

BEHAVIOR · GRADES 2–6

Restorative Circles

Whole-class prompts

What restorative circles are

A restorative circle is the whole class sitting in a circle — visible to each other, no desks between them — and each person speaking in turn around the circle on a given prompt. They're used for:

- Building community at the start of the year
- Reflecting on issues affecting the class
- Repairing after a class-wide incident
- Marking transitions (a child leaving, a half-term ending)
- Just regular weekly community-building

Done consistently, circles transform classroom culture. Children get heard. The quieter children speak. The dynamics shift.

How to set up a circle

Physical setup Move desks back. Children sit on the floor or on chairs in a circle. EVERYONE is visible to everyone else. The teacher sits in the circle, not above it.	The talking object A small object (a smooth stone, a soft toy, a wooden token). Whoever holds it speaks. Everyone else listens. Pass clockwise.
The rules 1. Only the person with the object speaks. 2. You can pass if you don't want to share. 3. Listen with your whole body. 4. What's said in the circle stays in the circle (within reason).	The teacher's role Hold the space. Don't comment after each child. Take your turn last (or first to model). Don't fix or moralise.

10 community-building prompts

#	Prompt
1	What's one thing you're looking forward to this week?



#	Prompt
2	What's something most people don't know about you?
3	If you could be any animal, what would you be? Why?
4	What's one place you've been that you'd like to share?
5	What's a kind thing someone has done for you recently?
6	What are you proud of from this term?
7	Who's a person you really admire? Why?
8	What's a skill you have that you'd like to teach others?
9	What do you love about your family?
10	What's the best thing about being your age?

10 reflection prompts

#	Prompt
11	What's one thing you've learned this week?
12	Something that surprised you this term
13	A time you helped someone recently
14	A time someone helped you
15	Something you're working on getting better at
16	Something you're worried about
17	A goal you have for next term
18	A challenge you've overcome
19	What you most enjoy about our class
20	Something you'd like to change about how we do things



5 prompts after a class-wide incident

#	Prompt
21	What happened? (One short sentence.)
22	How did you feel when it happened?
23	How do you think [affected person/people] felt?
24	What would help make things better?
25	What do we as a class need to do differently?

5 transition / closing prompts

#	Prompt
26	What will you remember about this term?
27	Something you're going to miss
28	A thank-you you'd like to say
29	Something you want to leave behind
30	A hope for what comes next

Common pitfalls

1. **STARTING WITH HARD PROMPTS.** Build trust first. Spend half a term on community-building before reflection prompts. Spend longer before incident prompts. 2. **THE TEACHER FIXING.** After each child speaks, resist the urge to comment. The point is hearing, not solving. 3. **PRESSURING SHY CHILDREN.** 'Pass' must be genuinely OK. Children learn it's safe. Most start passing and end up sharing within a few weeks. 4. **INCONSISTENT USE.** Once a term doesn't work. Once a fortnight, ideally weekly, builds the muscle. 5. **USING IT AS PUNISHMENT.** The circle is not where children are exposed for misbehavior. That betrays the trust.

