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# A Guide on How to Teach the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

## FAQs on the Convention on the Rights of the Child

### What is it?

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the most comprehensive statement of children's rights ever produced and is the most widely ratified international human rights treaty in history.

### Who signed it and when?

The Convention was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989 and has been ratified by 195 countries. As of today, all countries have signed the Convention with the USA the only country yet to ratify it.

### How many articles are there?

The Convention has 54 articles that cover all aspects of a child's life and set out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to.

### Do all children have rights?

Yes - every child has rights, whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities or any other status.

### How does the Convention define a child?

The Convention defines a "child" as a human being below the age of 18, unless the relevant laws recognize an earlier age of majority.

## Are certain rights more important than others?

The Convention must be seen as a whole: all the rights are linked, and no right is more important than another.

## Why does the 30th anniversary of the Convention matter?

30 years since its adoption, the Convention has helped to transform children's lives. It has inspired governments to change laws and policies and make investments so that more children finally get the healthcare and nutrition they need to survive and develop; more children attend school and there are better systems to protect children from violence and exploitation. It has also enabled more children to have a voice and participate in their societies.

Despite this progress, the Convention is still not fully implemented or widely known and understood. And today, too many childhoods are cut short when children are subjected to discrimination, suffer online abuse and exploitation, or are robbed of their childhoods by conflict and violence. As childhoods continue to change, there is a pressing need to refresh the relevance and urgency around implementing the Convention for the 21st century.

## Why do students need to learn about the Convention?

Students can't fight for their rights and support other people to claim their rights, unless students know what they are.

By learning about the Convention, students have an opportunity to increase action and awareness around it so that for every child, every right is fulfilled, now and for future generations to come.

**A useful further resource:** [Myths and Misconceptions on the Convention of the Rights of the Child](#)

## Techniques for Promoting Collaborative Learning and the Right to be Heard

Below are some strategies that can be used to promote collaborative learning that ensures all learners have an opportunity to speak and listen.

**Talk Partners** – Students work in pairs to discuss responses to questions and thoughts and opinions before sharing with the wider group.

**Think-Pair-Share** – Students work independently to come up with an opinion or response to a question. They then team up into a pair to discuss this before joining up with another pair to hear their thoughts and responses.

**Snowballing** – Students discuss a topic in pairs. They are then joined by another pair and another as the group grows from 2 people, to 4, to 6 etc.

**Listening Triangles** – Students are in groups of three and each have an assigned role either as a speaker, questioner or note-taker.

- The Speaker explains the topic (or expresses their opinion on an issue) as directed by the teacher.
- The Questioner listens carefully and asks for clarification or further detail.
- The Note-taker observes this process and provides feedback to both speaker and questioner.

## How to Teach Sensitive Topics

**Please note:** The discussions you have with your students in these activities need to be handled sensitively and with consideration given to students' backgrounds and experiences. You want to make the classroom a safe place for your students to share their ideas and experiences. Some students may want to be excused from certain discussions and this should be respected.

You may find the suggestions here a useful reminder, even if you are already experienced in handling sensitive topics.

### Before the session:

- Do you already know a particular student or students who is/are personally affected by issues of child rights? If so, you could let them know in advance that you will be discussing child rights and check if they are happy to participate.
- As much as possible, focus on solutions rather than problems.
- If you think it's necessary based on the local context, you could divide the class into smaller groups based on age, gender or experience to create a more relaxed atmosphere to encourage students to participate.

### “Class charter/Ground rules”

If you already have standard “ground rules” in place for managing inclusive and respectful discussions in the classroom, refer to them at the beginning of the session as you explain that you will be discussing important but sensitive issues.

If you do not already have such ground rules, can you develop them with your students? This will help them to exercise their critical thinking and empathy skills and they will have more ownership and commitment to respecting the rules. The rules can be illustrated and displayed in the classroom for regular use. Prompt questions:

- *What rules do you think we should have to make sure that everyone feels safe to express their opinions?*
- *How can we give everyone a chance to express themselves, not just the students who feel confident? (Only one person talks at a time; no interrupting; listen carefully and respectfully to what others say)*
- *What should we do if someone doesn't want to express their opinion? (Respect this and don't force them to speak or embarrass them: expressing an opinion is a right, not an obligation)*
- *What should happen if we disagree with each other? How can we disagree in a respectful way, not in a hurtful or rude way? (Politely ask the person to give reasons for their opinion so that we can understand it better; challenge the idea, not the person; thank the person for sharing their idea, and explain that you have a different idea and why; use language like “I think...”, not “You are...”)*
- *What should we do if someone gets upset? (Let a friend comfort them; give them the chance to continue or to leave the discussion; don't draw attention to them or force them to say what's wrong but respect their privacy).*

### At the end of the session:

- Provide an opportunity for students to feed back from their group work and to ask any questions.
- Offer them the chance to speak to you separately after the lesson if they're worried about anything.
- Thank the students for their thoughtful/creative/interesting contributions and for listening to each other in a kind and respectful way.
- Express that you are proud of them for contributing their valuable thoughts on this difficult topic.
- Move the discussion towards a positive note (looking to the future).
- End on a positive, preferably fun note (age-appropriate song, dance, joke etc.).

### After the session:

- Be prepared for students to approach you to discuss anything that might be bothering them.
- Follow up on anything you promised to do, for example finding out more information about something.

### Further reading:

You may find the following sources of advice on how to approach controversial topics in the classroom useful.

[Oxfam UK's guide to Teaching Controversial Issues](#)

[Short course on Child Rights and Why They Matter](#)

[Linking Child Rights to the Global Goals](#)

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