

Making 'communication' matter

Any good teacher conveys the outcome(s) of the lesson to students early so they know what to expect and what they will learn. Most students actually want to know this even though they may not be jumping in their seats with joy. Explaining that they will improve their communication, evaluation and synthesis skills by the end of the lesson may not be that important to many students...unless we make it matter. How can we ensure that students really understand that the skills we teach them will matter in their lives? That the skills are relevant to them?

Can you pass The Lift Test?

This activity gets students thinking very carefully about their argument; the core of a message and the 'So What?'. It will also, hopefully, encourage them to consider which skills they can develop which will become essential in whatever they choose to do. It will also highlight the importance of our subject - they can learn skills for life.

e.g.

You have written a book on Crime in the Early Modern Period and have been given the opportunity to pitch this great idea to a publisher in London. You have been granted five minutes of her time. [Students create their brief in this section]

You arrive at the publishing house's foyer in good time so you even have a chance to calm yourself down, have a glass of water and maybe even glance over your main points.

Suddenly, the publisher appears in her coat and briefcase in hand and says, "...sorry something's come up, give me the low-down on the way to my car...". You now have 45 seconds to pitch your idea as you join her in the lift down to the car park.

This activity is easily modified for a number of scenarios e.g. identifying arguments and stories in articles; and will also help develop students' skills of:

- Communicating an important message in a concise manner
- Analyse and contrast the main factors of a topic or theme
- Evaluating what the main points are and emphasise the 'golden nugget'

Passing the 'lift test' is widely used in the business world e.g. publishing and we have given you an idea how it could be used in history.