

This tool engages students in activities where they share ideas and discuss how each perceives the new information.

## Back and Forth

Every day people exchange information. We write letters and reports; make phone calls; have face-to-face conversations; send emails, texts, and tweets; or create blogs. All of these exchanges are reciprocal, and as we share the information, we are “listening” and checking for mutual understanding with the other person so that we can accurately respond or ask for clarity.



**In the classroom, the Back and Forth strategy is used to assess for student learning. On any given topic, students explain and share their thoughts with a partner. The partner listens to check for accuracy, and they discuss disagreements so that both come away with a correct understanding. Students use a writing template to organize their discussions, validate each other’s interpretation, and formulate a unified conclusion.**

## Back and Forth (continued)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Back and Forth**

My partner's explanation of \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

✓ for Accuracy:

Is there anything in the explanation that needs to be corrected? If so, write the corrections here.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### How to Use Back and Forth

- 1. Create**  
The teacher presents a prompt for the students to discuss.
- 2. Explain**  
Partner A explains to Partner B a problem, process, concept, idea, or fact as assigned by the teacher.
- 3. Write**  
Partner B captures Partner A's explanation on the template.
- 4. Check**  
Partner A checks Partner B's writing for accuracy and that they both agree on the response.
- 5. Repeat**  
Students reverse roles with a new prompt so that Partner B has the opportunity to explain verbally. Partner A records the explanation and Partner B checks for accuracy.



## Back and Forth (continued)

### When to Use Back and Forth

Use Back and Forth anytime in a lesson when students are working in pairs:

- ♦ After introducing a new topic or new vocabulary
- ♦ After teaching a classroom procedure
- ♦ To review for an upcoming assessment or as a formative assessment
- ♦ Before beginning a new assignment to assess prior knowledge
- ♦ As a way to apply the new concept to real life

### Back and Forth Variations

#### Trio Back and Forth

Students can work in groups of three so that one student explains the concept, the second student writes, and the third student checks the explanation. All three students must agree on the accuracy of the final, written statement.

#### PreK-K Back and Forth

PreK-K students can complete this activity orally, using repetition of their partner's response, and then discuss any incorrect parts of the explanation. As an option, the teacher can scribe the conversation.

#### Differentiated Instruction

Different pairs can have different levels of understanding of the same concepts. Students who have accommodations or modifications are assigned topics to meet their individual needs.

#### Dialogue Journals

Students are provided a prompt after completing a class activity and dialogue with a partner using the journal. For example, the teacher reads a nursery rhyme, then prompts the students to "Write a question about the rhyme for your partner." Students exchange the journal and ask each other questions and validate responses.

#### Concept Analysis

Ask students to analyze a concept, providing evidence to back up their respective views. A prompt could be, "Does the value of driving a car justify its pollution to our community?"

#### Re-Tell

Ask students to re-tell a story in their own words or from a different perspective. For example, ask the students to re-tell the story of *The Three Little Pigs* from the wolf's perspective.

### Value of Using Back and Forth

- ♦ It helps to scaffold learning and gives students a cooperative time to interact with the concepts.
- ♦ The teacher can check for understanding by monitoring the students' exchanges.
- ♦ Students think authentically about the concepts using prior knowledge, create relationships with the concepts and personal experiences, and use oral and written language to explore topics, retain concepts, and consider real-life applications.

Back and Forth helps students process concepts using oral and written language by providing a structure that allows them to think critically, express themselves, and build on prior knowledge and personal experiences. This strategy provides opportunities for students to work with information and to speak meaningfully with one another.