

Fortify a Conversation

In this activity, student pairs turn a basic conversation into a more formal, academic one.

Procedure:

1. Students are given half of an informal, non-academic transcript of a “Basic” dialog about the topic.
2. Students then create the other half of the informal dialog in the rest of the ‘Basic’ column.
3. Next, students are given the first two (or four) rows of the ‘Fortified’ column as models of the type of academic conversation you want them to create.
4. Then, in the ‘Fortified’ column, students fortify the conversation with more academic responses, as shown in the first two (or four) rows.
5. Students share and justify their changes. Types of corrections and changes may include: increasing the length each message; not overusing pronouns; using expressions such as *in order to*, *however*, *in addition*; softening all or nothing messages using *some*, *could*, *might*; and using evidence.
6. Have students orally rehearse the new dialog in pairs while you monitor their progress.

	Basic	Fortified
A	I think they should stay. The government is shaky.	In my opinion, the U.S. troops should remain in Iraq. They help to keep politics stable.
B	Me, too. They gotta keep things calm. And they help the people who are homeless.	I agree. The troops are needed in order to maintain the peace and to assist displaced people who no longer have homes.
A	But how long, I wonder? It seems like they are less needed now.	And yet I also wonder how much longer the troops should remain. The need seems to be diminishing.
B	Yeah. And it costs so much. Millions of dollars. We need it.	True. And we must consider the high cost of remaining. It is estimated that we spend 720 million dollars a day. Many people in this country could benefit from that money.
A		
B		
A		
B		
A		
B		