

© Curriculum Visions 2025

Curriculum Visions Labs explainer

How to support children as they learn - no matter what their ability - using conversational podcasts.

Learning English and a subject together.

Where SEN needs can be MAINSTREAM learning and everyone can learn together. Read on...

We are always looking for ways to help those with special learning needs stay part of mainstream education, or to enable them to learn in parallel with mainstream so they don't get left behind.

We are also always looking for ways that all students can raise the bar. And that means understanding the big picture they are learning. So not just 'this is a cliff' but 'oh I see how cliffs work as part of coasts, and how that might affect us all'. Then here is some point about learning facts. There is an application. Bonus.

And we have now introduced a major step with this.

But first let me remind you about the most engaging, and wide-ranging medium of all - movies. Movies can be watched by 8 and 80 year olds at the same time. Their technique is to provide material that is interesting and non-threatening. And I don't mean documentaries, which are often long and complex and reach a tiny audience. But they don't have to be mindless cartoons, either.

And then let me agree with you that reading books is not the best way for all learners. Many learn better through listening, and especially conversational listening. Listening and speaking are easier than reading, which is easier than writing. So it makes sense to start with the easiest and make that as easy as possible, so that all learners get confidence.

So we have been thinking about how to engage as wide a range of students at the same time, while learning what is required in a non-threatening way, and using the idea of movies and conversations. And we wanted to introduce it across all subjects with a uniform presentation and in the most engaging way.

But we are teaching a curriculum, so we have to make sure we present facts, and that those facts are checked and produce a complete coverage of the curriculum.

And, by the way, not clouded by embedding it in gamification.

So we have headed for conversations. Conversations are engaging in their own right, and make it easier for learners to see a clear path through their learning.

Impossible?

Wait until you see what we have produced.

We have taken the idea of dual person podcast and used the version known as webcast conversation to present a non-threading coverage of the curriculum topics that will be studied. And we cover each topic in about 5 minutes! Yes, 5 minutes.

We have thought hard about this and decided that the presentation style should not be condescending as in many children's programmes, but adults talking to learners respectfully.

Our pair of presenters should be in different locations (suggesting you can learn from anywhere) in home situations, and with American presenters. The American version of spoken English lends itself to a more relaxed learning conversation, and students are used to podcasts, videos, cartoons and their TVs all being in American English. Our view is to choose whatever will give the best result. So we draw whatever is best from around the world. If that is not how you see things, then what follows might not be for you. But if you are excited by the thought, then read on.

Presentation podcasts are an active listening exercise, not passive ones such as movies. Learners have to stay active to follow the questions and answers. That is a further plus.

We have over 100 podcasts of this kind. They are in the section called The Big Picture, and they start with “Let’s talk about”. They have been scripted by us and then changed into casual question and answer conversations without losing any of the content standard. This makes it seem as though you have not been challenged at all. The conversation is female-led, and male supported. These even work for science, which so many people think is threatening and unfathomable. . And, as with our books, it is always the same format and with the same presenters. Then everyone knows where they are all the time.

Learners at home also get the benefit of top class teacher-presenters even when not in a formal classroom.

So, give them a whirl. We leave you to rummage and find them. More are being added every day, and when you know where to find them you will find them in the same places throughout the website.

## So how do I use them?

You can use these in many ways.

1. If you are unsure of the topic you are about to teach, listen to the podcast and get some pointers as to how it is done. Then, if you don’t want learners to use them directly, at least you will have listened to an expert presentation.
2. You can get learners to watch these in class or at home, with you or without you, at the start of a topic as an introduction, and as a summary and plenary.
3. We learned so much doing these. And they are captivating. The idea is to pull all the ideas from a topic together and weave them into a natural conversation. Then teachers can pull out the

threads and elaborate on them to the level of each student's ability.

That is why we give you the starting script written by us. It is not a transcript because it has been converted into conversational English for the presentation. And that style belongs to listening, rather than reading. But you can use it with students in many ways. Here are some suggestions:

#### 4. Whole class, including learning-challenged.

Ask each student to say one thing they remembered. If they are able to write it down, they should do so. If not, write it for them on a board.

If they can't remember anything, then play it again.

After the first fact is extracted, see if they can remember a second thing. They or you write that down.

#### 5. Medium ability

You can provide prompts: what did the presenters say about "???" And replay the podcast to find out.

Questions like this are endless once you have the script in your hands. Highlight the facts and be sure to ask about them all.

#### 6. Advanced ability

a. Ask learners: can they find additional facts in the podcast that are not in the script?

b. Are there additional facts in the script that are not in the podcast

(The answer is yes in both cases)

#### English writing styles

Try to get students to use the script to make their own podcasts. Use the script to compare English use for the same purpose in different ways.

7. None of this stops you from using books, normal videos and so on. It is an additional – and to many SEN learners – a vital tool.

Oh, and by the way, the Grizzly Gazette has a different kind of podcast, more suited to magazines. But Crazy Joe and his family do cover the ground thoroughly, too.

And, of course, we also provide you with speeches by legendary people such as Tutankhamun and Thomas Edison as though you were being taught by them.

So just choose whatever suits you and your learners best and use the same techniques to extract information and get learners to collate it.

At the end, they can write a summary of what have learned, and can make up podcasts of their own using this information. And they do a presentation in front of the class.

But at the end of the day, the real benefit will be if you can get learners with short attention spans, and with limited reading skills, to get on board with the subject and so stay part of a mainstream class.

Enjoy.