

# Teaching Teenagers: challenge accepted

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# Content

## **Part 1: People - rapport and roles**

- *Developmental factors*
- *Establishing rapport: strategies and techniques*
- *Classroom roles: effect on classroom dynamics and motivation*

## **Part 2: Language - topics and tasks**

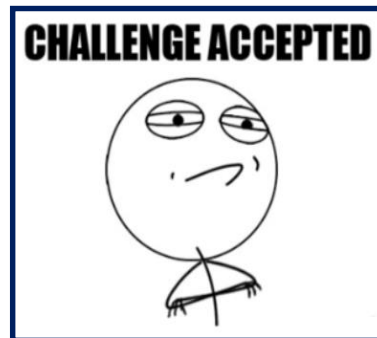
- *Teenage topics in the spotlight*
- *A flexible and authentic approach to finding topics and developing materials for activities*

# Teaching Teenagers – challenge accepted!

Your students and you:

Prepare to tell your partner

- about the students you teach
- what you enjoy the most about working with teens
- the main challenges you face



# People: rapport and roles

## Rapport

- developmental factors which characterise teenage learners
- strategies and techniques for establishing rapport

## Roles

- for a healthy classroom dynamic
- to boost and sustain students' motivation

# Developmental factors: compared to YLs, teens...

- are more grown up
- have longer attention spans
- are better at abstract thinking
- are more body-conscious
- are harder to reach
- have more brittle self-confidence
- are more swayed by peer pressure
- are more sexually aware
- are more rebellious
- are less concerned with getting the teacher's approval

Choose an item on the list to discuss with a partner.

- Share an anecdote/episode from your classroom
- Discuss how it affects your approach to teaching

# Developmental factors: compared to **adults**, teens...

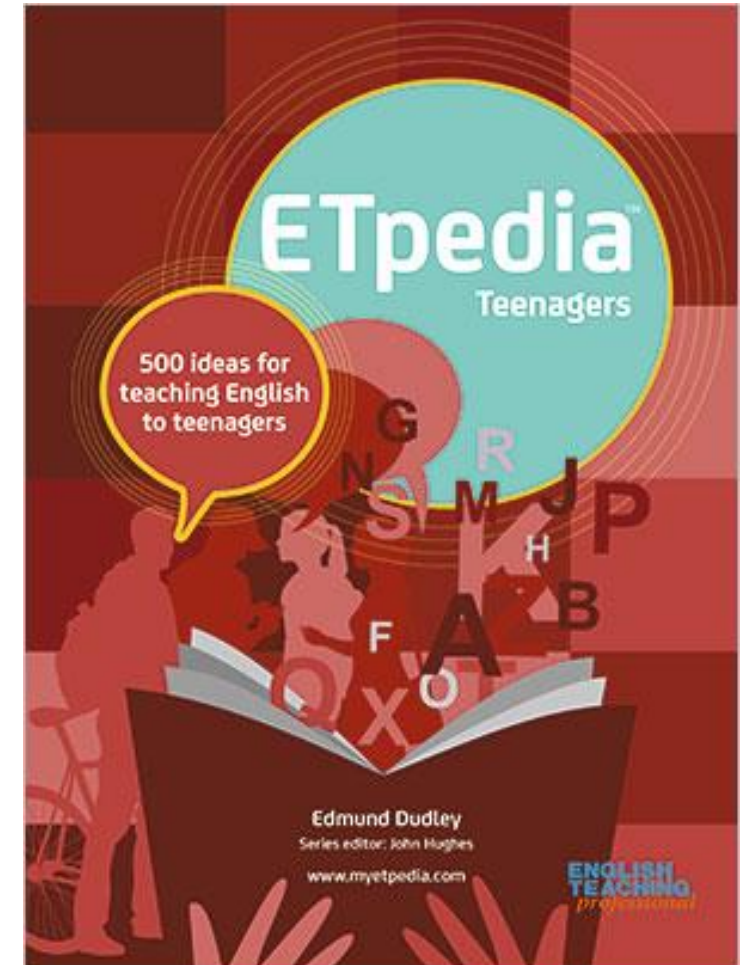
- are less likely to empathise with the teacher
- are less willing to ask for help
- are more inclined to take risks
- are less autonomous
- are more willing to accept uncertainty
- are more likely to switch off in class
- are less interested in grammar and language analysis
- are less skilled at managing their time
- are more emotional
- have better mobile-phone etiquette

Choose an item on the list to discuss with a partner.

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# Building rapport with teenagers

“The relationship between teenage students and their teacher can be fragile. It takes a long time to build rapport, so tread carefully. Remember that weeks of hard work can be undone in a matter of seconds with a careless word or action.”

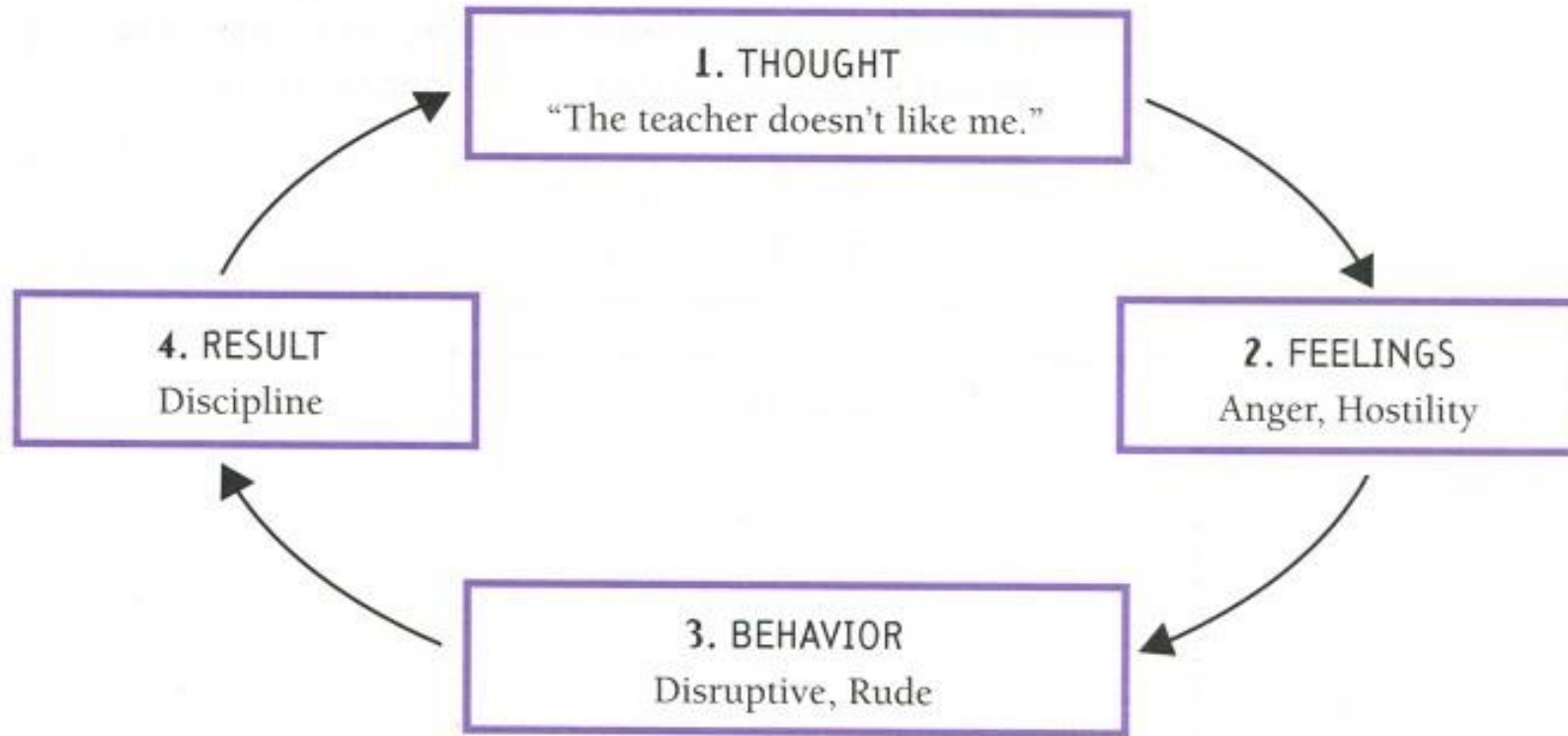


# 10 ways to build rapport with teenagers

1. Accept teenagers for who they are
2. Uphold important values
3. Don't make fun of students
4. Don't talk about students behind their backs
5. Explain unpopular decisions
6. Give them a chance to make amends
7. Don't judge them on past behaviour
8. Make yourself available to students
9. Challenge counterproductive mindsets
10. Discuss problems honestly



# Hard-to-reach students: thought cycles

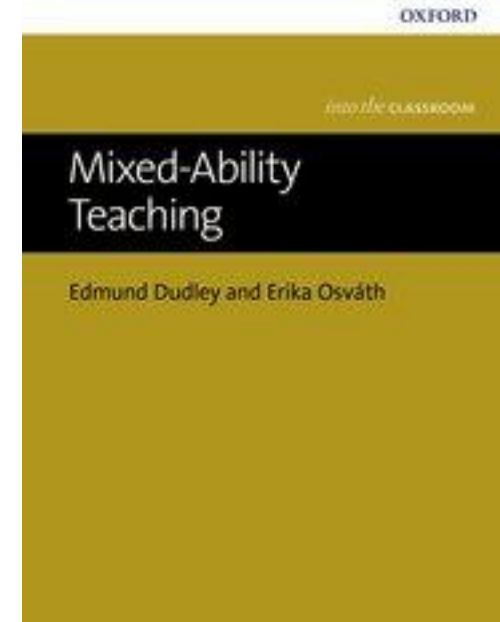


**FIGURE 1** *The Thought Cycle*

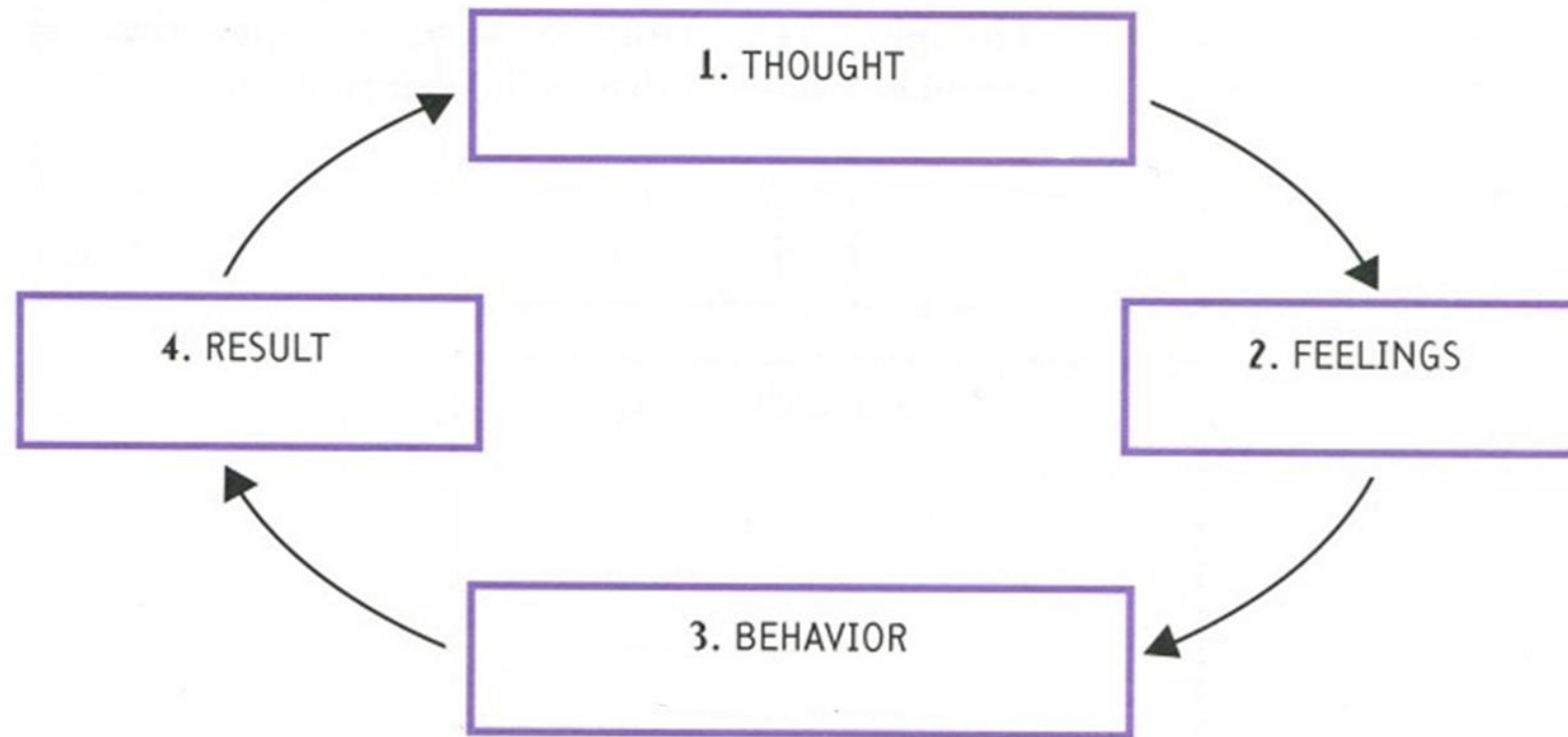
# Looking beyond behaviour

“A helpful policy is to backtrack from behaviour to the the feelings that are behind it, and from there to the thoughts that are behind those feelings. Our goal is to help learners see that their negative thoughts are not based on fact. And the only way to do that is to provide them with compelling evidence.

The teacher’s job is therefore to remain positive and supportive, and to generate situations, exchanges, and activities from which the learner is able to draw more positive conclusions.”



# Thought cycles: targetting students' thoughts



**FIGURE 1** *The Thought Cycle*

# Classroom roles

Why limit students' role to *language learner*?

A richer array of roles allows teenage students to:

- get a stronger sense of usefulness
- overcome passive attitudes
- develop self-esteem by having additional areas of expertise recognised
- develop empathy for the teacher and other members of the group

# 10 ways to give students responsible roles

1. Appoint a class rep
2. Ask them to handle the tech
3. Make use of special skills
4. Appoint a timekeeper
5. Use the students as activity fact checkers
6. Micro-teaching
7. Give students summarising and adjudicating duties
8. Give students research tasks
9. Share online administration tasks
10. Get students to carry out observation tasks

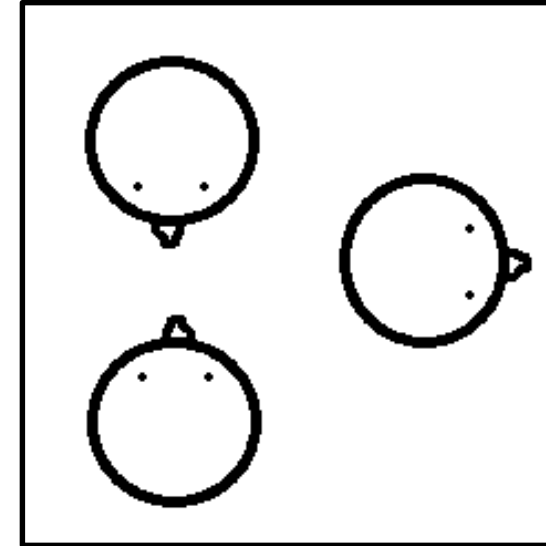
# Use students as activity fact checkers

Establishing a student as *the highest authority*:

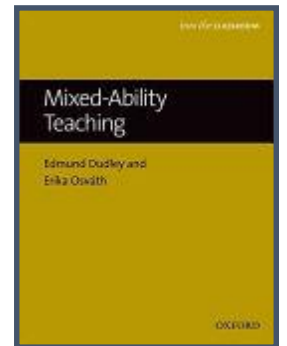
- Ask a student to prepare a short talk or presentation about themselves
- Other students listen and write down three facts about the speaker
- Students read out their sentences - speaker confirms or corrects
- No repetition of facts allowed
- Then ask for further guesses (e.g. If favourite team is Barcelona, then favourite player is Messi?)

# Positive gossip

- Get students into threes
- 1 student turns their back
- the other two gossip about her/him
- positive comments only



- What are your feelings about this activity?
- Do you have any concerns or caveats?
- When/with which groups would you use it?



# Language: topics and tasks

## Topics

- teenage topics: what are they interested in?
- DOs and DON'Ts for finding topics

## Tasks

- flexibility and authenticity
- ideas for developing and extending tasks



# Which (seven) topics are teens NOT interested in?

<https://mawsig.iatefl.org/gagas-grandma-and-garden-clippings-or-choosing-themes-for-teens/>

- Music (Madonna, ABBA...)
- Controversial issues (homosexuality in Russia, neo-Nazis...)
- Fashion
- Herbs, spices, tea: healing properties
- Current affairs (refugees, conflicts)
- YouTubers talking about normal life
- Drones
- Driving
- Countries nearby
- Backpacking
- Music (contemporary figures with a message e.g. Meghan Trainor)
- Hair
- Fairy tales
- Weird food e.g. Insects
- Comparing opinions across generations e.g. on tattoos
- YouTubers doing crazy things
- Video games
- Travel: different places in our country
- Faraway, exotic places
- History (testing knowledge)
- History (figures like Mandela)

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# The turn-off topics

<https://mawsig.iatefl.org/gagas-grandma-and-garden-clippings-or-choosing-themes-for-teens>

Music (Madonna, ABBA...)  
History (figures like Mandela)

→ boring, out-of-date,  
irrelevant

Fashion  
Video games

→ divisive; topic for friends  
not classmates

Weird food e.g. Insects  
YouTubers doing crazy things  
Faraway, exotic places

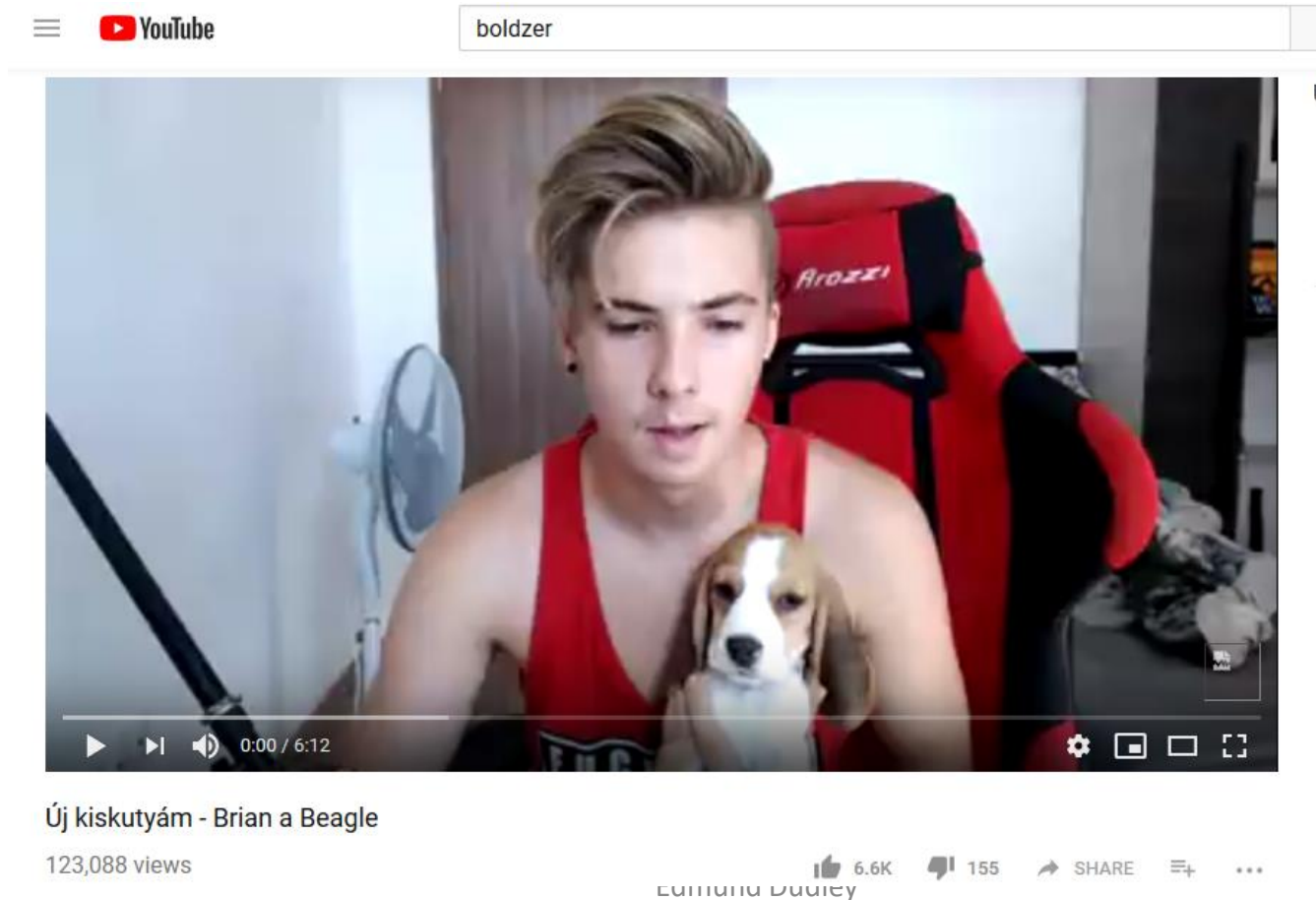
→ Too distant and  
(depressingly) unachievable

# Finding topics: 10 DOs and DON'Ts

1. DO take steps to find out what students are interested in
2. DO test the waters
3. DO offer choices
4. DO get feedback on lesson topics
5. DO focus on young people rather than pop stars
6. DO keep it real and relevant
7. DO collect your students' ideas
8. DON'T get too personal
9. DON'T limit yourself to resources in English
10. DON'T lose your cool

# An example of using non-English materials

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d2yTF9TkpVs&t=73s>



# Scale of 1-5

Where do you think this is?

How sure are you (1-5) ?

1: We have no idea. Let's say...

2: Our guess is that it's...

3: It looks a bit like... / It might be...

4: We're pretty sure it's...

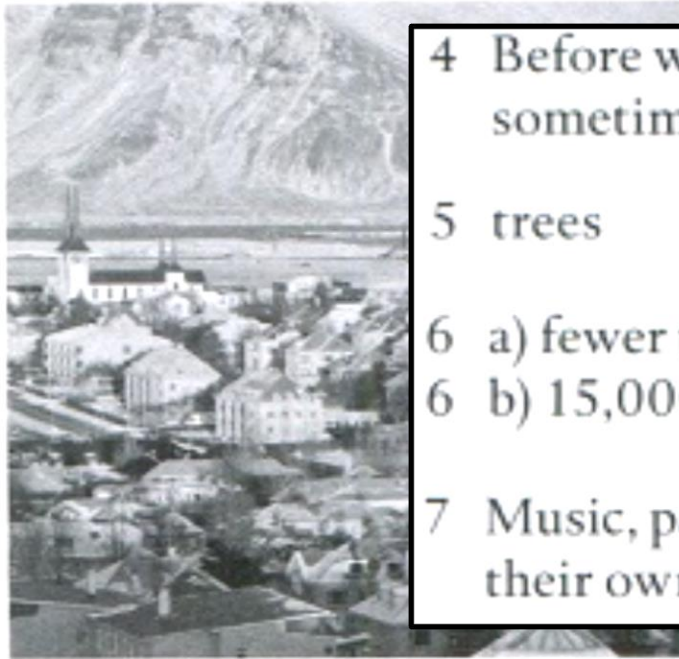
5: That's definitely...



# Scale of 1-5

## Speaker 2 Reykjavik, Iceland

- 4 When do people go to swimming pools and hot tubs?
- 5 What are there very few of in the Icelandic countryside?
- 6 How many people are there...? in Reykjavik in the second-biggest city
- 7 What kind of things do Icelandic people make?



- 4 Before work, at the weekend, or sometimes to have business meetings
- 5 trees
- 6 a) fewer than 250,000
- 6 b) 15,000
- 7 Music, paintings, drawings, books, and their own clothes.

# Photo contest



- Get students to open their gallery and find a picture taken in the last week
- In pairs, share background info / answer any questions
- Tell students that each pair has to nominate one of its photos in an (imaginary) themed photo contest
- Announce the theme of the contest
- Students have to figure out 1) how their photo matches the theme of the contest and 2) what to say about it
- Tip: don't let students change pictures after you announce the theme.



# Selfie spot-the-difference

- Students find a selfie on their phones which was taken at school
- In class they try to recreate that selfie as accurately as possible
- Compare the two images side-by-side
- Write down as many differences as they can



# Graffiti back stories

- Get students to take a photo of some street art
- Ask them to invent a remarkable back story for each picture. Ask:

*Who was the artist?*

*What is it about?*

*Why did they do it? / Who is it for?*

*What happened as a result?*

Display and compare ideas



# Speak, pass, nominate

Give students three options when reporting back after pair work:

1. Speak
2. Pass
3. Nominate your partner

Do it right:

- Accept all answers. Move on if they pass
- Give nominated students the option of passing
- Be positive and respectful