

Trading Without Words

Week 17 • Wednesday • Hands-On: Communication and Fair Trade Games

Reading Time

When explorers and Native Americans first met, they had a big problem: they spoke completely different **languages**! Neither side could understand the other's words.

So how did they talk? They used **gestures** — hand signs, pointing, and acting things out. They showed objects and traded them. They drew pictures in the sand. Slowly, some people learned each other's languages and became **interpreters** — people who translate between languages.

Talking without words is hard! Misunderstandings happened often, and sometimes caused big trouble. Today you will try it yourself — can you trade and talk using no words at all?

Reading Questions

1. What big problem did the two groups have when they met?

2. Name two ways people communicated without shared words.

3. What is an interpreter?

Hands-On: The No-Words Trading Game

You need: a partner and 5 small items each (toys, snacks, cards).

Rules: NO TALKING allowed! Use only gestures, pointing, and facial expressions.

Step 1: Each player lays out their items.

Step 2: Try to trade items using only gestures. Both players must agree (nod yes) for a trade to happen.

Step 3: Play for 5 minutes, then talk about it.

Bonus round: try to 'tell' your partner something more complicated with gestures, like 'I am hungry' or 'It might rain tomorrow.' How far can you get?

After the Game

1. What trades did you make? How did you agree without words?

2. What was the hardest thing to say with gestures?

3. Did you have any misunderstandings? What happened?

Think About It

1. Why do you think misunderstandings between the explorers and Native Americans caused trouble?

2. Why were interpreters so important?

Draw a Message

Draw a picture-message with NO words that tells someone: 'Let's trade — my fish for your corn.' Could a stranger understand your picture?



Review

I did it!	Circle one
I traded using only gestures	YES / NOT YET
I know what an interpreter does	YES / NOT YET
I drew a picture-message	YES / NOT YET