

Conversation Ball

The teacher tosses a squeeze ball to a student who wants to speak to the class. The student can stay seated or come to the front of the room. Any topic is acceptable as long as it's appropriate for the classroom (nothing negative, no bad language). Each student is given five minutes to talk. The student can also present pictures, PowerPoint slides, or things from home. Also, drawing on the board is permitted.

The audience is expected to sit quietly, giving the speaker their full attention. The only person allowed to speak is the person holding the ball. When the student finishes speaking, the ball is tossed back to the teacher and then the teacher tosses the ball to a student who is quietly raising a hand to speak. That student then has five minutes to ask questions or present a new topic. If anyone interrupts or speaks inappropriately, points are lost. Extra points are gained by asking thoughtful questions or by making insightful comments. The objective of the game is to provide practice in appropriate classroom and overall social behavior. A squeeze ball is used because it is soft and can be used to alleviate anxiety while speaking. Also, the physical nature of the activity provides an outlet for hyperactivity.

The points are posted each time the game begins. The rubric points are added to the overall weekly classroom and homework points which lead to awards and prizes at the end of the week. The game is recorded on a digital video camera and made into a podcast. Many students need help developing patience and sensitivity to other people. This game clarifies the parameters of

appropriate social interaction. Included in each podcast is a class discussion about what is good about the interaction and what could be improved.

Points:

- **Talking only while holding the ball** 500 points
- **Talking only about appropriate subjects** 500 points
- **Refraining from distracting behavior** 500 points
- **Good response to another student** 500 points
- **Thoughtful comment** 500 points