

# Education News

## How to grow confident kids?

## The art of children's conversation®



A new game promises to help children develop as confident speakers, better listeners and great all-round communicators, as well as being suitable for use in therapy and education.

Following the success of their original game, The Art of Conversation, creators Louise Howland and Keith Lamb have adapted the concept to create The Art of Conversation for Children (TAOC®). Suitable for players from five years to adults, TAOC® helps children put complex ideas into words, share their ideas and feelings and respect the views of others. The game may be played in nine different modes, both competitive and non-competitive – there's even a solo mode.

Like the original game, it is professionally accepted as a resource for use in therapy, education (including anti-bullying programmes), counselling and language teaching.

Experts agree that more children are now starting school with language delays, and this is widely blamed on their decreased exposure to

conversation. With so much modern communication taking place by e-mail and SMS, and with TV, computer games and games consoles being the preferred recreation for many children, they are simply less exposed to real-life conversation. Yet children who communicate well by the time they start school have a head-start in life.

For example, the family dinner-table used to be the place where the day's experiences and thoughts were shared. Today, many families eat dinner with the television on, or family members eat at different times due to school, sporting and work commitments.

TAOC® will not only help children to become confident speakers and attentive listeners – it's also great fun for players of any age. More than a quiz, more than a game, you can play it with people you know well, or those you've only just met. It's also a handy dispute-resolution tool that can be used within families, school groups and other groups. The 16 page booklet provides valuable guidelines for the use of TAOC.

The original TAOC® is now available in French and German editions, with two English-language versions – the Australian original and US and UK variants. More editions are planned soon. The children's version was a logical next step, and provides families, in particular, with a great reason to turn off the screens and communicate effectively.

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## WHY IS A CONVERSATION IMPORTANT?

Good conversation is about bonding, it is being able to express and explore ideas, hold them up to the light, in a safe and nurturing environment. It is about feeling valued, about understanding each other and ourselves and having compassion and empathy. It is learning to disagree without being disagreeable.

Sincere and close conversations can play a major part in the primary prevention of many areas of difficulty, such as homelessness, depression, anxiety, marriage and family breakdown.

Satisfying conversations seem to happen when there is the time and opportunity for quality conversation.

This doesn't tend to happen with a quick "What happened at school today?" on pick-up. That question is pretty much guaranteed to get a "nothing", regardless of which child you ask! Listening to others is a wonderful way to learn and to consider our own views.

A common denominator in a survey done of "high achievers" in America was the family dinner. Isn't that amazing?



## Giveaway

If you would like to win a copy of TAOC®, we have 10 copies of the game to give away to education eye readers. Be one of the first 10 visitors to [www.taoc.com.au](http://www.taoc.com.au), for your chance to win.

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