

Academic Response Frames

What is a response frame?

A response frame is a structured, topic-related response scaffold that elicits application of carefully targeted language forms, and provides an opportunity for students to add relevant content to demonstrate understanding of the context.

What is the value of using a response frame?

A response frame provides students with a linguistic scaffold for responding competently by explicitly modeling and clarifying the features of an accurate response in the specific lesson context: appropriate syntax, correct grammar, and precise vocabulary. Response frames in academic language development curricula written by Dr. Kinsella (*English 3D*, *Academic Vocabulary Toolkit*) enable a teacher to construct a model verbal and written response, deconstruct the response, and guide students in reconstructing their own proficient response. This form-focused modeling and guidance helps students notice linguistic features in meaningful contexts. Of equal importance, a response frame encourages more efficient use of their limited exposure to vocabulary, sentence structures, and grammatical forms of advanced social and academic English.

How does a response frame differ from a cloze sentence, and a sentence stem or starter?

It is important to distinguish the differences between a “cloze” sentence, a sentence starter and a sentence frame. These three response scaffolds differ in both function and form. Cloze sentences are generally used for assessment purposes, to determine whether students can successfully recall focal lesson content. Cloze sentences require students to merely “fill in the blank,” usually eliciting identical responses. [Dolphins are marine ____ (mammals) closely related to whales and ____ (porpoises)]. Because cloze sentences largely produce identical responses, they do not provide ideal opportunities for students to develop verbal skills with engaging partner interactions and rich whole-class discussions.

In prior curricula and training, Dr. Kinsella provided “sentence starters” to encourage more productive and competent verbal contributions. Mimicking her lead, many publishers have included starters or “sentence stems.” A sentence starter may help students initiate a response with a safe linguistic start in an academic register; however, the remainder of the sentence is often casual or grammatically flawed. [Based on his previous actions, I predict the president ____ **is gonna say no.**] Impromptu corrections of “bi-register responses” do little to promote linguistic understandings and communicative competence.

Therefore, to address the complex linguistic needs of English learners, particularly long-term English learners with superficial oral fluency and various “fossilized errors,” Dr. Kinsella has drawn upon her linguistic background and developed academic **RESPONSE FRAMES**. Response frames provide considerably more guidance than sentence starters by enabling students to produce accurate target language forms (vocabulary, syntax, grammar) and the ability to discuss, follow along and comprehend while listening to increasingly sophisticated language. Response frames are optimal when a discussion prompt is open-ended, with a range of conceptual and linguistic options. A response frame can be strengthened by the additional linguistic scaffold of a precise word bank. Providing students with a manageable list of everyday words paired with precise words encourages students to make mindful word choices and utilize a consistent academic register.

Sentence Starter vs. Academic Response Frames

Sentence starter:

A partner shows active listening when _____.

Common casual and grammatically flawed outcome: **A partner shows active listening when they nod.**

Response Frame:

A partner demonstrates active listening when she/he _____ and _____.
(verb + s) (verb + s)

Word Bank

Casual Verbs

says
likes
lets
helps

Precise Verbs

replies, responds
appreciates, compliments
permits, _____
_____, _____

Model Response: A partner demonstrates active listening when she **restates** my idea and **asks** clarifying questions.

Key Components of a Response Frame

A response frame includes the following essential features:

- ✓ a syntactic scaffold (a rigorous and relevant sentence structure in an academic register requiring completion with clearly specified grammatical and vocabulary targets)
- ✓ a clearly specified grammatical target
- ✓ embedded topical and high-utility vocabulary in an academic register
- ✓ a focused word bank prompting use of precise word choices
- ✓ an engaging opportunity for students to apply and demonstrate understanding and include their own ideas

Sample Lesson Scenario Using Response Frames

Setting Up	1. Introduce frame (visibly displayed, with a model response)	To share your idea in today's lesson, we will use an academic response frame. I have written my own idea in the frame to model how you will add an idea about our topic: the ways that a lesson partner demonstrates active listening.
	2. Students repeat frame and model (silently tracking, phrase-cued, then chorally)	Follow along silently tracking with your guide card as I read aloud my model response. To get comfortable using the response frame, read my response with me in phrases, imitating my emphasis. Now let's warm up our public voices by reading aloud my entire response with expression.
	3. Direct attention to the grammatical and/or vocabulary target (underline, circle, highlight)	Underline the word "demonstrates" in the frame. This verb ends in -s and is written in the simple present tense because the action describes what a lesson partner does usually or always. To complete this sentence correctly, you need to add a singular subject pronoun after the conjunction "when". Circle either "he" or "she". Now you must complete the response with a verb phrase, a group of words beginning with a verb or action word in the present tense. Think about what a partner does most of the time to show that he or she is actively listening to you.
	4. Prompt students to select a precise verb	Review our precise present tense verb bank and take a moment to think about the strong verb choice you will add to complete the verb phrase.
	5. Direct students to write their ideas in the frame	Quietly write your idea using the response frame. If you need assistance with spelling, grammar, or word choice, raise your pen and I will help you. Please don't bother your partner.
	6. Circulate reading sentences, providing feedback	Your perspective is that a partner demonstrates active listening when she asks questions. What question might she ask? Excellent, develop your sentence by adding that specific showing detail.
	7. If students finish quickly, cue a fast-finisher task	Quietly reread your sentence and prepare to share it in front of the class using the document camera. Jot down another idea in the space provided at the bottom of the page in your portfolio.
Partner Discussions	Transition to partner interaction	Now we'll share perspectives with partners. (or groups)
	8. Direct students to silently reread responses in preparation to share	Reread your sentence silently a few times in preparation for sharing with your partner.
	9. Cue partner (A/B) to read their sentence to their partner (twice)	Read your sentence to your partner twice: first, read it fluently; second, make eye contact and say it with expression. Let's begin with partner 2 this time. Be sure to listen to your partner attentively because you will need to restate their response. If you both finish sharing your selected response, share another idea until I call time (1, 2, 3, eyes on me). If you don't have a second idea, share my model response on the board.
	10. Circulate listening, providing feedback, and to identify strong responses for reporting phase	I didn't catch your ideas. Will you please share again making eye contact and using more expression? Thank you.
Whole-class Reporting	11. Cue partners to restate each other's responses	Now I'd like you to restate your partner's idea. Partner 1 will go first. Restate your partner's response using this expression ... ("So what you're saying is.. If I understand you correctly,...") After your partner confirms that this is what s/he intended to say, switch roles.
	Transition to reporting	"Now let's hear some of your responses."
	8. Elicit reporting with entire frame, (visibly displayed)	Please remember to use your public voice and the entire response frame if you are called upon to report.
	9. Assign active listening task(s): take notes, compare, point out similarities, agree/disagree	I have three active listening tasks for the discussion: 1) look at the speaker; 2) record one idea that is different than your own; 3) listen for similarities.
	10. Record student contributions: list on white board, chart	I will record all of your contributions in phrases on the board to use during other lessons.
	11. Cue identified students to report	I have asked Isabel to start our discussion. Please use a public voice to report your point of view.
	12. Elicit additional responses using inclusive strategies (nominations, name cards, popcorn, volunteers)	Let's hear some other perspectives. I've pulled Jose's name card. Please contribute your perspective. Now I'd like a partner nomination from this side of the room. Karla, let's hear your response. We have time for two contributions. I'd like one from the front and the back of the room.