

Hammer or Nail



Problem Solving

Grade(s): 6–8

learning objective/s or description

Students will use abstract thinking to compare themselves to everyday objects by choosing between two options (e.g., "hammer or nail?") and explaining their reasoning to a partner. Through this pair-share activity, students will practice self-reflection and get to know their classmates better.

materials needed:

- Optional: question list printed for the facilitator

Any tips or important information

- There are no right or wrong answers—students choose what feels true to them.
- Start with simpler questions and work toward harder ones as students warm up.
- Ask 6–10 questions total; switch partners halfway if you want more variety.
- Encourage students to explain their thinking, not just pick a side.

lesson structure:

Opening Circle Question (3 minutes)

- "Would you rather be a cat or a dog?"

Community Builder: Switch Sides (3 minutes)

Draw an imaginary line down the middle of the room and call out "this side or that side" options (e.g., pizza or tacos, summer or winter). Students walk to the side that matches their choice each time.

lesson structure continued:**Activity: Hammer or Nail (15–20 minutes)**

1. Have students get into pairs and face each other.
2. Explain that you will offer them a question with two choices, and they will use their imagination to decide which one best describes them. For example: “Who is a hammer? Who is a nail?”
3. Give students a moment to think, then have each partner explain why they feel like a hammer or a nail. Give each person about a minute to share.
4. Ask 6–10 questions total. Use the question bank below; start simpler and work toward harder ones.

Closing Circle Question (2–3 minutes)

- “What is one thing you learned about a classmate today?”

Question Bank

Start with simpler questions and move to harder ones as students get comfortable.

Simpler Questions	Harder Questions
• Red or blue • Monster or alien • Orange or banana • Slide or swing • Sun or moon • Cat or dog • Pizza or tacos • Book or movie • Walk or run • Sing or dance	• Hammer or nail • Racket or ball • Jeans or a suit • Egg white or egg yolk • Cube or ball • Present or future • Tree or flower • Mountain or valley • Guitar or violin • Teacher or student

Resource adapted from Be the CHANGE consulting