

Talking and Timing: Adding Dialogue and Delays

40 minutes

Creative Coding Challenges

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

In this lesson, you'll learn to create a conversation between two characters in Scratch. Follow steps to add dialogue and use timing with 'wait' blocks, ensuring your sprites speak at the right moments on screen.

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Develop skills to add dialogue to sprites in a Scratch project.
- Understand the use of timing to control the sequence of dialogue between sprites.
- Learn to create a new project and add characters in Scratch.
- Gain knowledge on setting a suitable scene for the dialogue.
- Master the process of testing and adjusting the conversation for smooth flow.

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Open scratch.mit.edu on the class display and on pupil devices, and check the school filter allows it.
- One device per pupil or pair, logged in if your school uses Scratch accounts.
- Sound optional: dialogue uses on-screen speech bubbles, not audio.

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HOW THE LESSON RUNS

Introduction
Create a new project
Add Two Characters
Set the Scene
Start the Conversation
Wait for a Response
Make the Second Character Speak
Keep the Conversation Going
Test the Conversation

TEACHING MOVES

- 1. Introduction. Frame the goal as a two-sprite interview on screen. Stress that timing, not just the words, makes the turns feel real.
- 2. Create a new project. Send everyone to Scratch and Create together. Confirm every screen shows a fresh project with the default cat before the next step.
- 3. Add Two Characters. Insist the cat is deleted first, then two sprites chosen. Walk the room and check every sprite pane shows exactly two thumbnails before moving on.
- 4. Set the Scene. Ask pupils to pick a backdrop that fits an interview. Keep it quick: stage, studio or park are enough.
- 5. Start the Conversation. On the first sprite only, snap when green flag clicked then say for 2 seconds. Check code is on the intended sprite, not the other.
- 6. Wait for a Response. Add wait 2 seconds under the first say. Explain this pause is the gap the second sprite will fill.
- 7. Make the Second Character Speak. Switch sprite carefully. Mirror the pattern: green flag, wait 2 seconds, then say. The opening wait stops both speaking at once.
- 8. Keep the Conversation Going. Return to sprite one and add the next say under the existing wait. Repeat the rule: while one speaks for 2 seconds, the other waits 2 seconds.
- 9. Test the Conversation. Green flag together. If bubbles overlap or leave long gaps, change only the wait values, then retest.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Pupils leave the cat in and end up with three sprites, then attach say blocks to the wrong one. Before any coding, check the sprite pane shows exactly two thumbnails. Delete extras, then click the correct thumbnail before dragging blocks.
- Both sprites speak at the same time because the second script has no opening wait. Compare the two scripts side by side. The listener needs wait blocks that match the speaker's say durations.
- Pupils change say duration but forget matching waits, so turns drift out of sync. Treat each say's seconds and the partner's matching wait as a pair. Adjust both, then green-flag test again.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Emerging: Sit with the pupil to delete the cat and select two sprites, then build only the first say and wait together. Have them copy the board scripts sprite by sprite before inventing their own lines.
- Developing: Let them finish the two-turn exchange, then ask them to read each script aloud to check waits match the other sprite's say blocks. If timing is slightly off, prompt one change at a time and retest.
- Proficient: Challenge them to add another full turn each, still keeping say and wait pairs aligned. Ask them to tighten awkward gaps by adjusting wait values until the interview feels natural.