

Why words matter

This resource provides activities that can be used to spark discussion in the classroom or at home. The questions are designed to get young people thinking and talking about language and its effects on the way we feel about our bodies.

Note to educators and teachers: Before starting this activity, you might want to read through the information at www.calla.ly/vulvataalk, particularly the Call it by its Name guide, so you can discuss the correct terminology for vulvas and vaginas.

1. List all the words you currently use to describe vulvas and vaginas.
2. Circle all the words that make you feel any shame or discomfort when you say, hear or read them.
3. See if you can remember when you started to use these terms. You might realise you've been using them all your life and have simply become used to it, or maybe you heard them more recently through friends, online or on TV.
4. Next to the words you currently use, write down the terms you want to use next to them. Discuss the words as a group or in partners, explaining how the words make you feel and what you think might happen when you swap them for new terms.
5. Plan what you might say to someone if you hear them using the 'old' words to talk about vulvas or vaginas. How might you explain to them the power of their word choices? How do you think they might react?