



## Why I'm a joiner.

I loved woodwork when I was at school. Here's a picture of a wooden cat I made when I was 12 (yes, I've kept it all these years). But it's not that kind of joinery I want to talk about here.

A few weeks ago I got my (student) membership card from the Royal Society of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) and I realised that I am now a member of no less than 6 national professional bodies (3 English language teachers' organisations ([IATEFL](#), [NATECLA](#), [NALDIC](#)), 2 dyslexia professionals' groups ([BDA](#), [PATOSS](#)) and now the RCSLT). Is that healthy, I wonder, to have more professional membership cards than bank cards?

It's not the plastic cards that attract me, of course. It's the sense of belonging to a group, the chance to meet like-minded people and to access all of that professional development that is on offer. Joining a professional organisation is not an end in itself – it's always the start of something new.

Being a member of these groups has given me opportunities to develop all kinds of new skills, too. Through volunteering on various committees, such as the [IATEFL Inclusive Practices and SEN SIG](#) I have had to learn how to draw up a fantasy budget, manage massive online meetings, format digital newsletters, make tea on an industrial scale and print and fold a hundred handouts ten minutes before a talk. I'm not saying I'm any good at these things, mind, but I've given them a go. I've met people that I feel are on the same page as me, and working with them towards a common goal has meant that I have friends all over the world.

Most importantly, I believe that professional organisations have a huge role to play in effecting the changes that I want to see. One teacher working alone can only write so many letters, sign so many petitions. But thousands of us working together can get the message across much more clearly, whatever we want to say to publishers, exam boards or policy makers.

That's why I'm a joiner. How about you?