



The Starter Generator

120 starter activities to use in your lessons



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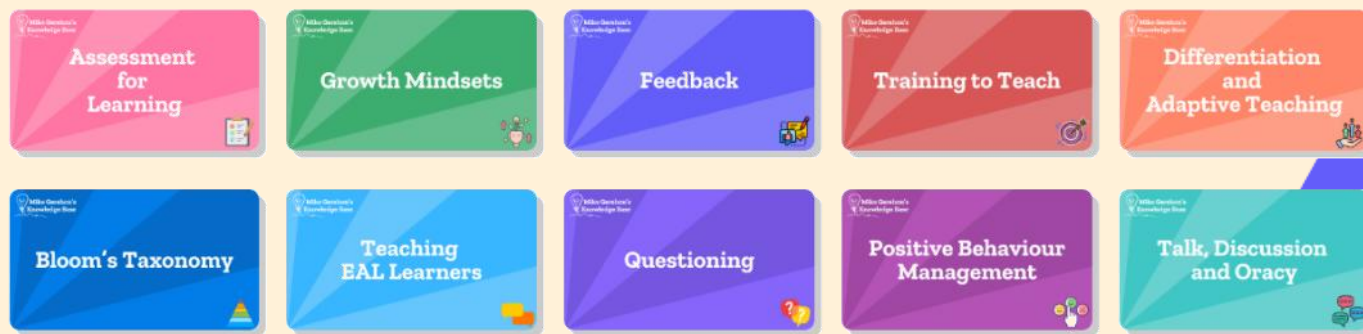


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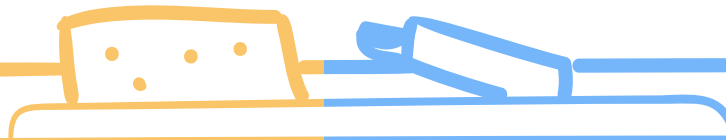
Odd One Out



Give learners four items and ask them to decide which is the odd one out and why.

For example:

Four images, four keywords,
four diagrams or four people.



Mike

List-O-Mania



List as many X as you can.
Your time starts now!

For example:

List as many keywords as you can in 90
seconds. Your time starts now!



me

Show me the answer!



Set learners a question and they must then show you their answer using mini-whiteboards, True/False cards, ABCD cards, hand signals or something else.

Develop by asking learners a series of questions and, potentially, doing it in a rapid-fire style.



What's the question?



If this is the answer, then what
might the question be?

For example:

If 'calcium' is the answer, what
might the question be?



Finish the Sentence



Give learners a sentence and ask them to finish it off.



Develop by using multiple sentences, ambiguous or unclear sentence starters, challenging sentence starters or definition sentences that must be completed in a highly specific way.



me

What's this?



Display an image and ask learners:

‘What might this be?’

Develop by using close-up images, unusual images, unexpected images, or images that are tangentially related to your topic.



Questions



Give learners a sequence of questions to answer that run from easy to challenging. Five is usually a good number.

Develop by setting a time limit, by using open or ambiguous questions, or by challenging learners to create at least one answer they think no one else in the class will come up with.



Decode It



Display the lesson topic, learning objective and/or big question written in code.

Give learners the key and challenge them to decode it as quickly as they can.



me

Who am I?



Display an image of a person connected to your topic and ask learners:

‘Who might this be, and how do you know?’

Develop by only revealing part of the image at a time.



Questions you would like to ask



Share with learners what you are going to be studying, then give them two minutes to discuss with their partner what two questions they would like to ask about the topic.

Develop by having pairs stand up and swap questions with other pairs around the room.



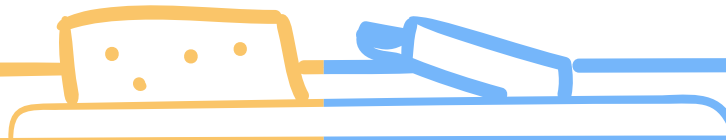
What's your opinion?



Share the topic, a statement or a question.

Ask learners: What's your opinion?

Give them one minute to verbalise their thoughts with a partner, one minute to write down their ideas, and three minutes to share with at least two other people in the room.



Definition Match



Display a series of definitions and keywords,
all mixed up.

**Learners must correctly match the keywords
and the definitions.**



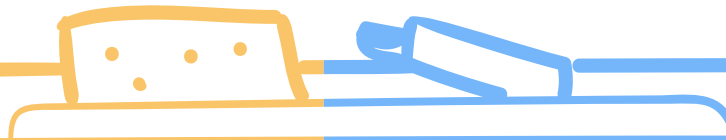
me

What connects?



Display twelve keywords on the board.

Ask learners to identify which of the keywords are connected to the topic/subject and which are not.



Word Fill



Give learners a piece of text containing missing words. They must fill in the correct words.

Develop by giving learners a text containing incorrect words. They must identify these words and replace them with the right ones.



List/Definition



Part 1: List all the words you can think of connected to X.

Part 2: Use your list to write a definition of X.



Pictionary



Divide the class into pairs.

**Give one learner in each pair a list of
keywords/concepts.**

They must draw each of these in turn, while their
partner has to try and guess what they are.



Mike

Freeze Frame



Divide the class into groups of 3-5.



Read out a short, scene-setting narrative connected to the topic.

Challenge groups to create a freeze frame showing the scene that you have just described.



me

Bingo Sheets

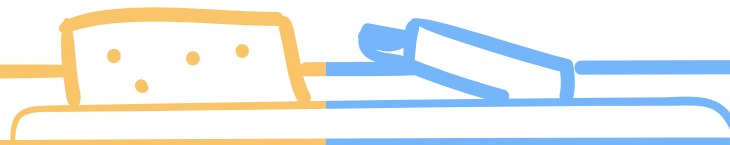


Give learners a bingo sheet containing a set of keywords connected to the topic.



Everyone can get the same bingo sheet or (and this is better), create a few versions with different keywords on them.

Read out definitions. Learners must cross off keywords they hear defined ... until someone shouts
BINGO!



Hangman



Play hangman with your class.

You choose the word or phrase.

They must work out what it is, before their
guesses run out.



me

Dingbats/Say What You See



Display a series of dingbats or visual catchphrases on the board.

Learners must work these out and then share their answers.



me

Homework Peer-Assessment



Learners swap homework.

The teacher displays the success criteria.

Learners peer-assess their partner's work.

**Develop by taking in homework and redistributing
at random for the peer-assessments.**



mg

Pupil as Teacher



One learner (or a group)
take on the role of teacher.

**They summarise the last lesson
then question the class on
what was learned.**



me

20 Questions



Learners have twenty questions to work out who or what you are.

**You may only use the words
'yes' and 'no' when you answer.**



A-Z



Ask learners to write down the letters
A-Z in pairs or threes.

Reveal a topic.

**Give groups two minutes to write down as
many words as they can think of that connect
to the topic.**



Mike

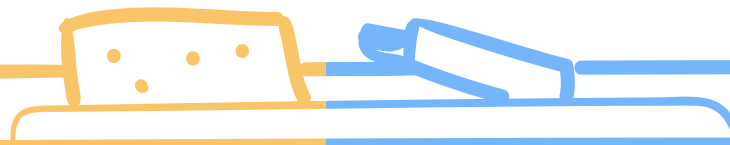
What's Being Thought or What's Being Said



Choose a picture.

Display it on the board.

**Ask learners what's being
thought or what's being said
(and why they think that).**



Name That Tune!



Play learners a song connected, in some way,
to the learning.

**Learners must listen and transcribe
the lyrics as best they can.**

They must then try to work out what the lesson
is going to be about, based on the lyrics.



Instructions



Share a task or process with learners and ask them to write instructions for it.

Increase the challenge by sharing something intricate (but with which learners are already familiar).



me

Ridiculous Arguments



Give learners a ridiculous argument and ask them to justify it.

For example:

All banks should be run by five-year-olds.



me

What if ... ?



Pose a 'What if ... ?' question.

Ask learners to discuss it in pairs.

Then, ask learners to stand up and find three other people with whom to share their ideas.



Art and Life



Use a relevant poem, piece of art, sculpture or photograph to get learners thinking about the topic.

From here, you can draw out some of the lesson themes, referencing the piece of art you have shared.



Tell me three things ...



... about the topic we are studying.

... you learned last lesson.

... that help explain magnetism.

... refugees might feel.

... you know about the Vikings.



me

Scenario



Display a scenario on the board.

Read it through with your class.

Give three choices of how learners could respond. Ask them to discuss in pairs, make their choice, and be ready to justify it.



Get Creative



Display five random words.



Challenge learners to connect each of these to the topic/subject you are studying.

Develop by asking learners to tell a story that includes all five words and links to the topic/subject.



Ranking



Give learners a set of items and ask them to rank these according to some sort of criteria.

For example:

Rank these adjectives from most to least useful if you were writing a news report on flooding in the local area.



Empathy Builder



‘Taxes for the rich will be scrapped tomorrow and replaced with voluntary philanthropy’

- How might a millionaire feel about this?
- What about a person on average income?
- Or someone receiving income support?

(Take this model and fit it to your topic, with the emphasis on learners’ putting themselves in different people’s shoes.)



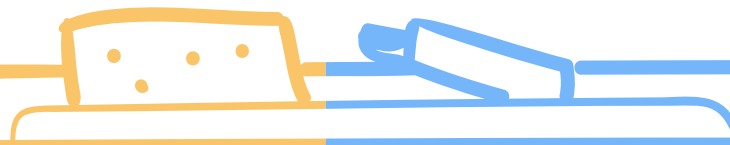
Taboo



Divide the class into pairs.

Give one learner in each pair a list of words.

They must describe each word to their partner, without using the word itself. Their partner must try and guess what the correct words are.



me

Compare and Contrast



Display two images connected to your topic.

Ask learners:

What similarities do you notice?
What differences can you see?



me

Recipe Time



Display a list of bullet points connected to an idea from your topic.

Ask learners: ‘What is this the recipe for?’

Develop by having learners create their own versions to test out on their peers.



Have I Got News For You



Display a news headline with
one or two words missing.

Learners must fill in the blanks.

When the headline has been correctly
guessed. Ask learners how they think it
connects to the lesson topic.



mg

Mystery Bag



Take a bag into the classroom that contains an object connected to the lesson.

Pass the bag around and let learners feel the object inside.

Give learners a chance to discuss what they felt. They must then try to guess what the object is.



True or False



Present learners with a sequence of statements related to the prior learning.

For each one, they must decide if it is true or false.



me

Fact or Opinion?



Give learners a photocopy of a newspaper article connected to the lesson, along with two highlighters.

Learners must highlight facts in one colour and opinions in the other colour.



Odd One Out – Pictures Only!



Display four pictures and ask learners to tell you which one they think is the odd one out and why.

Develop by having learners create their own versions that they then try out on their peers.



Mike

What's the topic?



Reveal a clue, then ask:
'What might the lesson topic be?'

Repeat with a second, third and fourth clue.

See how long it takes until everyone agrees
on what the lesson topic is.



me

Just a Minute



In pairs, learners must take it in turns to try and speak about the current topic for sixty seconds, without hesitations, mistakes or repetitions.

Develop by having learners try to do it in front of the whole class.



Mike

What do you know?



Share the lesson topic with learners and ask them to create a spider diagram to capture everything they already know about it.

Develop by having learners create a mind-map instead of a spider diagram.



Group the Keywords



Display twelve keywords on the board, connected to the topic you are studying.

Ask learners to sort these into four groups (which can be of different sizes) and to then explain the thinking behind their decisions.



me

Connect the Animal



Display a picture of an animal and challenge learners to think creatively about how they could connect it to the lesson topic.

For example:

How might a zebra connect to probability?
How might an otter connect to identifying verbs?



Mike

What would win?



Choose any two items, then ask learners what would win and why. (The aim here is to focus on reasoning and developing arguments.)

For example:

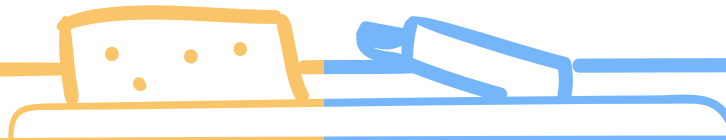
A tree and a fence. What would win?
Tomorrow and today. What would win?
A rainbow and a shelf. What would win?



Different Shoes



- If your favourite singer was in charge of assemblies, how would they be different?
- **If a magician came in to teach you fractions, how might they do it?**
- If Abraham Lincoln took our politics lesson, what might it be like?



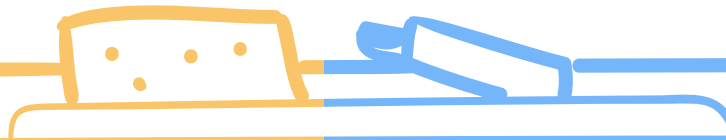
me

What's the story?



Give learners a set of cards containing a jumbled-up story. (The cards could contain images or words.)

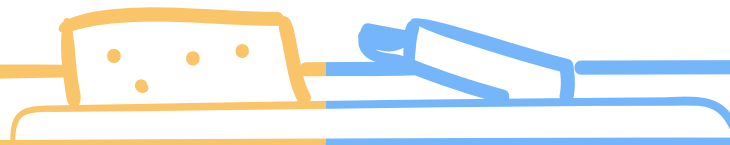
Learners work in pairs to correctly sequence the story. They should then suggest how the story connects to the lesson topic, or why it might be important.



Flow-Chart



Challenge learners to take what they have learned so far in the topic and to communicate it as a flow-chart.



me

Continuum



‘Nuclear energy should be embraced as an essential part of any country’s energy mix.’



Agree

Disagree

Where would you place yourself ... and why?



me

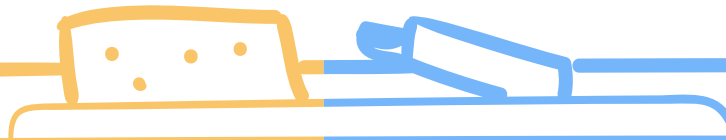
Have I seen you somewhere before?



Display on the board a range of keywords connected to the topic.

Ask learners to make three columns in their books:

- I know you
- I think I've seen you somewhere before
- We've never met!



Mike

Picture in Time



Display a picture and ask:

- What might have happened before the photo was taken?
- What might be happening now?
- What might happen after?



me

In the Spotlight



Ask for a volunteer.

**Pose five questions about the topic to this learner.
They must give an answer for each one.**

On mini-whiteboards, the rest of the class mark down if they agree or disagree with the answers they hear, sharing this with you and their peers each time.



Connections



Choose a learner to begin.

Ask them to say a word (this could be connected to the topic, or a word at random, it works either way).

You now say a word that connects to the word that was said. Then, you pick a learner to say a word that connects to your word.

After they've said a word that connects, they pick the next learner ... and you continue as far as you can manage.



Home Improvement



- How would you improve _____ ?
- Why would your changes be an improvement?
- Who for?
- How long would they last?



me

Get in Character



Display three questions on the board.

As learners come in, hand them character cards (these could connect to the topic or be random).

Learners must stay in character as they answer the questions (either verbally or in writing).



me

Design a Starter



Challenge learners to work in threes to design a starter activity and to then test this out on another group.



me

Which is wrong?



Display between three and five statements, equations, definitions or diagrams.

At least one of these should be incorrect.

Ask learners: 'Which of these is wrong, and why?'



Pair It Up



Learners work in groups of three or four.

Give each group a set of cards. Each card should contain something connected to the topic – in words or pictures.

Learners must pair up their cards and be able to explain why their pairings fit together.



My Word!



A learner is given (or chooses) a word connected to the topic.

They stand up and point to someone in the class who must give the meaning of the word.

That person then chooses a word of their own, stands up and points at the next person ... and so on.



Statement Exploration



Give learners a statement and ask them to explore it in pairs.
Provide questions to scaffold discussions.



For example:

‘Is it ever right to lie?’

What do you think?

What might someone else think?

What about someone who disagrees with you?



mg

Strongest Argument



Give learners a set of arguments and ask them to decide which, in their opinion, is the strongest one.

For example:

Which of the following arguments is the best piece of evidence that taxes are spent effectively?

- The National Audit Office checks all government income and expenditure.
- Voters can throw out governments they think spend money badly.
- Most people get along OK, so the money must be used effectively.
- Taxes aren't as high as elsewhere, yet we still have decent public services.



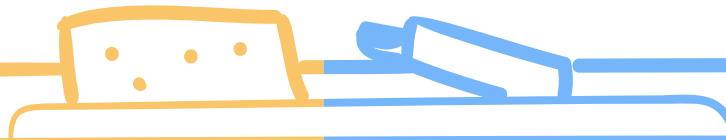
Concept Map



Display a list of words connected to a key concept you are teaching about.

Learners create a map showing how the words connect to each other, and to the key concept.

They must be able to explain and justify the connections they make.



What's your reply?



Reveal a surprising, unexpected or contentious statement. Give learners two minutes to discuss the statement in pairs and to come up with a reply.

For example:

‘All teachers should be allowed to teach whatever they want, whenever they want.’



Mike

Draw me the Answer



For example:

- Draw a picture that explains photosynthesis.
- What was life like in Roman times? Draw me the answer.
- Can you draw me an answer to the question 'What is fairness?'



me

Game Show



Find a template for a game show you like and adapt this into your lesson starter.

For example:

- Blockbusters
- Who Wants to be a Millionaire?
- The Chase



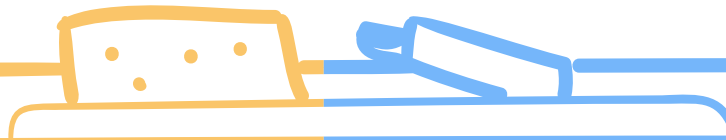
me

Analogyes



Display an analogy on the board,
as an example.

**Give learners two lists of keywords
and ask them to construct an
analogy (or two), using the lists.**



Sculpture



Bring in a big bag full of materials like cardboard boxes, old newspapers and pipe cleaners.

Divide the class into groups of three or four.

Give each group some of the materials from the bag, along with an idea, keyword or concept connected to the topic.

They now have three minutes to use their materials to make a sculpture representing their word.



Play Doh



Divide the class into groups.

Give each group a tub of play doh, along with a keyword, concept or phrase connected to the topic (keep these secret).

**Groups must model what they've been given,
using the play doh.**

The class then share their work, and learners must try to guess what the other groups have modelled.



Find the Definition



Print off definitions of keywords and either stick them up on your walls or hide them round the room.

Give learners the list of keywords and explain they must find and write down the definition for each, before the time is up.



Genre



Give learners material connected to the topic and ask them to rewrite it or act it out based on a specific genre.

For example, a maths teacher might give out instructions about how to calculate the area of a circle and then ask learners to act these out as if they were in a sci-fi movie.



Tree-Mendous



Display the outline of a tree.

Ask learners to assess how they are feeling about the topic so far.

Where would they place themselves on the tree?
What part of the tree represents how confident they are feeling about the topic so far?



Stimulus



Divide the class into groups.

Give each group a different piece of stimulus material that connects to the topic.

Ask learners to explore the stimulus material and to write down any questions it makes them think of.

Choose a few different groups to share their stimulus material and questions with the class, then introduce the topic.



Prop-Tastic



Start the lesson holding a prop of some sort.

Explain that learners may only ask questions about the prop, and that the lesson will not begin properly until learners have worked out why you are holding the prop and how it connects to the topic.



Mike

Noun Play

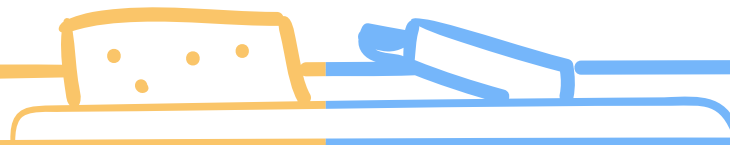


_____ is like (a) _____ because ...

The first blank is for the topic, concept or keyword.
The second blank is for a random noun.
Learners must then finish the sentence.

For example:

- Photosynthesis is like a road because ...
- Magnetism is like a castle because ...
- History is like a swan because ...



me

Solutions



Display a problem on the board. This might connect to your topic, or it might be an unrelated problem you are using to get learners thinking.

Challenge them to come up with as many solutions to the problem as they can think of, and to then rank these from best to worst, in their opinion.



Uncover



Hide a picture on your slide behind
a series of squares.

Remove one square at a time (or get learners
to pick which square to remove next).

**As each square is removed, invite learners to
guess what the hidden image is and how it
connects to the topic.**



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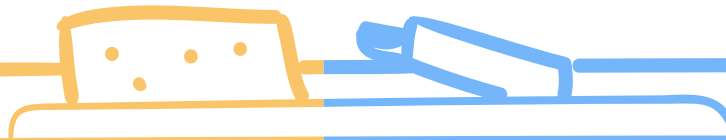
Anagrams



Use an anagram generator to turn keywords or phrases connected to your topic into anagrams.

Learners must try to solve the anagrams, working out the correct keywords or phrases.

Develop by having learners create their own anagrams.



Mike

Redesign



Give learners something to redesign, alongside a set of parameters.

For example:

How would you redesign The Houses of Parliament so that they were more modern, more user-friendly, and had a more equable atmosphere?



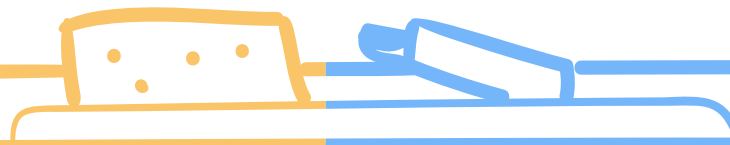
Silent Instructions



Divide the class into pairs.

One person in each pair receives a set of instructions.

This learner must communicate the instructions to their partner, while remaining completely silent.



Mike

Translate



Divide the class into pairs.



One learner in each pair receives a keyword, question or phrase connected to the topic.

Both learners receive a sheet explaining either Morse Code or the British Sign Language alphabet.

The first learner must use the sheet to communicate the keyword, question or phrase to their partner, who must try to decode it.



Uses



Bring out an object and show it to your learners.

This might connect to the topic, or it might not.

Challenge learners to think up as many uses for the object as they can.



me

Pass the Parcel



Wrap up an object connected to the lesson and play pass the parcel.

Each layer could include a question related to previous learning or to the new lesson topic.



me

Time/Place Lapse



Learners close their eyes while you guide them through a short story transporting them to a different time or place.

Explain that this new time or place is missing a vital thing that we take for granted in our everyday lives.

Discuss with learners how this might make life different.

The goal is to get learners thinking critically about something they usually take for granted. You can then segue into your lesson from there.



Mystery Guest



One learner receives a card with a famous figure and some biographical details written on it.

The rest of the class question them to work out who they are.

The learner with the card can only answer by saying 'Yes', 'No' or 'Maybe'.



Dissonance



Try to encourage learners to experience dissonance in their thinking



For example:

Imagine a square egg.

Why doesn't school not exist?

Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication and Division –
why isn't there another one?



me

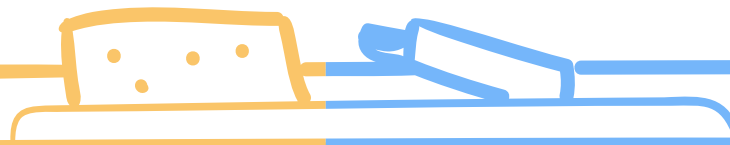
Detectives



Learners become detectives.

Give them some clues and ask them to work out what they think the lesson is about.

You might also let them ask you some questions, as if they are interviewing you like a potential suspect.



me

New Inventions



Ask learners to devise a new invention that connects to what you studied in the previous lesson.

Scaffold by giving some examples that you have thought up yourself.



me

Dominoes



Create a class set of dominoes on sheets of A4 paper.

Hand one domino to each learner.

Challenge the class to make the longest chain of dominoes they can.



Smile



Imagine a time when something good happened to you.

It could be a big thing like winning a prize, or something simple like laughing with friends.

Hold that image and think about how it felt.

Imagine you have that same feeling now and smile.

What a lovely way to start the lesson.



Mood



Decide on a particular mood you would like learners to begin your lesson with. For example, calm, attentive, or enthusiastic.

Ask learners to role-play this mood.

Take them through a series of different scenarios in which they must stay in role.

Then slip into the lesson itself and return to the role-play if and when required.



me

Creative Writing



Display three keywords connected to the previous lesson.

Challenge learners to write creatively for ten minutes.

Explain that they must include the three keywords in their writing.



Abstract Thinking



Get learners to discuss and then note down responses to questions like:

- What shape is justice?
- What is the colour of emptiness?
- What is the texture of a rainbow?



me

What if ... Poetry

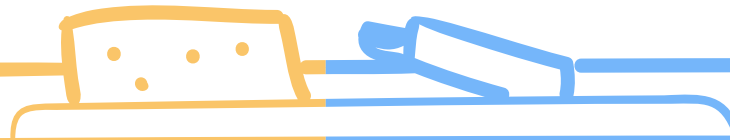


What if bridges had families?
What if trees had rights?
What if colours were numbers?

Share three 'What if ...?' questions with learners.

These could be connected to the lesson but don't have to be.

Ask learners to pick one of the questions and to use it as a title for a poem, which they then write.



Performance



Either show learners a section of a performance or deliver a performance yourself (for example, by reading an extract from a book).

Let the dust settle and then invite learners to respond.

What questions do they have?
What did the performance make them think about?
What do they think happens next?



Big Picture



Talk to learners about the big picture and how today's learning fits into this.

Start out really big and gradually focus in smaller and smaller until you hit the key thing you are going to be learning about in the lesson.



me

Summary



Ask learners to write a sixty-second summary of everything they've learned in the unit so far.

Or ask them to write a newsflash summary of what they learned in the last lesson.

Of give them the lesson title and ask them write a three-sentence summary of what they think the lesson will be about.



Sentences



Cut up a sentence (or two) connected to the topic and hand the different parts to different learners.



They must physically arrange themselves so they spell out the sentence correctly.

Develop by handing out sentences and then getting learners to arrange themselves into one or more paragraphs.

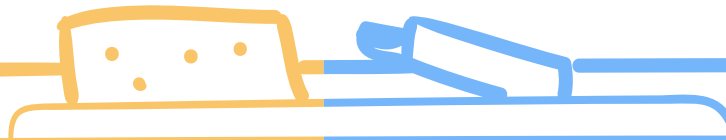


Arrangement



Ask the class to arrange themselves in order of age, shoe size, height or something else.

The only rule is that no one is allowed to talk.



me

Simon Says



Play 'Simon Says' with your class.

Develop by telling learners that they must do the opposite of what you say.

Or by bringing in requests related to the learning. For example, 'Simon Says show me with your fingers how many lines are in a Haiku.'



Post It



Display several questions around the room and give each learner 1/2 post-it notes.

Learners have 3 minutes to look at the questions and discuss them with a partner.

They must then vote for which they would like to focus on during the lesson.

They do this by sticking post-it notes beneath the question they like best. The question that receives the most post-its becomes the focus of the lesson.



Celebration



Perhaps once a term use the start of the lesson to celebrate the work you and the class have done up to that point.

Learners could vote for awards like 'hardest worker', 'positive influence' and 'biggest improver'.

You could show work done at the start and end of the period to demonstrate how far learners have come with their learning.



Key Letters



The teacher shouts out a letter.

Learners must respond with a keyword related to the current topic that begins with that letter.

Keep going for as long as you like. (Or let learners who give a correct keyword take over and shout out a letter themselves.)



Create-a-Title



Display five keywords on the board.

Challenge learners to use these to create a title for the lesson.

Ask them to predict what they think the focus is going to be, based on the keywords.



mg

Ten Words



Give me ten words related to ...

... the lesson

... what we did last lesson

... the topic

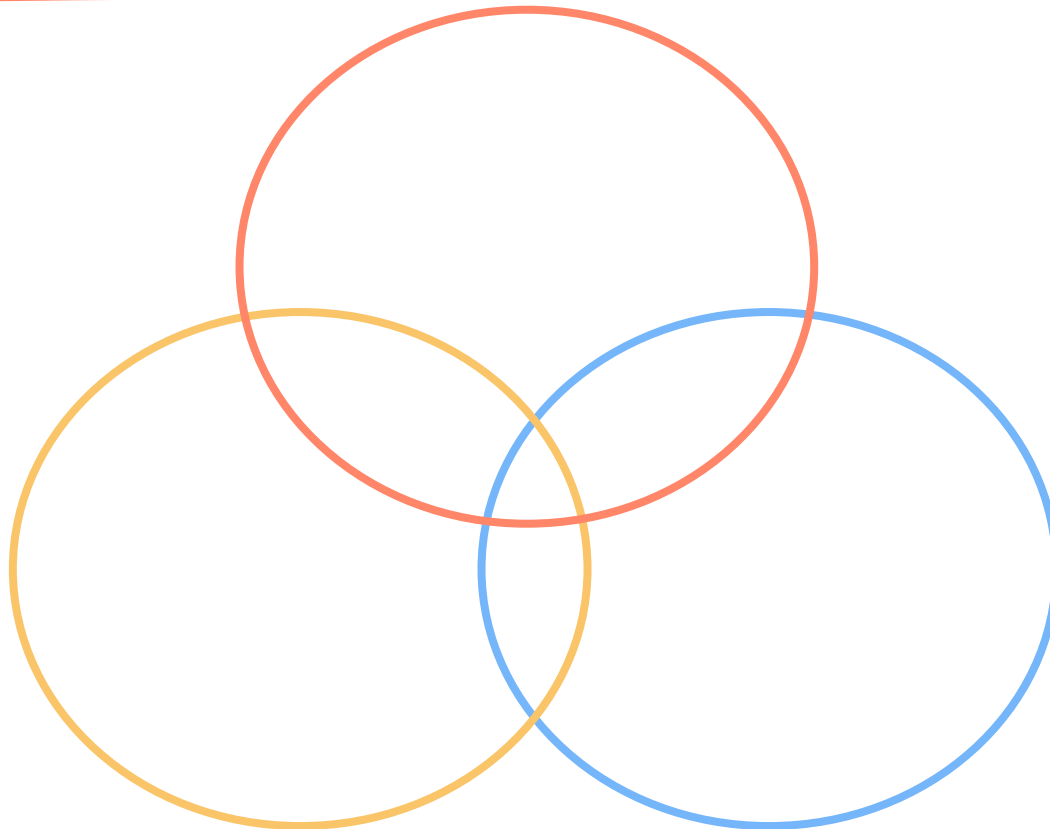
... Mondays

... liberal democracy



me

Venn Diagrams

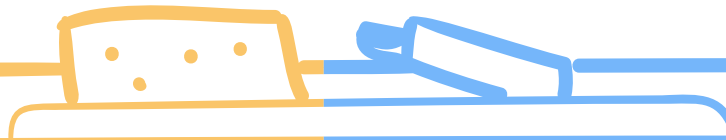


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Noises



Play a noise and ask learners to respond to it, to try and work out what it is, or to try and work out how it connects to the lesson title.



me

Think-Pair-Share



Give learners a question or problem and sixty seconds silent thinking time to think about it.

When the time is up, ask learners to share their thoughts with a partner.

Finally, ask a handful of learners to share what they discussed with the rest of the class.



Goal-Setting



At the start of a unit of work, ask learners to set their own goals.

Display the following sentence starters on the board and ask learners to create their own goals:

What I want to know about the topic ...

What I want to be able to do by the end of the topic ...

I'll know I've achieved my goals because ...



Multi-Tracking



Ask learners to perform a multi-tracking activity like patting their head and rubbing their tummy at the same time.

Develop by asking a learner to lead the activity for the rest of the class.



me

Songwriter



Ask learners to write a song or rap explaining what they know about:

- The topic
- What they have learned already in the unit
- Something in which they are personally interested



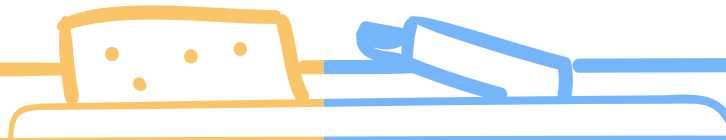
me

Jigsaw



Cut up a picture or instructions and
hand out to groups.

**They must put the jigsaw back
together and then follow the
instructions or respond to the picture.**



me

Random Debate



A proposition is displayed on the board as learners enter the room.



Learners must either defend or refute the proposition, depending on where they are sitting.

Reveal a slide showing which half of the class is defending and which half is refuting. Or do it with the toss of a coin.

Learners must practice the skills of argument – regardless of whether they agree with the proposition.



Describe and Draw



Divide the class into pairs.

Partners sit back-to-back. One has an image, the other a pencil and a piece of paper.

The first learner describes the image. Their partner must try and draw it as accurately as possible.



Slogans



Learners create slogans.

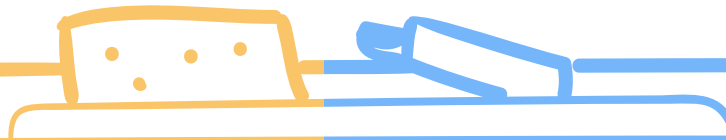
For an image.

For last lesson's learning.

For the topic.

For a keyword.

For a person or event.



me

Interview



Divide the class into pairs.

One learner receives a sheet containing information about the topic.

The other learner must interview their partner to discover what they will be studying or to elicit as much of the information as possible.



Press Conference



Begin the lesson by calling a press conference.

You have an announcement to make, and learners must take notes and then question you on what you have said.

Your press conference should be about the lesson, or something connected to what you are studying.



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