Time for Talking

Speaking and Listening Activities for
Lower Primary Students

Elizabeth Love & Sue Reilly

Illustrated by Heather Cull

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Contents

About This Book

Time for Talking supports teachers seeking to develop primary students' oral language skills. Nine key language areas are highlighted in separate chapters. Each area is introduced through an explanation of the importance of the skill, how to develop the skill in the classroom, how to reach the at-risk child, and assessment strategies. The core of *Time for Talking* is the fully developed activities related to each key language area.

Time for Talking is organized as a flexible resource. Individual or groups of activities should be chosen throughout the book to meet the unique requirements of each class. It is not meant to be used in a lock-step manner.

A resource section for children's literature as well as a bibliography of sources concludes the book.

Oral Language Development

The following introductory chapter will serve to provide a clear understanding of how *Time for Talking* addresses:

- the nature of oral language development
- reasons oral language is important
- ways to encourage oral language in the classroom

The Nature of Oral Language Development

Children learn to use oral language for communication by interacting with other more skilled language users. Parents and caregivers play a vital role in early language development as they encourage children to talk, respond, expand, and remodel their attempts to communicate. The importance of this *human environment* in which oral language learning takes place must not be overlooked. Much of language development takes place prior to a child starting school, but it continues to be developed and refined through the primary years, adolescence, and into adulthood.

The key components of oral language can be described in terms of:

- *content*—one must have something to say.
- *form or structure*—a way of organizing what is to be said.
- *use*—the adjustment of language according to purpose and context.

Content

Content refers to the meaning of language. Good communicators not only have a wide vocabulary range but they also understand how word meanings can change and how words relate to each other. *Semantics* covers this area of words and their related meanings.

Form or Structure

This area refers to the way in which language is organized. The smallest structural units of English are speech sounds or phonemes, which we articulate to produce words. This is called *phonology.* Word forms and endings are selected to mark features such as verb tense, plurality, gender, and possession. This area is called *morphology.* The ordering and patterning of words within a sentence is called *syntax,* which is important in conveying differences in meaning.

The basic sentence unit of English relies on the combination of noun and verb phrases. Words can be added, modified, and extended to produce more complex and coordinated sentences. For example,

The boy kicked the ball might become *The little boy with the red football jersey kicked the ball and then jumped for joy.* Rules of grammar are superimposed on sentences to convert them into their negative, question, or command forms. Any analysis of language needs to look beyond the sentence to connected discourse, in which the style, genre, and cohesiveness of language can be evaluated.

Language Use

A wide range of language skills are necessary for effective communication. For example, competent communicators know how to initiate and maintain a topic. They use body language and eye contact to sustain interactions. They know the rules for taking turns and interrupting. They are also aware that these features may need to be varied depending on the context and purpose of the interaction *(contextual understanding)*.

In each of these three components of oral language, two distinct but interwoven processes operate—comprehension and expression, which we call *Speaking and Listening*.

Current Thinking About Written and Oral Language

Further study into the uses of language has resulted in an alternative to the traditional, that is grammatical, way of looking at language. The application of a functional approach to language involves the premise that language is a social process that reflects our understanding about the world. The social context, the nature of what is being talked about, and the relationships and roles of those communicating will determine the appropriate language or text to be used. These texts may be in the oral or written *modes*.

All societies use genres such as *describing, reporting, storytelling*, and so on, to achieve social purposes for the group. Storytelling, for example, may have the purpose of amusing or entertaining others. The three key features of a genre are:

- It serves specific functions or purposes.
- It has a predictable organization or structure.
- It frequently uses certain types of language features.

Children are often familiar with language used for playing games, interacting socially, and participating in family activities. At school, however, they are introduced to a wider range of new texts and genres considered important for participation in school learning and community interaction. Some of these valued genres occur predominantly in the written mode, but many are common to both oral and written language. These are the focus of the speaking and listening activities in this book.

Why Oral Language Is Important

Although the technologies available today place increasing importance on written language, oral language remains the predominant mode of communication in our society. It is essential for social interaction and is used for purposes such as controlling others, expressing feelings, informing people, questioning, or obtaining what is needed.

Teachers are ideally placed to observe their students' language skills as they interact with adults and peers. However, the language demands of school and life go beyond those needed for successful conversation. Success in school necessitates the mastery of new, varied texts or language routines.

Oral language development is intimately connected with *cognition*. Language gives a child an opportunity to think out aloud. For example, *This puzzle piece might fit because it has blue on the end.* Once thought to be merely an egocentric stage of development, this *self talk* links words, deeds, and ideas, and facilitates planning and critical thinking. This ability to consciously attend to the way we think is often described as *metacognition* or *thinking about thinking*.

Language helps children integrate new information, ideas, and experiences into their existing framework of knowledge and beliefs. It also assists in making sense of what's new, so that we can change and expand what we already know. Furthermore, when we express our ideas, justify our opinions, and hear the responses of others, we are compelled to accommodate ideas and modify our thinking.

Oral language underpins *literacy*. Oral language is the primary language mode, and children's comprehension of written language across the curriculum will depend on their underlying oral language ability. Academic recognition is most often given to achievement in the written language mode. However, because children need to follow teacher instruction, understand and participate in oral discussions, and learn to ask questions, oral language will continue to be the most important avenue for gaining information in the classroom.

Early instruction in literacy assumes a complex and abstract level of language that may not be present when children begin school. Literacy learning requires *metalinguistic awareness* (reflection on language itself) as predictive skills are utilized in contextual reading, as possible word meanings are examined, and as spoken sounds are mapped onto the letters that represent them.

Language Continuum

Spoken and written language are often perceived as having different functions and occurring in different contexts. However, it is useful to consider both modes on a continuum between the informal conversational style of language at one end and a more formal and abstract literate style at the other. An oral presentation on Antarctica, for

example, involves different goals as well as different vocabulary, language complexity, and organization from those involved in an informal chat with Mom about party favors. These are at the opposite ends of the continuum. Similarly, in the written mode, a note left on the fridge would be at the informal end of the continuum, while an article for the school newspaper would be written in a more formal style.

Classroom activities should be presented along the continuum for both oral and written language modes. By introducing children to more oral, but literate activities, the connections between oral and written language will be strengthened, and students can make the transition from the concrete, casual style of language to the more complex and literate style found in reporting, explaining, and debating.

Encouraging Oral Language in the Classroom

At home and in preschool settings, where most early language learning takes place, oral language is a primary focus. However, for many school-aged children, the opportunities to engage in oral language activities for a variety of purposes is drastically reduced. In fact, in the past, many children have entered classrooms in which there was no planned oral language curriculum. Oral language was very much the poor relative of written language. Perhaps this occurred because teachers only viewed oral language in the casual conversational sense and assumed that their students were already skilled in this area.

Fortunately, oral language skills are receiving renewed emphasis. However, many teachers still feel more confident teaching and evaluating in the reading and writing modes than they do in the speaking and listening modes. They remain unsure of the links between oral language and literacy learning and so do not give oral language priority, nor program it with confidence. Without a true understanding of oral language and its connection to thinking, learning, and literacy, teachers find that their assessment of students' oral language skills is poorly framed. Too often their observations note only social language skills such as taking turns, maintaining eye contact, and the ability to follow simple directions. Other important language competencies in verbal fluency, organization, and coherence are largely overlooked. In eagerness to move through the curriculum, teachers must guard against omitting or diluting oral language opportunities.

Many teachers are increasing opportunities for oral language by embracing cooperative learning activities. Interaction with other children must always be valued, but the significance of interaction with adult models must not be forgotten. The teacher's own language use and style as well as responsiveness to children are powerful tools in the classroom.

Making Oral Language Happen

Teachers can enhance their students' oral language opportunities in the classroom by:

- verbalizing the value of oral language skills.
- scheduling a daily oral story time, regardless of the age or ability of the student group and following this with oral discussion time.
- communicating with parents about the role and importance of oral language.
- using parent help in the classroom for specific oral tasks as well as for reading tasks.
- programming set times for whole-group, small-group, or partner oral language activities.
- modeling these activities to students so that in time and with practice and support they can work independently.
- planning oral language activities across the curriculum.
- planning oral activities along the language continuum.
- providing a range of experience with oral language genres.
- showing how oral language can be represented in the written form.
- guiding students to understand the structure and organization of different types of text.
- preparing two or three suitable areas in the room that are recognized as *talking time* spaces.
- providing equipment for independent oral language activities.

Teacher Talk Makes a Difference

Teachers need to consider the proportion of time their language in the classroom is used for:

- teacher **talking** versus **listening.**
- teacher **talking** versus **student talking.**
- **telling** or directing versus **wondering** or posing hypotheses.
- **regulating** classroom behavior versus **communicating information.**
- asking **questions** versus **commenting.**
- asking **questions** related to **memory for facts** versus those stimulating **interpretation, analysis, comparison,** and **evaluation.**

Teachers who use their own oral language to advantage will:

- respond to students' contributions with genuine interest.
- allow time for students to respond before speaking again.
- extend all students with a variety of language activities.
- monitor individual student's understanding.
- monitor how frequently students ask questions and note the type of questions asked.
- repeat and rephrase to clarify students' messages.
- highlight the main points by using pauses, stress, or reminders.
- support directions with visual information, for example, gestures, and making diagrams.
- introduce new concepts one at a time.
- help students integrate new information by accessing prior knowledge.
- demonstrate enthusiasm for language by discussing word meanings and sharing puns, jokes, and poetry.
- model learning strategies and thought processes by *thinking out loud.*

About the Activities

The oral language activities in this book have been grouped into nine sections: *Storytelling, Describing, Recounting and Reporting, Active Listening, Following Directions, Making Vocabulary Connections, Asking Questions, Discussing and Reasoning,* and *Language Interaction.*

Each of these sections addresses:

- relevance to literacy,
- stages of development,
- classroom application,
- the at-risk child, and
- assessment.

Some sections represent important language texts or genres. For example, *Storytelling* and *Recounting and Reporting.* Others such as *Making Vocabulary Connections* and *Asking Questions* focus on language itself.

The activities in each section can either be used independently or integrated into the curriculum. Language goals for the students and teacher notes are provided at the beginning of each activity.

The activities provide examples, illustrations, and suggestions for immediate use. Some include reproducible blackline masters. Activities are aimed at students in kindergarten through second grade. Many, however, can be easily adapted or extended to encourage oral language skills in older students or to form the basis of written language tasks.

Most of the activities can be used individually, in pairs, small groups, or by the whole class. Many can be made into take-home resources.

Oral Language Assessment

Evaluation should be an integral part of the classroom to provide feedback to both teacher and student and to facilitate future planning. Teachers also need to know about the stages of development of oral language in order to facilitate their students' progression to the next stage.

Areas for Assessment

- attitudes toward communication
- use of oral language in different contexts
- the different purposes of oral language
- skills of spoken language, such as grammar, vocabulary, attentive listening, and so on
- ability to listen actively and process language
- strategies for language and thinking

Planned Language Observations

- Observe and keep records of the development of listening and speaking skills in a variety of contexts, such as partner work, reading conferences, news time, giving directions and presentations.
- Use a variety of evaluation methods—anecdotal records and checklists.
- Plan for students to keep their own self-assessment records.
- Tape recordings can be made of student presentations and of your own dialogue and class instruction to monitor the effectiveness of teacher talk.

Sample Plan for Speaking and Listening Activities

The following sample plan would be an appropriate way to use the activities in *Time for Talking* to supplement the class theme: Creepy Crawlies—Insects and Reptiles.

Note that all of the activities listed here are oral language activities from this book. In actual use, a few, but not all, of the activities explored here would likely be used during one theme.

Sample Activities

Language Focus: Storytelling

Wh Wheel, page 16
Read *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* and have students use the wheel to retell or act out the caterpillar's stomachache and how he eats for a week before becoming a cocoon.

Story Cue Cards, page 17
Make Story Cue Cards relating to a bug. Students work in small groups to create their stories.

Language Focus: Describing

Picture It, page 32
Have students each make a unique spider out of black paper to play a game called *Spot the Spider.* Line up finished spiders and have a student describe one of the spiders as other students guess which spider is being described.

Measure Up!, page 34
Go on a nature hike on school grounds to collect bugs. Order the bugs by size and compare them. For example, model for students by saying, *The spider is smaller than the beetle, but bigger than the ant.*

Language Focus: Recounting and Reporting

Is News New or Just Old Hat?, page 49
Brainstorm with students all of the places in school they think insects might hide. Then have students use the Show-and-Tell plan to report on what they found in one of these places.

A Team of Reporters, page 55
Have a team of reporters report on a field trip to a natural history museum or other outing where bugs are spotted.

Language Focus: Active Listening

Boo! Hiss! Hooray!, page 70
Choose a class bug and learn as much about it as you can. Then use the "Boo! Hiss! Hooray!" activity to have students respond to true and false statements you make about the bug. For example, A spider has six legs. *(Boo!)*

What Nonsense!, page 71
Make absurd statements about specific bugs that students have been learning about. Have them tell why the statement is silly and replace it with a true statement.

Language Focus: Following Directions

Tell the Alien, page 89
Partners take turns giving directions about how to move like a particular bug or reptile, such as a praying mantis, flea, snake, or lizard.

Make and Say, page 90
Give pairs of students matching sets of large and small colored circles, including one with a bug's face. Partners sit facing each other with a screen between them. One student explains to the other how to order the circles to make a bug. When the screen is removed, differences are observed and discussed.

Language Focus: Making Vocabulary Connections

Parts and Wholes, Page 105
Label specific parts of bugs on a picture. For example, *cocoon, pupa, feelers, casings, camouflage,* and *antennae*.

Colorful Language, page 110
Combine the name and movement or feel of creatures to create new similes. For example, *A ladybug waddles like a…, A snake might feel like a….*

Language Focus: Asking Questions

Yes or No?, page 128
Students think of two yes-no questions to ask a mosquito. Encourage them to ask one factual and one imaginative question. They can play *If a Mosquito Could Talk* by taking turns role-playing the mosquito and making up answers.

Thinking Web, page 135
Use a thinking web for finding out about a particular creature. Students can work in small groups to write their questions on one web, or the class can work together, recording questions on the board or on an overhead.

Language Focus: Discussing and Reasoning

What's the Use?, page 146
Have students brainstorm ways to get rid of flies. They might even invent a fly trap from a common object. They can collaborate to draw their inventions and explain how they work.

Let's Debate, page 154
Have students debate the following two points of view: *People should kill spiders* or *People should not kill spiders*.

Language Focus: Language Interaction

Body Language!, page 168
Give students a scenario including a bug or reptile, such as getting stung by a bee. Have students describe their actions and facial expressions as they report about themselves or a friend getting stung.

Act It Out, page 170
Have each student choose his or her favorite bug and act out how to persuade someone that it is the best bug in the world.

Storytelling

Relevance to Literacy

Relating experiences to another person is part of everyday communication. From our earliest experiences we are exposed to scripts of language interactions that accompany the routines and experiences in our daily lives. Story scripts enable us to represent our own experiences and participate in the real and imagined happenings of others.

Oral narratives are midway on the continuum of language between the casual oral conversation and the more formal language used in books. As such, they serve as a bridge to mastery of the more structured language of the classroom. Success with the narrative genre has ramifications for a student's response to literature, and later for understanding in the social sciences and appreciation of the causes and consequences of events in history. Furthermore, difficulty with this genre may lead to problems with expository thought and language. Spatial-logical thought in which physical properties of objects are explored, categorized, and contrasted first appear embedded within a child's ongoing story.

Narrative Organization

Narratives have a predictable structure. They usually contain

1 *Introduction—an orientation to the characters, place and time.*
2 *Initiating events.*
3 *Problem for one of the characters to resolve.*
4 *Response—character's reactions and motivations lead to a plan of action.*
5 *Resolution of the problem.*
6 *Evaluation of the significance of what has happened.*

Language Features

Storytelling is usually centered around and often features descriptive language. The events are recounted in the past tense and are linked to each other by the use of connecting words, such as those related to time and causality. Characters' dialogue is sometimes inserted into the text. The use of cognitive verbs, such as *think* and *decide*, reveals a character's motivation in the story. Accurate pronoun reference is vital for story coherence.

Oral Narrative Stages

Oral narrative ability has its origins in the young child playing the role of the spectator on life experiences and relating these experiences to others. The two-year-old child's first oral attempts at narrative may simply consist of several sentences loosely related to a particular event or object, but not related to each other. As skill develops, the sentences become more related to a central core. By four years of age, these stories show a chain of events that lead directly from one to another in sequence and the child begins to *sense* that a story has a structure. By the time children enter school, most have learned to manipulate central characters who perform and plan actions and participate in events over time.

Narratives in the Classroom

Children need practice in oral storytelling. With practice they will be able to move from the early stage of loosely constructed story language supported by gesture, facial expression, and shared knowledge to develop the more sophisticated and succinct language used in mature narratives. This is particularly important as oral storytelling overlaps many areas of the curriculum and provides a basis for story writing. Many early factual books incorporate stories into the text to facilitate understanding.

Oral stories need to be modeled by the teacher through oral storytelling and by highlighting their structure. This knowledge and experience help students gain an understanding of what they will later read in books. Even those who have a rich background in oral language will benefit from being made aware of what capable storytellers they are. With guidance, children can translate their knowledge to the next stage of development.

A child's success at school is partly determined by early exposure to a rich language environment that consistently demonstrates and values literacy. Children who have not experienced this before coming to school will need to participate in many more oral language experiences before they are ready to approach literacy learning. Listening to stories allows children to understand the power of language. Wells's (1986) longitudinal study of language development showed that children whose parents had read to them at home were better able to narrate an event, describe scenes, and follow directions at age seven. They were also better able to understand the teachers' use of language in the classroom.

The At-Risk Child

Telling a story or retelling a familiar tale is more than just simple recall. It involves a complex interplay of cognitive development, linguistic skills, and social context, as well as an understanding of the structural features of stories. The complexity of the child's story will vary from task

to task, depending on the purpose of the task and the audience. Rehearsal, the teacher's use of question prompts, and pictorial cues will also assist the child. Children generally provide a less sophisticated narrative with fewer details if they are familiar with the story.

Children without much prior exposure to storybooks may be disadvantaged in understanding the way stories can be organized. Furthermore, children from different cultural backgrounds may bring different experiences and utilize different structural organizations for their stories.

Children with delayed speech and grammatical development are an obvious at-risk group. Telling an effective story requires the use of particular language forms. Past and future verb tenses are needed, as are words to link ideas that help the listener (or reader) identify the time sequence of events. Greater flexibility in the use of complex sentence structures and pronoun reference is needed in more sophisticated stories to demonstrate how ideas or characters are related and how episodes and subplots are interwoven or embedded. Hence, some children with seemingly adequate language skills, as observed in conversation, do not have the linguistic complexity and knowledge of narrative genre structure to support their performance in storytelling.

Paying attention to the concept of time and to the key linguistic features of stories will help children tell more effective stories. Using the story framework from shared books will encourage many less confident children to attempt their own stories.

Assessment

Assessment of oral narrative ability should be based on more than one event, with special note being made of the child's level of independence from contextual support. Oral narrative tasks provide teachers with an opportunity to observe development of extended language. They can observe not only students' understanding of stories, but also their ability to organize language effectively. Storytelling is ideal for teachers to tape to assess language forms and communication skills with greater reliability.

Novice Speakers

- Recount personal experiences and discuss experiences shared with adults and peers.
- Sequence ideas in speech in intelligible ways.
- Use *and, then,* and *but* to link ideas in speech.

Observation Guidelines

Use the following guide when observing students at the novice level as they tell a story.

Structural Organization

Observe whether students:

- identify the main character
- give a sequence of events from a familiar story
- provide more detail of time and place in response to teacher question

Most children at this level are able to provide a simple sequence of narrative action. Some children will also include information about setting and a conclusion. Beginning at about age four, children start to include more explicit physical and mental states. By approximately age six, they describe motives for characters' actions.

Language Features

Observe whether students:

- provide a number of sentences
- use concrete vocabulary
- use temporal connecting words such as *and, then, when, first,* and *in the end*
- use causal connecting words such as *because, so,* and *else*

Most children at this novice level provide an oral style of narrative using a string of connecting words such as *and* and *then* to join and begin sentences. The simultaneous demands of developing content and plot often limit expressions of cause and effect, which can make their stories ambiguous. Around the age of six, narratives become causally coherent. However, some children may use cause-and-effect words such as *so* and *because* at the beginning of sentences, even when no causal connection is apparent.

Maturing Speakers

- Describe real or imagined events in logical sequence.
- Understand and experiment with more complex grammatical connecting words, such as *because, if,* and *after,* to sustain a topic and to express ideas.
- Recognize the beginning and end of a spoken text and try to organize own speech effectively.

Observation Guidelines

Use the following guide when observing students as they mature in their ability to tell a story.

Structural Organization

Observe whether students:

- provide the listener with orientation identifying the character, time, and place
- retell the main events in logical sequence
- present a resolution or plan to solve the problem

Most children at this maturing stage will provide a basic narrative, although a cause and an effect may still be missing. There is often some elaboration of the plot and character.

Language Features

Observe whether students:

- use and maintain past tense
- use pronouns clearly so that it is obvious to whom the words *he*, *she*, and *his* refer
- use appropriate connectors indicating time sequence: *and then*, *afterwards*, *later*, *at first*, *the next day*
- use logical connecting words that show the relationships between ideas: *because*, *so*, *although*, *unless*, and *if*
- use a range of descriptive words or phrases such as adjectives and adverbial phrases
- use dialogue
- use specific *book language* or literate language features such as *once upon a time . . ., suddenly,* or repetition for emphasis

Most children by the end of this stage of development will maintain tense consistency and use appropriate cohesion and pronoun reference. They will use a range of vocabulary as well as temporal connectors. Some will even begin to use a more formal literate style.

Draw Me a Story

Children use pictures to tell or retell key parts of a story in order.

Goals

This task helps students:

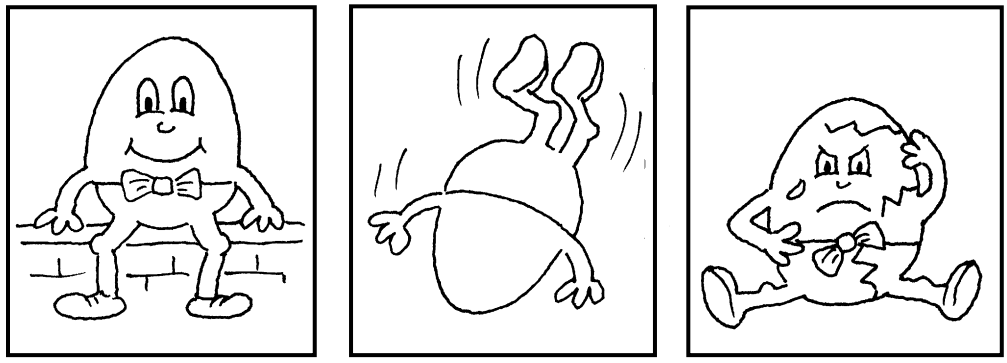
- identify important parts of a story
- show and tell about events in sequence
- use descriptive language
- present a story to an audience

Teacher Notes:

After reading or telling a story, have students represent it in pictures using one of the following activities.

1 Ask students to draw their favorite parts of a story and share it with the class by talking about their pictures.

2 Discuss story events in sequence. Children can draw the story in picture squares you provide to show the correct sequence. Key words that highlight time progression in the story can be provided as shown in the following examples.



First. . . Then. . . At the end. . .

3 Start a drawing on the chalkboard while students take turns telling what is happening, or what might happen next. Their suggestions are added to the picture. When children run out of ideas, add to the drawing to prompt children to extend their thinking. This will stimulate further ideas or events to include in the story.

Wh Wheel

Children use a game wheel to provide components for a story.

Goals

In this small-group language activity, children are asked to:

- identify key components of narrative structure
- use a framework to organize information in narratives
- arrange phrases and clauses according to the rules of grammar
- practice telling a story from pictures

Teacher Notes:

Simple stories can be generated by using *wh* questions, as in the following example.

Guide students to illustrate answers to these questions and use them to prompt an oral story. To assist students, use drawings or pictorial symbols next to the *wh* words.

Alternatively, provide paper with four columns, each headed with a *wh* question. Students can draw answers under each heading such as: *Who?* (baby), *Where?* (in the bathtub), and so on. Upon completion of their pictures, each student can read each picture to tell his or her own story. Some can be guided to conclude stories by drawing the end on the back of the paper. This activity may later progress to the creation of comics.

Other story-prompt words can be added when students become familiar with the basic *wh* words.

These prompts can also be written on index cards and illustrated.

- *Why did it happen?*
- *How did they feel?*
- *What did they think?*
- *What happened next?*
- *In the end . . .*

Story Cue Cards

Children produce stories from story element cue cards.

Goals

This task is primarily for students who are familiar with narrative structures. Students will:

- create scenarios by drawing on their knowledge of situations and potential problems
- demonstrate understanding of cause and effect
- think creatively and present a story to an audience

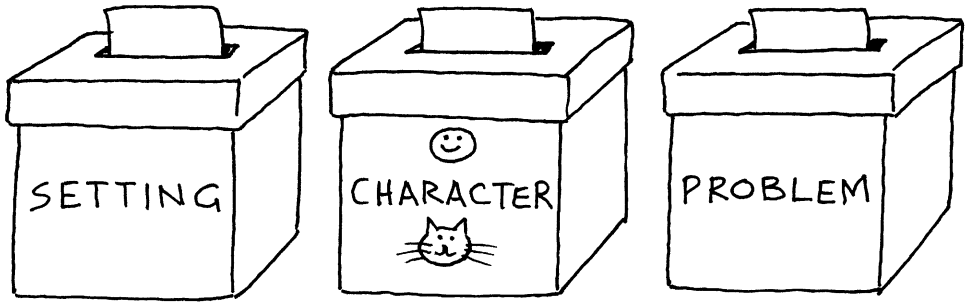
Teacher Notes:

Decorate three boxes with a motif or drawing to represent the story elements of **Character, Setting,** and **Problem.** Have students make their own stories by choosing a story starter selected from each of the three boxes. Ask students to create their own conclusions. Amusing or fanciful results are often obtained when a cue for each element is selected randomly from each box.

Alternatively, students may wish to select just one element. For example, a student can choose a character card to use as the stimulus for a story.

A third option might be for students to create the cards using the ideas in each box, or simply using the titles of each box to guide them.

To reinforce reading, write the cues on different-colored cards so that all of the character cards are one color, the setting another color, and the problems a third color. This will also make it easier to return cards to the proper boxes.



SUGGESTIONS:

Setting
- a cold windy day at the beach
- a blistering hot day at school
- a rocket trip to the moon

Character
- a little elephant with an extra long trunk
- a naughty girl with long ponytail
- a six-year-old boy who collects baseball cards

Problem
- run out of candy
- doesn't want to go to sleep at night
- lost homework

Let's Tell a Story

This is a joint storytelling activity.

Goals

This is a class activity to involve children in joint storytelling. Students will:

- listen actively and attentively
- draw on their previous knowledge of situations and potential problems
- think creatively
- apply rules of word order and grammar
- present ideas to an audience

Teacher Notes:

Begin telling a story by introducing the class to only one element of a story. For example, tell about the **time** in which the story is set, such as *Last weekend there was. . . ,* or tell about a **person** or **thing** in the story, such as *A six-month-old puppy was. . . .*

A student adds a part to the story before you interject another part. For example:

Teacher: Last weekend there was. . .
Student: a wild storm. . .
Teacher: and a little boy was very scared. His pet dog Snoopy. . .
Student: was barking really loud because he didn't like thunder. . .
Teacher: so the little boy. . .

Initially, encourage students to keep their contributions short and clearly defined so that the story has some sense of purpose and resolution. As students become more confident with the task and the story elements, they will be better able to provide and control more of the action of the story.

A Different Ending?

Students give stories different endings in this activity.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- engage in problem solving and creative thinking within a story framework
- share ideas orally with the class
- give opinions and justify them
- think of alternative solutions

Teacher Notes:

The starting point for this activity could be a story currently being read to the class. At some point after the character and problem have been revealed, ask students to think for a few minutes about how they think the story will be resolved.

Ask students to do one of the following:

1 Tell the new story ending to the class.
2 Report what they think will happen and why.
3 Draw a picture of what they think will happen and use this to support a verbal presentation.

An alternative is for students to provide a different ending to a well-known story. To prompt different endings, ask *what if* questions, such as *What if Jack couldn't find an ax to cut down the beanstalk?, What if Cinderella didn't want to marry the handsome prince?,* or *What if Alice in Wonderland didn't wake up?*

The whole story, with its different ending, could be acted out using puppets. An older student or a teacher could take the role of the narrator.

Story Starters

Students retell their past experiences or predict future personal events.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- recount personal experiences or expectations
- use appropriate grammar, for example, past or future tense, or adverbial phrases of time
- formulate questions relevant to the discussion

Teacher Notes:

Children often enjoy recounting their own experiences. This can be a starting point for telling simple narratives or reports. Give students an appropriate verbal starter, or write several on index cards and have each student choose one randomly.

Listeners can ask speakers relevant questions to encourage clarification or further description of the experience.

SOME SUGGESTED STORY STARTERS:

When I was a tiny baby. . .
Before I could talk. . .
When I was left with a baby-sitter. . .
On my first day at school. . .
Last vacation. . .
Yesterday at school. . .
Last night. . .
This morning. . .
Tomorrow I might. . .
At Christmas time I like to. . .
When I am a teenager I think I. . .
Next year I will. . .
In high school. . .

NOTE:

By adding different verb forms at the end of story starters, different opinions and language structures will be stimulated. Compare—

Yesterday I should have. . .
Yesterday I thought I. . .
Yesterday I wanted to. . .

Autumn Leaves

Students use word cues to help them create and sequence a story.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- understand connecting words that show relationships between ideas
- engage in joint story construction
- discuss alternative plots
- participate in cooperative language interaction and negotiation

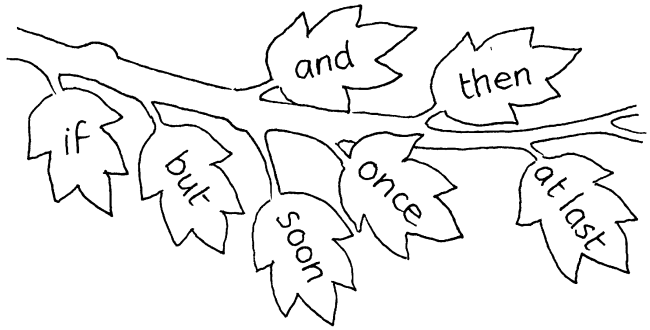
Teacher Notes:

Good storytellers know how to use language to relate ideas and to show transition sequences in their stories.

1 Demonstrate the role of transition words in sentences. For example, *We ate our breakfast and <u>then</u> we brushed our teeth.*

2 Highlight transition words when reading stories.

3 Write the words below on cardboard cutouts of autumn leaves and attach them to a large cardboard tree. Use them to guide students to create a collaborative story. Teacher or student begins the story by selecting an appropriate starter prompt from the tree. For example, *Once upon a time there was a terrible storm. . .*



4 Another student makes a selection and continues the story using that particular transition word as the start of the next idea. For example, *and the little girl and her dad were hurrying home across the park. . .* The story continues in this manner until it is complete.

Suggested transition markers for novice storytellers are largely temporal connectors:

once	*and*	*then*	*when*	*but*	*at last*
last week	*soon*	*after that*	*later*	*and then*	*in the end*

Further transition markers for maturing storytellers include:

because	*finally*	*while*	*quickly*
however	*as I was*	*so*	*just then*
if	*all of a sudden*	*immediately*	*after a while*

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Give older students a selection of transition words. Ask them to include some of these words in an oral or written story.

A Math Story

Students listen to a story and represent the problem with numbers.

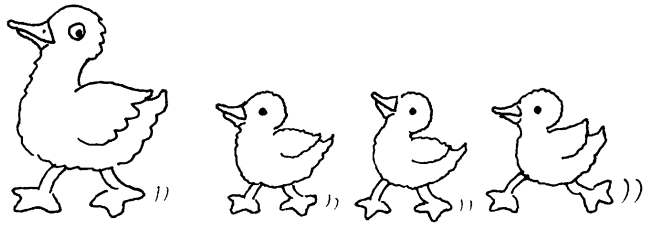
Goals

In this activity students will:

- link number concepts and language in the form of a story
- demonstrate their understanding of language used in math story problems by dramatizing number stories

Teacher Notes:

Demonstrate how a sum can be retold in an oral story by reading the stories given below and highlighting the numbers as they correspond to the key stages in the story. Students play the role of the ducks and act out the math story problem. As some students act out the story, others hold up cards with the corresponding numbers and math symbols in the correct order, left to right. Stories can be simplified for younger children.



Try this slightly more difficult story.

Once upon a time there was a mother duck and she had three ducklings. She took them down to the pond for a swimming lesson. All of the little ducks swam close to their mother. They heard a croaking sound coming from somewhere in the long grass near the edge of the pond. One little duck went off to see what could be making such a loud noise and didn't come back. It began to get cold, so mother duck decided to take her ducklings home. They were nearly back home when the mother duck noticed she did not have all her ducklings.

"Quack! Quack! Where are you, little duck?"

At last the curious little duck noticed that the lesson was over. He heard his mother quacking and he saw that his mother and the other ducklings were nearly out of sight.

"Quack! Wait for me," he said as he joined the others. Now they were all together at last. 1 + 3 – 1 + 1 = 4

NOTE:

You may wish to break the story into a number of smaller, simpler sums. For example,

1 + 3 = 4 (mother duck and 3 ducklings)
4 – 1 = 3 (1 duck wanders off)
3 + 1 = 4 (duckling returns)

Story Alive

Students tell a story or event from another person's or animal's perspective.

Goals

Based on students' involvement with a class pet, they will:

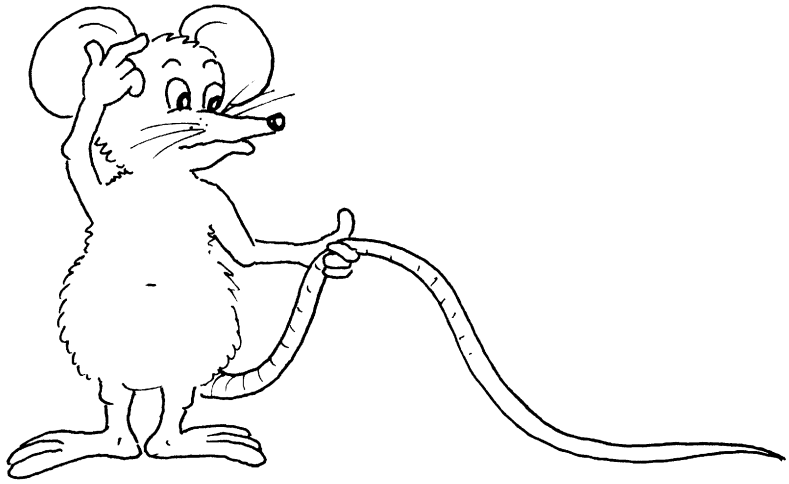
- talk about things living in their environment
- develop a story plot based on real and familiar events
- see another's perspective
- understand a model of imaginative story making

Teacher Notes:

Children often enjoy talking about living creatures. A mouse, snail, or other small manageable animal can be introduced into the classroom as a pet. It can also become a focus for oral storytelling. Stories can begin at a simple level, such as describing the animal's actions or things about it that the children can physically observe. "Wh Words" (see page 16) can be used to assist reluctant talkers. More imaginative language and tales can be triggered by using some of the prompts suggested below.

SUGGESTED PROMPTS FOR IMAGINATION:

- Last night Squeak discovered that someone had left the door of his cage open. . .
- During school time Squeak loved the company of the children. But at night he was tired of being all alone. . .
- Squeak was sick of eating grain—he was determined to try a real school lunch. . .
- Vacation was fast approaching. Squeak hoped and hoped that he would be able to return to Amanda's house. Last time he went. . .
- When Squeak was three months old, a strange thing happened. His tail began to grow—a centimeter each day!



Story Frame

Students participate in building a simple, amusing story by using a folded paper framework.

Goals

In this activity, students will:

- be introduced to a simple story framework
- create a simple story sequence
- build awareness of sentence structure through substitution of grammatical forms
- appreciate humor through recognizing absurdities

Teacher Notes:

This activity is similar to the party game where participants take turns adding parts of a sentence to generate an amusing vignette, which is then read aloud to the group.

Give each student a piece of paper. At the top they each write the name of a male person. This could be their own name or a fictitious name, such as Ratman. They each fold their own paper over to cover the written word and then hand the paper to the next person. The second person writes the word *met*, folds the paper, and passes it on. The third person writes a female's name, and so on. With each turn a new component is added using the following framework. Examples are then read to the class. This task can also be made into a purely oral activity.

(Male name)	Ratman
	met
(Female Name)	Cinderella
in/at	a spaceship
He said	"Do you like to dance?"
She said	"I haven't got any money."
So they	started a hamburger shop

Once the stories are completed, children can open the papers they now hold and read each one. Have them ask themselves whether the stories make sense. If necessary, continue with: *How can you change your story to make sense?*

Children can also identify what is funny about their stories or change one line in each story to make it funnier.

Further story structural components can be used, for example,

- Time. . .
- Place. . .
- Female. . .
- Saw. . .
- Male. . .
- Action. . .
- She said. . .
- But he wanted. . .
- So they finally. . .

Bring It to Life

Students create a fantasy characterization and story based on concrete objects.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- create a fantasy characterization and share it with others
- demonstrate their knowledge about story structure
- tell a story to an audience
- provide alternative resolutions to problems

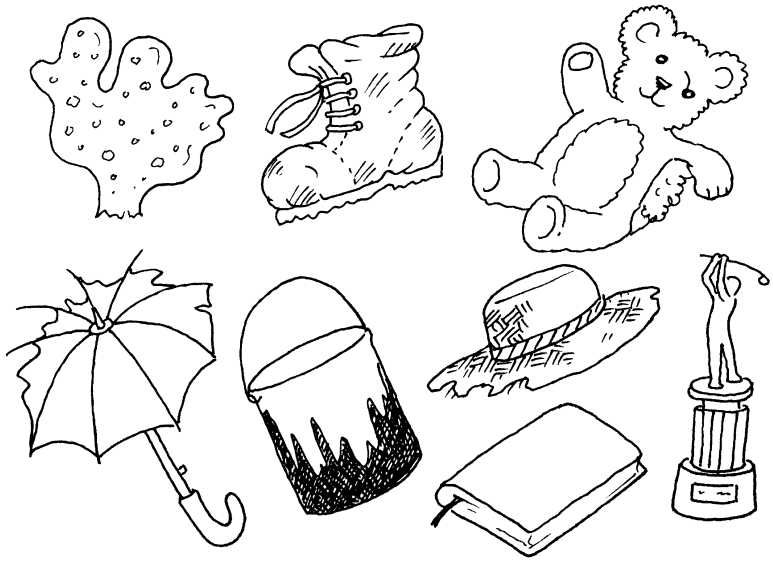
Teacher Notes:

In this activity an object becomes the focus of oral storytelling. The class names the object—for example, *Fred, the feather duster*—and enters into the fun of bringing it to life.

To help establish the character, ideas can be shared on

- where it was born
- family members and friends
- where it has spent its life up until now
- its job
- its good points
- how old it is
- its bad points
- where it was born

Model a story using the prompts *who?, where?, what happened?*, and the solution.



SUGGESTED OBJECTS:

- an object owned by a child in the group
- a sea sponge
- an old hiking boot
- a blackened pot
- a worn teddy bear
- a tattered straw hat
- an old broken umbrella
- an old family book
- Grandfather's golf trophy

Solve My Problem

Students build a story around an inanimate object's efforts to solve a problem.

Goals

This activity will extend creative thinking by requiring students to:

- see events from an alternative perspective
- think of alternative solutions to resolve a story problem
- work together to tell a collaborative story

Teacher Notes:

This storytelling activity centers around inanimate objects. Provide the name of the object and a problematic situation for students, who decide on the ways in which the story will unfold to resolve the problem.

1. Provide the name of each object and its problem on an individual card. Students may enjoy illustrating them.
2. Read aloud one character problem for the whole class to tackle. Alternatively, students can choose a card and work in pairs to make up their story solution.
3. Ask students to explain or act out their story solutions.
4. Record the children's efforts on audiotape or videotape. These can be enjoyed by the class or used by the teacher to evaluate language progress.

SUGGESTED "CHARACTERS"

1. Silvester, the odd sock, was left in the bottom of the laundry basket. All Silvester wanted to do was to find his mate. . .

2. Clop, the used horseshoe, lay in the paddock near the dam. Clop felt useless. . .

3. Shag, the worn-out toothbrush, hated his new job of cleaning the bathroom tiles. He longed for his old friends—the teeth and the gums.

4. Press, the pencil, was extremely short. She kept breaking and being taken to visit Gobble, the sharpener. It just had to stop. . .

5. Gotcha, the flyswatter, hung on the hook in the corner of the kitchen. He was uncontrollably jealous of the bright shiny can of bug spray that appeared on the shelf after yesterday's shopping trip. . .

Improvisation

Students will use improvisation to build language and cognitive skills.

Goals

Improvisation integrates cognitive and linguistic skills. This activity requires students to:

- draw on past experiences
- participate in group discussion and negotiate roles
- adjust the clarity, volume, and pace of speech for different speaking roles
- use language and drama skills to entertain others

Teacher Notes:

Dramatization of a story can help children interpret events and character roles. However, in improvisation, students move beyond interpretation to create their own *texts*. Initiate improvisation by giving students a sentence or phrase to incorporate into their own story, for example, *But he only wanted two of them….*

Improvisation generates more verbal language than most other activities. It is important to allow adequate time for collaboration and rehearsal. Also, some further support and guidance my be needed. For example, you may need to provide and describe an appropriate *setting* for a particular improvisation.

Write the following guidelines on the board. Encourage students to include these features in their own improvisations.

IMPROVISATION GUIDELINES

Include the following:
Setting (Time and Place)
Characters
Plot (Include a Problem)
Problem/Resolution
Dialogue (Include Suggested Phrases)

SUGGESTED PHRASES

I thought you were my dad.
This isn't as easy as I thought.
We don't seem to have a spare tire.
He doesn't remember.
Hurry up, she's coming.
That dog sure does look big.
. . . and now it's starting to rain.
And this is my new pet.
Excuse me! I've lost my ball.
But it wasn't my fault, Mrs. Jones.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Ask students to improvise on nursery rhymes and stories. Or, improvise situations such as deciding which toy to buy in a shop, trying to keep a secret about a surprise party, and so on.

Describing

Relevance to Literacy

Descriptive language is increasingly important to classroom success since it enables students to learn about things they have not experienced firsthand. Using descriptive language can trigger creativity and imagination. Descriptive language also helps in reporting perceptions and experiences in a comprehensive manner. In later school years, students use descriptive language to record information in written form for themselves and others. Children need to develop oral proficiency in describing in order to develop critical areas in math and science. For example, accurate description of attributes assists comparisons and categorization.

Mastery of descriptive language encompasses much more than using a wide variety of adjectives. Effective talkers select the most relevant or salient information to tell. They organize the content in a logical way and choose vocabulary to impart precise meaning. For example, using *tartan* versus *plaid*, or *three* rather than *some*.

Stages of Development

Children's first descriptors are mostly adjectives that demonstrate their emerging understanding of the world. The descriptive words are closely related to the development of basic concepts of size, color, shape, and so on. Words that describe verbs (adverbs such as *fast* and *slow*) appear in children's speech at about three years of age. Adverbs with *-ly* endings appear much later. An important development in grammatical complexity occurs when the child begins to flesh out descriptions of things and events by using expanded verb and noun phrases. For example, *The little brown dog was barking*. Complex sentence development allows several ideas to be combined into more concise sentences, such as *The little brown dog* ***with the broken leg*** *was barking* ***ferociously***.

Children's first descriptive analogies are very concrete. Differences are easier to describe than similarities. A major development during the school years is the understanding and use of more abstract figurative language. By eight, children realize that words may have more than one meaning. For example, they begin to realize a word such as *sweet* may have a psychological meaning applied to a personality as well as the sensory meaning of taste.

Students who continue to struggle using descriptive language in the intermediate years often lack organization. Oral language work in the early stages of oral development can help students internalize and organize their thoughts better for speaking, which will improve their later writing. Webs and outlines can be used to develop both descriptive writing and speaking.

Organization of Descriptive Language

Describing in the oral mode is often an incidental part of general discussion. It is rarely directly taught in primary classrooms except during math or science. The structure of the describing genre is quite predictable, usually following this sequence:

1 Introduction
2 Details
3 Concluding statement (optional)

Language Features

Specificity is the key to descriptive language. Similes and metaphors may be used, but these and other literary techniques are more common in written language. In extended discussion or explanation, description is often embedded within the text and therefore assumes a greater grammatical competence. For example, *The boy* ***who I played football against last Saturday*** *said hello to me on the street.*

Visualizing and Verbalizing

When listening to descriptions and explanations or during reading, students are assisted if they can form a visual image or *gestalt* (whole) in their minds. As additional information is received, this image is modified and refined. A number of the descriptive activities in this book utilize the visualizing and verbalizing techniques of Nanci Bell (1991). The ability to visualize language supports language comprehension and promotes the link between language and thought. Visualizing and verbalizing assists both the speaker and the listener to focus on the topic.

The goal of the visualizing and verbalizing process is to use key words to develop an imagined *gestalt*. Initially, provide a picture and show one of the key word cards such as *What?* to prompt visualization and verbalization. (See page 32.) Students then describe *what* the picture is. Use more key word cards such as *size, color, shape,* and *number* to help students expand on relevant details. Eventually students can progress to using key word cards such as *where, background, perspective, mood, when,* and *sound*.

Questions can provide students with helpful feedback about the precise quality of their descriptions. Ask questions that require students to make choices to clarify their descriptions. For example, when asking about size, you might say, *What should I see in my mind? Is it a little like a baby? Is it your size?*

In the Classroom

Teachers need to make time for children to describe the patterns and distinctive features of objects around them as well as to compare and classify them. Description is as important in language arts programs as in the math and science curriculums.

Children's understanding and use of analogies, such as similes and metaphors, can be extended by introducing poetry, jokes, puns, and so on. These give children the opportunity and license to use language creatively.

The At-Risk Child

Children with deficient vocabularies often have problems with description because they lack the range of subtleties in word meanings to clearly identify features and attributes of things or events.

Some children have a problem identifying the main idea of what they perceive, so they focus on peripheral details. Even if concepts are understood, they may have difficulty in using language to demonstrate that knowledge. In some instances, children with language and learning difficulties have a significant delay in retrieving words or labels from their memory store in order to express ideas. Their descriptive language is less precise, more open to ambiguity, and therefore less effective. There may be difficulty with the precise language descriptors in math and limited understanding and use of the language of poetry and humor.

Teachers and parents often assume that a talkative student has the skill of descriptive language. However, closer inspection often reveals that expressive language abilities and their conscious application to particular tasks are inadequate for learning. Attention to descriptive language skills is extremely important for the at-risk child.

Assessment

The child's ability to describe can be noted in several contexts, such as "Show and Tell," math, story discussion, and science observations.

Most novice storytellers are able to provide concrete descriptions of the characteristics and use of an object. As they mature, their descriptions contain information of the overall category (for example, *animal*) and specific characteristics that differentiate the referent from others in that category. For example, *It's wild . . . um, it's not usually a pet, and it's very quick and clever 'cause it can swing through the trees hanging on with its legs and long tail.*

Novice Speakers

- Report to a group on personal knowledge about a topic.
- When prompted, make relevant contributions in class, group activities, and discussion.

Maturing Speakers

- Present information on a known topic to a group with some attention to adequacy and relevance of information.
- Sometimes use similes to make speech more effective.
- Plan spoken descriptions.

Observation Guidelines

It is important to note the variety of descriptors children use and how abstract or how concrete they are. The level of teacher support and prompting needed should also be noted.

Generalized Description

- Uses concrete stereotyped attributes such as color, shape, and number.
- Important defining features may be ignored.
- Teacher prompts and extensions needed.

Specific Description

- Uses a greater variety and more abstract criteria, such as location, attributes, and function.
- Vocabulary is explicit and accurate.
- May add explanations and definitions at listener's request.

Expanded Description

- Parts are expanded in more detail.
- Description is ordered, linked, and cohesive.

(Adapted from *First Steps, Oral Language Resource Book,* Education Department of Western Australia, 1994.)

Picture It

Students use visual imagery to assist them with the comprehension and expression of language.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- observe details in pictures and systematically describe them
- express themselves clearly and concisely
- visualize what others describe
- ask questions to clarify a message and gain more information
- summarize the image formed at the conclusion of the description

Teacher Notes:

Present the following five key structure words: *what, size, color, shape,* and *number.* (See page 29.) Demonstrate how a speaker can use these prompts to describe something and how a listener can use them to ask for more information.

Tell students that they will work in pairs to describe pictures to one another. Show a picture to one person in each pair and have them describe it to their partners, using the key word cards as prompts. Encourage partners to form a picture in their minds. For example, a child describing a car might say:

What:	It's a car.
Size:	This car is a toy about the size of a matchbox.
Color:	It's a dark green, but the hood is red.
Shape:	I don't know what kind of car it is, but it is pointy at the front and the trunk is round and sort of pushed in.
Number:	There's only one car in the picture.

SIMPLE VISUALIZATION ACTIVITIES:

(Refer to the "Picture It" blackline master on page 41.)

1 **Repeat the Description**

One partner describes a picture using the key words above. After listening to the complete description, the listener repeats the description. Both students score a point each time one of the aspects of the object is described. To score points, a small counter can be placed on the appropriate part of the picture. This promotes cooperative rather than competitive learning and requires both students to visualize. The students work as a team by giving each other the best possible descriptions so that the visual pictures formed in the listeners' minds are as close as possible to the actual picture used by the speakers.

For example, to describe an old boot, the interchange might be:

Speaker: *This boot is really big, maybe about size ten. It has a huge tongue that looks all chewed and the lace is only threaded through half the holes. It is brown, but it's very dirty and worn out on the toes.*

Listener: *There's an old boot—it's really huge and sort of worn out on the end.* (3 points)

2 **Question the Speaker**
The speaker tells his or her partner what the pictured object is in a single word or short phrase. The listener must ask questions of the speaker to obtain a detailed description of the picture. The key words can be used to prompt the formation of questions. Give students practice asking questions that require a choice. For example, *Is the dog's tail long or short?*

3 **Draw from Description**
Use one of the preceding activities, but have the listener draw what he or she hears. The picture is then compared to the original picture. Note that the comparison should not be judged on artistic ability but used as a way of assessing how many features were transferred from the speaker to the listener.

COMPLEX PICTURE ACTIVITIES:

Use the additional structure words *(where, movement, mood, background, perspective, when,* and *sound)* to assist children's descriptions of finer details in more complex pictures.

Measure Up!

Students learn to use comparative language.

Goals

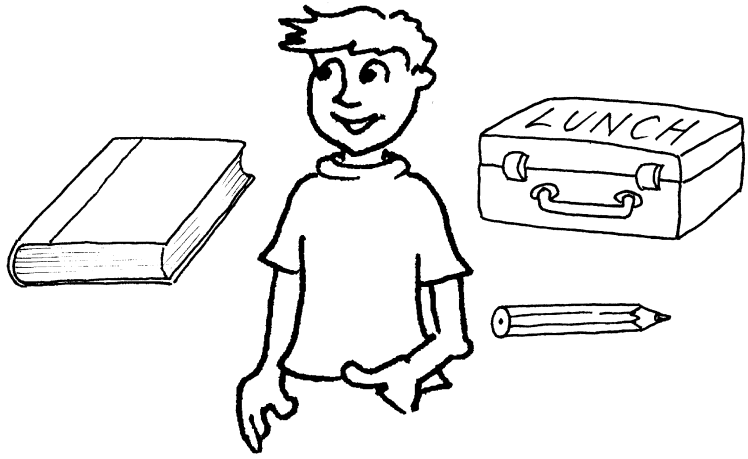
In these activities students will:

- verbalize concepts of size, shape, height, and mass
- use comparative language
- apply prior knowledge of the world to explain comparisons and contrasts
- practice sentence cloze

Teacher Notes:

ACTIVITY 1

Select an object in the classroom and demonstrate how to make comparisons. For example, *This book is bigger than the pencil but not as big as me. This book is as big as Toby's lunchbox*. Use the picture below to demonstrate how these comparisons can be recorded visually.



Students select another object and explore the room to find comparisons. Once they are familiar with this task, ask them to select an object to draw (one that is in the room) and describe the comparative relationships using some of the phrases below as prompts.

- *is bigger than*
- *is not as big as*
- *comes up to*
- *is almost as big as*
- *could hide in*
- *is the shape of*
- *would fit in*
- *is smaller than*
- *is heavier than*

ACTIVITY 2

Use the spinner provided on page 117 to play a game to prompt comparative descriptions. Write some of the phrases listed above on the segments of the spinner, such as *is bigger than, is not as big as*, and so on. Then have each student choose a person or thing not present in the classroom, such as a dog, Dad, bed, school bag, sister, tennis racquet, or school bus. Students take turns spinning and using the resulting phrase to describe the chosen person or object to the class.

The student continues spinning and describing until the person or object is guessed. If the spinner lands on the same phrase more than once, the child describing can choose to give a new description using the phrase or spin again.

Eyewitness

This activity gives students the opportunity to give an eyewitness description of a given character.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- use descriptive language
- appreciate that physical expressions and appearance can be used to infer motives or actions
- provide details to support their observations

Teacher Notes:

Begin by showing a color picture of a person from a magazine or book. Allow the class to describe this person. Also discuss what we might infer from the picture about someone's feelings and likely behavior. Extend this activity by drawing attention to the illustrations of book characters and how we often interpret their emotions and likely actions from the physical characteristics shown. Discuss which information is fact and which was inferred.

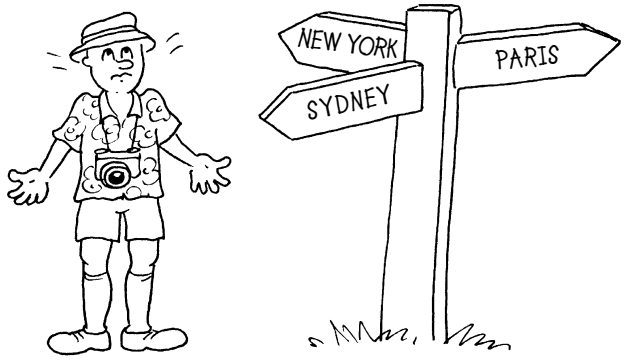
SUGGESTED INTRODUCTION:

Tell students: *Imagine you are the only witness to an event, such as a robbery at the bank. The police need your eyewitness description of the person you saw at the scene so that he or she can be questioned. Think about how this person looked and felt.*

Make a chart for classroom display to remind students about the following:

Age—approximate
Size—height, build
Color—hair, eyes, clothing, shoes
Facial expression—smiling, frowning
Stance/Posture—walking, bending, crouching, and so on

Give one character card to each student or pair of students (see BLM on page 42). They should draw this person paying particular attention to the features mentioned. A verbal description is then given by the student, including how the character may be feeling. Encourage students to think about what helped them come to this conclusion about the character. If the student says the person looked tired, ask how they know this. Display the pictures on the wall, together with their written labels to form a portrait gallery. These characters can later become the characters for students' written stories.



Making Faces

These activities help students use descriptive language.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- brainstorm descriptive vocabulary
- respond through drawing to specific descriptions of facial features
- use descriptive phrases
- follow instructions incorporating similes and metaphors
- use metaphors

Teacher Notes:

ACTIVITY 1

Brainstorm descriptive vocabulary. For example, *Jenny has short brown hair. Tommy has straight black hair. Susie has pierced ears*.

Prepare children for a drawing task by highlighting descriptive language. Select five students who have some features in common such as hair or eye color, and give an accurate description of one of them. The class identifies the student from your description. Alternatively, examine photographs and pictures from books or magazines. Ask students to take turns giving accurate physical descriptions of the people in the photographs.

ACTIVITY 2

Ask students to draw a large oval shape on paper. Model accurate descriptions so that the class can draw a distinctive face. Suggest features such as spiky hair, dimpled chin, round eyes, puffy or thin lips, wrinkled forehead, freckled nose, bushy eyebrows, bald head, long moustache, dreadlocks, and square glasses. Compare and discuss class results.

Students can also take turns providing information for this activity.

ACTIVITY 3

Use metaphorical language, as suggested below, to describe the features of a face. Students must listen to the description you give and draw these features to complete the faces on their papers. Lead a discussion about the characters that have been created. For example, *What kind of person have you created? What makes you think so? Can we interpret feelings from these facial features?*

SOME SUGGESTED SIMILES:

Nose:	Pointy like a spear, like a red rubber ball, long like Pinocchio's
Cheeks:	Fiery, sunken in like a cave, puffed up like a balloon
Chin:	Square and hard like set concrete
Ears:	Like a pixie, floppy like Dumbo
Forehead:	Oozing sweat, wrinkled like scrunched-up paper
Eyebrows:	Thick like a forest, as thin as a pencil
Eyes:	Like slits, as big as saucers, small and roundlike buttons
Lips:	Drawn up tight like a string bag, heart-shaped, wide open like a cave
Teeth:	Like knives, like pearls, sharp like daggers

Set the Scene

Students pretend they are set designers and describe a scene just prior to action described in a story, play, or film.

Goals

In these activities students will:

- use descriptive language
- ask comparative questions
- work collaboratively
- integrate information
- provide a descriptive recount of the scene to the class

Teacher Notes:

These activities use the technique called "visualizing and verbalizing," conceived by Nanci Bell. (See page 29 for further details.)

ACTIVITY 1

Display key words such as *what, size, number, background,* and *when* from the visualizing and verbalizing method so they can be seen by all the class members. Select a scene from those listed below. The class should work together using the key words to help them visualize the scene just prior to the event or action. When stuck, the teacher or another student could ask other questions to elicit more specific information. For example,

Scene: a city street **Event:** a car accident

You saw a truck. Was it large or small? **(size)**

You said there were cars entering the intersection. How many were there? **(number)**

Was there a crowd on the street or just a few people? **(background)**

What time of day was it—morning or afternoon? **(when)**

Provide verbal summaries as this clarification progresses to make sure that the whole class is forming a similar picture in their minds and, at the conclusion, summarize the scene just before the event takes place.

ACTIVITY 2

Ask a pair of students to select a scene and describe (verbalize) it to the class. Model your own visualizing process by drawing the picture you have formed in your own mind on the blackboard. Ask specific questions when necessary to get more specific descriptions. Finally, call for volunteers to recount the description. Continue to ask probing questions and modify your blackboard drawing in response to the description of the event.

SUGGESTED SCENES

Scene	Event
The school swimming pool	The trophy presentation
A country railway station	A large sum of money is found
Your local library	A fire breaks out
A cricket match in the schoolyard	A broken window
At home packing for a trip	Lost tickets

Five Senses

In this activity, students describe situations in terms of their sound, taste, appearance, smell, or feel. In doing so, they are stimulated to use similes and metaphors.

Goals

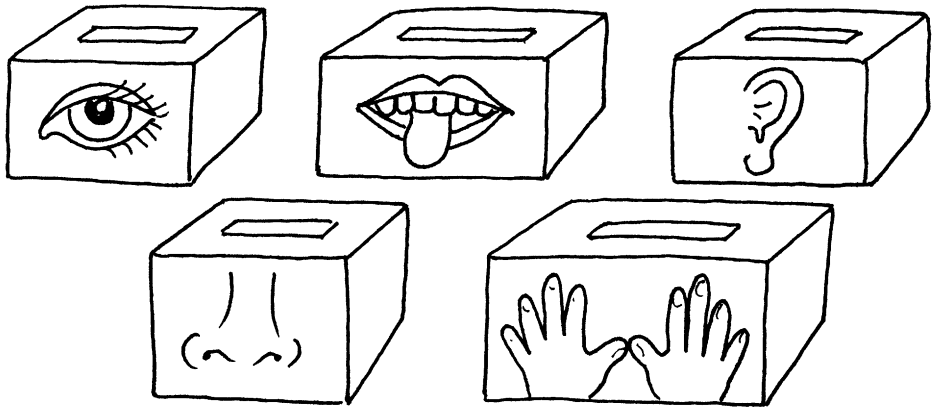
In this activity students must:

- picture, imagine, or recall sensations associated with past experiences
- use descriptive language, including metaphors and similes

Teacher Notes:

Often, the demand for students to describe their sensations in highly descriptive metaphorical language first occurs in written language. Students can gain a sense of mastery over the words they use through opportunities to experiment with descriptions in oral language. In speech, it is legitimate to revise, expand, and improve upon efforts, while students may feel more constrained by the finality of a written product.

1 Talk about the different senses and explain that this activity is about describing what the senses feel in words. Make a box with compartments representing the five senses, symbolized by drawings, as illustrated below.



2 Use suggested topics from the next page by writing them on cards and allocating them to the correct senses. Divide the class into sense groups and ask a student from each group to select a card. Students then explore what the particular situation reminds them of or explain what it is like.

3 Accept sound effects and adjectives, but try to extend the responses by providing prompts such as *it is just like… or it reminds me of….* In addition to similes, demonstrate metaphors in which you can actually say that a given situation is something else. For example, *Sipping boiling hot tomato soup is licking fire.*

SUGGESTED TOPICS:

Sound

How would you describe the sound of…

- masking tape being ripped off the roll
- sucking up the last of a milk-shake through a straw
- a cat's purr
- unwrapping a candy
- rain falling on a tin roof

Feel

How would you describe the feel of…

- patting an elephant
- picking up slugs
- squeezing jelly between your fingers
- picking thistles
- your head after you shaved your hair off

Sight

How would you describe the look of…

- shark's teeth
- the skin on the face of a ninety-year-old man
- the muscles of a weightlifter
- a spider web with dew on it
- a dark storm cloud

Taste

How would you describe the taste of…

- an uncooked chocolate cake
- icing made from salt instead of sugar
- grubs in dirt
- milk that is too old
- a very hot curry

Smell

How would you describe the smell of…

- running shoes after a marathon
- hay
- the garbage dump
- freshly baked bread
- shampoo

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

With students, make a *Sense Book* using a selection of their most imaginative descriptions.

Paint the Words

Students select and explain a color to associate with certain experiences and feelings.

Goals

This activity focuses on the ability of students to:

- visualize a given situation
- identify feelings and associate them with color
- explain and justify choices

Teacher Notes:

Talk with students about colors and how they can cause people to feel different emotions. People may explain that they feel red with a hot temper or black because of a dark mood. Encourage students to let their imaginations flow as they select a color to associate with one of the descriptions listed below. Remind them that the color selection should be a spontaneous one. They should listen to the description, react to it, and select the color. Allow students time to consider the reasons for their choices and ask them to share their views with others.

You can organize students in a variety of ways. Give one description to the whole class and group students according to which colors they choose. Within each color group students can share their reasons for their color selections. Alternatively, students may work in small groups or in pairs.

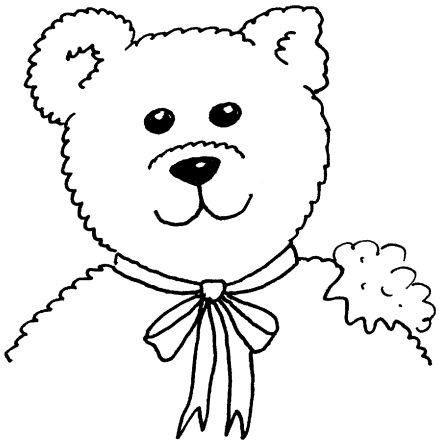
SUGGESTIONS FOR DESCRIPTIONS:

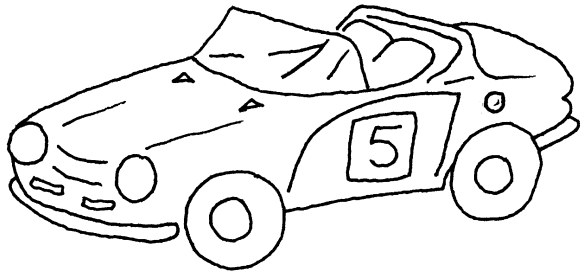
- a stomachache
- the zoo
- deafness
- rain
- holidays
- early morning
- dreams
- losing your favorite teddy
- not wanting to get out of bed to go to school
- wishing you had a bike like your friend's

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Reverse the activity described above by providing students with color words as a stimulus for descriptive language. For example, *red—fire licking at the tree top or my knees after falling off my skateboard.* Some language elicited from color words could form the basis of a class poem.

Picture It





See also: "Picture It" on page 32.

Eyewitness

A strict baby-sitter.

A small lost child.

A bad-tempered tennis player.

A generous grandfather.

A spoiled princess.

An unpopular umpire.

A confused tourist.

A sweaty dad.

A patient shopkeeper.

An injured football player.

See also: “Eyewitness” on page 35.

Recounting and Reporting

Relevance to Literacy

Recounting and reporting occur naturally in many everyday situations at home and on the playground. Although similar to storytelling, the main purpose of **recounting** is to tell what we did or what events took place. It often involves telling about the order in which these events occurred. Recounting is a form of communication that is very common in children's oral and early written texts. "We use recounting to keep the past alive and help us to interpret experience" (Derewianka, 1990).

Reporting involves telling facts or describing some aspect of the world. For example, telling Mom or Dad what happened at school or telling a friend about a hobby or interest are both considered types of reporting.

Both recounting and reporting are closely related to the describing genre. In the early grades, many language activities are based on first-hand experiences. Teaching strategies often help children organize their knowledge and experiences so they can be shared with others through reporting.

In upper grades, students are expected to retain information from teacher lectures. As students become familiar with recounting and reporting, their ability to follow teacher instruction, which often includes recounting and reporting, will also improve. Students should be given many opportunities to rehearse and modify oral presentations before they are asked to write and edit written presentations. This early oral organization will help them improve their written communication.

Recount Organization

Recounting includes:

1 *Orientation*—topic and some relevant background information
2 *Sequence of events*—usually in chronological order
3 *Some personal comments*—often included

There are three types of recounts.

1 *Personal*—such as an oral anecdote of a personal experience
2 *Factual*—such as recording the details of a particular event, for example a science experiment
3 *Imaginative*—such as taking the part of another person, a book character, or historical figure and giving details of events

Language Features

The language used in recounting involves the use of past-tense action verbs. Ideas are often linked with expressions of time, such as *first, later,* or *in the afternoon*. Emotional responses are often appropriate for inclusion in personal and imaginary recounts, but are not as acceptable in factual recounts. Factual recounts tend to use passive voice and third-person pronouns, for example, *he, she, it*.

Report Organization

Reporting may encompass many kinds of factual texts, such as telling the weather, reporting the news, or giving a science report. Reporting usually consists of:

1. Opening statement or general classification
2. Facts about various aspects of something, such as examination of components and distinctive characteristics
3. Reports have no specific ending but are often concluded with a general statement regarding the topic

Language Features

The language used in reporting is the kind that helps the speaker define, classify, compare, and contrast. Reports often contain descriptive language and depending on the topic may also be factual and precise rather than imaginative. Reports can also involve technical language specific to the topic.

In the Classroom

Children at school have many opportunities to talk with others on the playground and as they share group tasks. However, the time for purposeful *telling* may be minimal. Class size, the number of adults present, and the demands of school routines and curriculum are relevant factors in the limited time available for telling and reporting.

Many and varied *telling* activities should be specifically and regularly planned within the normal classroom routine. Children should be made aware that these times are important and that goals will be set and performance evaluated.

In the early years, students' oral language recounting and reporting will be informal with many opportunities for teacher clarification. We are doing children a disservice, however, if we do not also provide them with the support and opportunities to give structured oral recounts and reports that more closely reflect the formal or written end of the oral-written continuum.

Note: Reading a report when asked to give a presentation is essentially an **oral reading** task rather than **oral reporting**.

The At-Risk Child

Some children find it difficult to draw on their world knowledge and past experience through memory and visualization. They are unable to select the most appropriate ideas or organize their thoughts into a logical order. Their poorly sequenced, irrelevant, or tangential ideas become particularly noticeable in written rather than oral form.

If these students practice oral reporting, and are taught the structure of reports and recounts, they will understand what is required before trying to apply it in writing.

Assessment

The activities in this section will promote children's confidence about speaking to an audience. Children will also learn how to use and monitor tone, volume, pace, intonation, and gesture to enhance meaning. **Recounting** is highlighted in the activities "Paddy," "Just in Case," and "Is News New or Just Old Hat?" **Reporting** is the focus of the remainder of the activities.

Novice Speakers

- Report briefly to a group on personal knowledge about a topic.
- Recount personal experiences.
- Stay on the general topic and ask and respond to questions.
- Ask and answer questions seeking information or clarification.
- Self-correct to clarify meaning.

Maturing Speakers

- When prompted, include key information in a short spoken recount of an experience or event.
- Present information on a known topic with some attention to adequacy and relevance of information.

Observation Guidelines

On page 59 you will find a "Book Talk checklist." It is divided into four areas:

1 Oral Presentation
2 Language Interaction
3 Organization
4 Text Response

Once students are familiar with reports, they can begin to assess their own efforts. See "Plan Your Report" on page 58 of this section.

Just in Case

Students describe and report on their own or imagined experiences using real objects as a cue.

Goals

This activity encourages students to:

- report on and describe past experiences
- use their imaginations while thinking of where, when, and by whom the objects may have been used

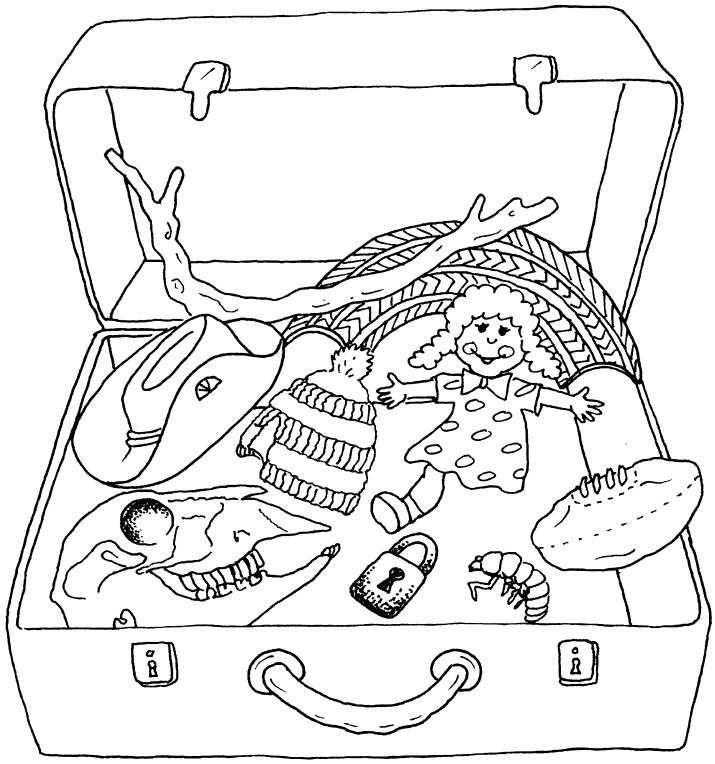
Teacher Notes:

Store a variety of objects in an old suitcase or other container. These will then form the basis of a "talking time" session for a small group of students. Choose fewer than ten objects at any one time. Alternatively, select objects to fit in with a particular classroom theme or excursion. For example, following an outing to the beach you might select a shell, a rock, an empty drink can, broken sunglasses, a piece of glass, a jar of sand, a crab's claw, a tube of sunscreen, and a sponge. Change the collection of objects regularly. At times you may decide to leave one or two objects of the previous collection for a longer period.

SOME SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

1 Select an object from the case for your report. Name it. What is it used for? Where would it be found? Who could it have belonged to? How might it have ended up in the case?

2 Choose an object. Describe a past experience that you are reminded of by this object. Where was it? Who was there? What happened?



SUGGESTED OBJECTS:

old teddy bear
deflated football
cicada shell
military hat
a doll with a missing leg
piece of tire from a truck
a colorful teapot
driftwood
rusty padlock
small wooden box
horseshoe
brick
foreign newspaper
a tiny pair of baby booties
painted ceramic figure
old photograph
a long match

Avoid objects that could be banged, blown, tried on, placed in the mouth, and those with easily broken or moveable parts.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

1 Use an object to start telling a story. To make this task more complex, other objects can be selected and incorporated into the theme once the story is underway.
2 After selecting an object, the group brainstorms words and simple phrases about the chosen object. For example, *brick: terra-cotta, mortar, builder, three little pigs, thick as a brick, house, strong.*

Paddy

Students recount their weekend experiences with "Paddy," the class bear.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- recount events by using a familiar toy as a prop
- present information to an audience
- demonstrate how events and feelings can be recorded for others to share
- take another's perspective

Teacher Notes:

SUGGESTED INTRODUCTION

Explain that Paddy is a friendly bear who has come from Scotland to share a year with the class. Every weekend Paddy takes his bag, diary, and scrapbook and goes home with a student. He stays the weekend, joining in with family activities. At the end of the weekend Paddy "writes" in his diary (a parent can help) and may paste a momento of his visit in his scrapbook. When Paddy returns to school on Monday his "new friend" helps him tell the class about his weekend.

Write the first entry in the diary to give students and their parents some guidance as to what to include. A letter can be pasted inside the front cover of the diary explaining to parents the intention of the activity, expectations, and the parents' role. Stress to parents that they need not write the diary entry, but should provide support for their child to write or dictate his or her own ideas.

Paddy could become a visitor from any culture. For example, Boris could be from Russia. In discussion, make observations about how Paddy is adjusting to his different experiences and encourage students to reflect on, accept, and value individual differences. Furthermore, students can learn about Paddy's country of origin—its location, climate, language, culture—and compare these with their own knowledge of the United States.

Over time students will likely adopt the role of Paddy's counselor and friend.

Is News New or Just Old Hat?

Goals

In these activities children learn to:

- provide news reports about their own activities
- plan and prepare news reports based on supposed events or topics
- sequence ideas in speech
- adjust speech, rate, volume, and information for presentation to an audience

Teacher Notes:

"News Time" or "Show-and-Tell" was once a routine part of the day in many primary classrooms. Unfortunately, it sometimes became a rather repetitive and uninspiring routine both for teachers and students. Understandably, many teachers threw out the show-and-tell part of the curriculum and some did not replace it with a better alternative. However, it is worthwhile taking a new look at the purpose and value of such activities so that we can accommodate the very important skills students learn when they present ideas to their peers. "News Time" is one of the few opportunities for children in the primary classes to have an extended turn in oral discourse rather than the short exchanges typical of conversation and question-and-answer routines. It provides an important early opportunity for children to become familiar with the reporting genre. During "News Time," they must select which information to tell and become aware of how to present this information to an audience.

Roslyn Neilson (1995) has devised the Show-and-Tell Plan on page 50, which helps students understand the four stages of the show-and-tell genre. Pictures can also be used to represent these stages and assist children in developing fluency, coherence, and independence from teacher questioning.

SOME NEWS VARIATIONS

Partner News or **Group News:** Have students work in small groups to share their news to allow more children to present their news. On occasion, when time permits, each group can choose one person to tell group news to the whole class.

News Subjects: After a vacation, direct "News Time" by asking for news according to particular criteria. For example, *Who has some vacation news that is smelly?* A student might respond: *Mommy and Daddy painted my room yellow, 'cause that's my favorite color and it was really smelly forever and I couldn't…um, and I got a headache.* Other subject choices could be: *wet, early in the morning, lost, excitement, sad,* or *loud noises*.

Weekly News: At the end of each week, ask one class member to recap his or her "Weekly News of the Classroom." Students may comment on class themes, special activities or visitors, field trips, or unexpected happenings that were important to them.

School Speech: Select a child to give a class report at an all-school assembly on school sports or a class field trip.

Write Headlines: Provide a picture from a magazine or catalog. Ask children to brainstorm different headlines and take turns providing a short report of *who, where, what happened,* and *why* to match the headline.

Sports Report: Ask some of the sports-conscious children to present a sports report on Monday mornings to provide news of weekend sports scores. If they can readily tell about their favorite sports, suggest they also include scores from another type of sport as well.

Weather Report: Ask a child each day to present a weather forecast for the next day using cutout cardboard props for clouds, rain, wind, sun, and so on. Record the information on the weekly weather chart. At the end of the week, check to see how accurate the forecasts were.

Show-and-Tell Plan

Introduction	What is it? 
Background	How did you get it? When did you get it? 
Use	What do you do with it? Where do you keep it? 
Evaluation	Why do you like it? 

Roslyn Nielson, 1995

Plan Your Report

These activities are an introduction to information reports.

Goals

These tasks will encourage children to:

- plan and present information on a known topic
- listen to a speaker and contribute relevant comments
- adjust speech, rate, volume, and intonation for presentation to an audience

Teacher Notes:

Introduce a topic and plan your report by referring to the guidelines for structuring an informational report. See the introduction to this section on page 44 for more detailed information.

ACTIVITY 1

Themes or class-integrated units of study are potential sources for report topics, such as: Animal Families, People in the Community, Food, Our Environment, Communication, or Life Cycles of Animals. A group of children can select subsidiary topics within one of these units of study and reports on these to other groups or to the class.

Divide the class into small groups or allow children to choose their own partners.

Each group is to decide on a topic and plan which aspects or components they will present using the BLM on page 58. The groups are given time to research this topic by using resources such as their own general knowledge, books, films, or discussion with peers or experts.

Later the groups present their information report based on their original plan. Other class members may make relevant comments or ask appropriate questions.

Students assess their own reports based on three criteria: informational content, organization, and presentation skills. They draw an appropriate smiling or sad face on the assessment sheet.

ACTIVITY 2

Individual children select their own topic of interest to research and present, for example, snakes, Rollerblading, or Michael Jordan. They use the same planning sheet and self-assessment sheet as for Activity 1. Suggest that children support their oral presentations with pictures, models, or props. The free choice of topic, although initially more demanding because the children must be involved in selecting and planning their own topics, provides an exciting opportunity for them to demonstrate their creativity and knowledge.

Book Talk

Students report on books they have read or shared at home.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- select and present relevant and interesting information about a book to an audience
- adjust volume, rate, and speech style to present a report
- listen and make relevant comments or questions about a book

Teacher Notes:

Tell students that over the next few weeks you would like each of them to report on a book they are reading. This book may be a story, a picture book, nonfiction, or a book that a parent is reading to them. Remind students that during a Book Talk, listeners will want to know what the book or story was about, which parts they enjoyed and why, details about the author or illustrator, as well as the student's evaluation of the book and which readers they think would enjoy it.

Send a letter home to parents highlighting the goals of the Book Talk. Ask parents to discuss the book with their child so that the child can prepare to speak to the class and answer questions about the book he or she has chosen.

Tell children the four areas that you will assess.

Assessment

1 *Oral Presentation*—clarity of speech, appropriate pace, volume and intonation, and awareness of audience.
2 *Language Interaction*—ability to give background information and explanation and respond to questions about the book.
3 *Organization of the Book Report*—introduction and information presented in a logical order.
4 *Response to the Book*—ability to identify fiction and nonfiction, and to identify the main character or topic. Ability to select and highlight particular key parts of the book. Ability to give a personal response to the book.

Allow approximately 5 to 10 minutes for each presentation and reward each student with a certificate of participation. Use the Book Talk Checklist on page 59 to evaluate the progress of the students and select areas for further teaching and modeling.

Time Line

Students give reports using time lines to aid memory and to record their knowledge.

Goals

This activity allows students to:

- represent their understanding of time progression, both orally and visually
- use language related to time
- identify the major events in the story
- use visual material to support and complement oral language presentation

Teacher Notes:

This activity encourages students to record their understanding of important information. One of the easiest ways to teach this skill is by using a story familiar to most children. Young children may like to draw key events on the time line, whereas older children can use written language.

Teachers should demonstrate the use of this time line in a variety of ways throughout the integrated class units or themes.

ILLUSTRATE GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT, AND CHANGE

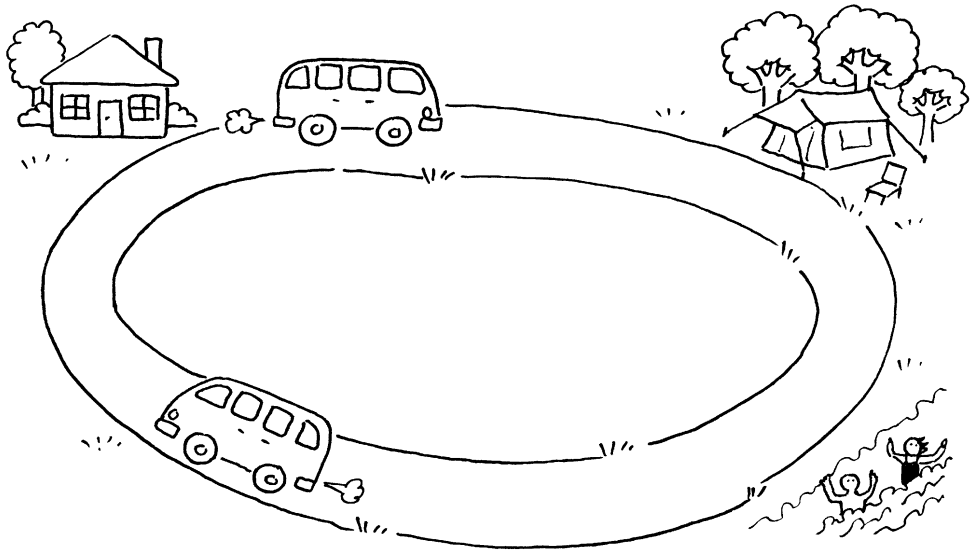
- Show the life cycle of a caterpillar.
- Record a child's life story from birth to the present, including events such as moving to a new house, gaining new siblings, and starting school.

ILLUSTRATE ACTIONS AND EVENTS

- Students draw a projected time line of the major events they think will happen to them in the future, including high school, college, jobs, travel, marriage, and so on.
- Students record early science experiments or cooking.

RETELL EVENTS

- Students create a time line based on a field trip.
- Make a time line based on the events in a story. For some stories the time line will be circular, as illustrated here.



Talking Lists

This activity prepares students for later reporting tasks by giving them practice listing items that are needed in a given familiar situation.

Goals

Students are required to:
- visualize and analyze familiar situations
- logically consider appropriate associations
- select specific vocabulary and list orally

Teacher Notes:

Discuss lists with students: *When do you make lists? Why do you need to make lists? Who makes lists?* Talk about the type of lists that are written, such as shopping lists, reminder lists, ingredients for recipes, or items for an experiment. Continue the discussion by focusing on lists that are spoken or silently made in your mind, such as the following:

1 Explain or describe things or events to others. For example, *When you go out in the snow, don't forget your mittens, snowpants, wool hat, and parka.*

2 Rehearse actions that must be remembered when performing. For example, while serving a tennis ball, you might say the following to yourself: *Throw the ball up, racquet back, up and over, weight forward, follow through.*

3 Remind yourself about directions, such as *Go up to the T, turn right, and take the second street left.*

Students can work in pairs and jointly construct a talking list on a selected topic. Ask pairs of students to present their lists to the class or the class could construct a continuous list, and add to the list in turn as they try not to repeat items.

SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR LISTS:

Make a talking list of…
- what you would need to pack for a summer vacation
- what you would need to make a birthday card
- what you would need to paint a picture
- what you might find in your Mom's handbag
- what you would use to clean the house
- what you would take to go to a baseball game
- what a builder needs to do his or her job
- what a hairdresser needs to do his or her job
- different types of weather
- sports played at the Olympics
- things you need to care for a baby
- playground equipment
- possible games to play at lunchtime
- different booths at your school fair

A Team of Reporters

Working as a team, students report on different aspects of a significant event.

Goals

This activity requires students to:

- recall and analyze past experiences
- summarize information
- use language clearly and concisely
- work cooperatively to present a team oral report

Teacher Notes:

Young children often provide only a global statement without details when asked to report on an event. Provide students with "topics within a topic" to assist them as they become aware of various aspects that might be interesting or useful to listeners.

Use "Team of Reporters" to follow up a significant school event. Use topics such as those listed below and choose students to report on them. Give students time to prepare before they present their ideas to the rest of the class. You might also hand out the topic cards to each team of reporters. Students can also suggest additional topics.

TOPICS SUGGESTIONS:

Summer Camp: weather, evening activities, food, journey there and back, student teamwork, duties around camp, daytime program, the camp concert, the funniest thing that happened.

School Fair: booths, activities for children, success of the fair, attendance, organization, things that could be improved, weather.

Visiting Performer: For example, a magician: audience reaction, appearance, tricks, skills needed by the performer, suitability of the place of the performance (venue).

Excursion: For example, to a farm: the best sights around the farm, the animals (farm and pet), the difference between lifestyle in the country and the city, the machinery on the farm, the farm buildings.

School Sports: getting ready, atmosphere before, during, and after the event, the most memorable races, game scores, cleaning up.

Get It? Got It? Good!

In this activity, students listen to short stories read by the teacher to identify the main idea.

Goals

This activity promotes students' ability to:

- listen attentively
- integrate information heard
- tell the main idea

Teacher Notes:

Students are often asked to identify main ideas for the first time by reading a passage and choosing among several possibilities. Giving finite choices in this way may limit the independence with which students tackle the text. For this reason, "Get It? Got It? Good!" asks students to identify and express main ideas for themselves, rather than selecting from someone else's suggestions.

Being able to visualize as a story is told will help students identify main ideas. Visualizing provides a tangible focus to integrate additional details. (See notes on visualizing and verbalizing on page 29.)

Choose a story below and read it aloud to students. Ask them to tell you the main idea of each story. If students answer with details from the story, acknowledge these and lead them to discuss the big picture or main point of the story. For example, *The writer is telling us about . . .* or *Give a title to this story.*

SUGGESTED STORIES:

1 Joe has a pet rabbit, two parrots, and a dog. Every morning he feeds the rabbit carrots and lettuce leaves. After school he never forgets to check the bird's seed and water. It is also Joe's job to feed and brush his dog, Rover. He tries to take him for a walk in the park every day.

2 Gavin lives close to school. Now that he is eight, he walks to school every day with his neighbor, Sam. Some children in Gavin's class ride their bikes to school. Sometimes Gavin wishes he lived a long way from the school so that he could catch the school bus. There is even a girl in his class who arrives at school in a taxi. Most of the other children walk or come by car.

3 When it rains some people are sad because their plans have to be put off. Farmers are often thankful for the rain because it helps their grass and crops grow. If you wear boots, a raincoat, and something to protect your head, it is fun to be out in the rain. You can step in the puddles and breathe the fresh air. Many people have to keep doing their job out in the rain whether they like it or not.

4 Grandparents are very special people. Children have lots of different names for grandparents, such as *Nanna, Nona, Pop, Pa,* and *Ompa*. Some grandparents live a long way away—even overseas in countries such as Italy, Argentina, or Vietnam. It must be hard for those children who can't spend time with their grandparents. Many grandparents live in their own homes or apartments, some live with their families, and others live in retirement villages with many other older people. Some grandparents are very frail or sick and need to spend time in the hospital or in a nursing home.

5 Children love birthdays and many adults do, too. On your birthday people make a fuss over you, do special things for you, and sometimes give you presents. Some children have their birthday parties at home, playing games such as *Pin the Tail on the Donkey* and *Musical Chairs*. Others go roller skating or bowling and have the party food there, too. A picnic or barbecue is a fun way to spend your birthday. In some families all the relatives celebrate a birthday—grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins arrive and there is usually lots of food and laughter. For other children, a birthday is a quiet but special time with just Mom and Dad and brother or sister.

6 Bike riding is fun, but there are many things to remember. You should always wear a helmet to protect your head if you fall. You must make sure that your bike works well, especially the brakes. When riding on a sidewalk, be sure to give way to pedestrians. Go slowly past driveways and check to see whether a car is backing out. If you are old enough to ride on the road, remember to stay on the right side of the road and to obey all the traffic signs. Even on special bike paths you must consider people who are walking and take care to avoid them.

Plan Your Report

Name _____

My topic is _____

I will talk about

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

Self-Assessment Name _____

✔ Yes or No	Yes	No
I introduced my topic to the class:		
I gave extra information about the topic:		
I put my ideas in order:		
I stood up straight:		
I spoke slowly and clearly:		

See also: "Plan Your Report" on page 51.

Book Talk Checklist

Oral Presentation:

____ Controls intonation and volume.
____ Speaks fluently without false starts.
____ Uses appropriate speech rate.
____ Speech sounds are clearly pronounced.
____ Maintains eye contact with audience.
____ Shows awareness of audience.

Language Interaction:

____ Provides audience with background information.
____ Uses specific vocabulary from the text relevant to the task.
____ Explains unfamiliar terms to others.
____ Responds to questions appropriately from the audience.
____ Recalls language structures from the book.
____ Supports and justifies opinions about the book.

Organization:

Provides a clear introduction.
____ Narrative
–recalls story plot.
–retells problem/solution.
____ Chooses relevant information to tell.
____ Organizes and sequences content appropriately.

Text Response:

____ Able to tell if nonfiction/fiction.
____ Refers to author/illustrator.
____ Highlights key events.
____ Uses illustrations to highlight information.
____ Able to give an emotional response to the text by highlighting enjoyable/boring/best parts.
____ Identifies location and setting (if appropriate).
____ Identifies main characters (if appropriate).
____ Identifies the motivation of a character.
____ Evaluates the believability of characters from the book.
____ Identifies the themes and relates them to life experiences.
____ Evaluates the information presented in text.
____ Completes presentation with reflective comment.

See also: "Book Talk" on page 52.

Active Listening

Relevance to Literacy

Much of a student's time in class is spent listening. Indeed, it is estimated that primary school students spend up to three hours a day engaged in this activity. It is therefore imperative that they do not "switch off" during listening activities and risk missing many learning opportunities and experiences.

There are a variety of purposes for listening. In the classroom students should be made aware of the different purposes.

The listening vocabulary is generally the largest of all four vocabularies (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). If a student's ability is limited in this area, all areas of the language arts are affected.

The Listening Process

Listening is more than being quiet or passively soaking up someone else's ideas. To listen effectively we need to expend cognitive energy in order to make sense of what we hear. Active listening involves:

1 Hearing and focusing attention on the verbal message.
2 Discriminating relevant from irrelevant information to gain meaning.
3 Controlling attention and internal evaluations long enough in working memory to formulate a response.

Active listening can be considered the aural counterpart of reading. Many skills common to both reading and listening, such as focusing attention and thinking about meaning, are likely to be best learned in the listening mode where feedback and clarification can be more immediate. If students are able to respond appropriately to the spoken word, they are more likely to comprehend this message in its written form.

Types of Active Listening

Just as we read for different purposes, we also listen with different purposes in mind. In the classroom, students must learn to listen in order to:

- recall sequences of information or events
- find details
- identify main ideas
- appreciate language, rhythm, and emotional responses
- engage in analysis and critical thinking

Sitting quietly, looking at the speaker, and nodding in agreement are overt social behaviors often associated with listening. These are important to language interaction, but their presence does not always indicate that children are actively listening.

Listening in the Classroom

Because listening is an essential prerequisite for so many abilities in school, many children with poor listening skills will also be poor readers. It seems wise then not to leave development of this skill to chance, but to plan the curriculum to assist students to become better active listeners. Lundsteen (1990) describes metacognitive listening as thinking about "thinking while you are listening." She outlines self-monitoring techniques and teaching strategies to assist children to listen actively:

1 **Strategies to Direct Attention** Indicate what to listen for or highlight important words. For example, you might say *Listen carefully to hear the words used to describe the snake* before you read a book about snakes.
2 **Strategies to Enhance Memory** Signal organization in advance to guide the listening process by using word signals such as *first, next,* or *last*. Use graphic organizers such as semantic webs or topic questions to activate students' prior knowledge. Topic headings, grouping related ideas together, and giving opportunities to recall important parts of the lesson will all assist memory.
3 **Strategies to Enhance Communication** Give feedback, paraphrase, summarize, or ask questions to clarify information.
4 **Strategies to Enhance Meaning** Elaborate on what the student has heard and form visual images or engage in self-questioning.

The At-Risk Child

If a child is not listening in class, his or her hearing should be screened. Intermittent hearing loss through the middle ear or respiratory infection are common in the early primary years and may impact learning. However, a number of children who do not have reduced hearing levels have difficulty blocking out background noise.

If these factors have been ruled out, look carefully at some other possible limitations in language development, conceptual understanding, life experiences, or teacher presentation that could be hindering effective listening. Activating what is already known and relating that to the listening task at hand will assist the at-risk child considerably.

Physically active children can find it difficult to keep still. They need a careful balance of tasks that require motor activity with those that require listening. Children with attention deficits and difficulties inhibiting their responses will benefit from implementation of the active listening part of the curriculum.

Repeating instructions for those children who never seem to know what they are supposed to be doing only tends to reinforce bad listening habits and does not reflect the real-world consequences of not listening. Studies have shown that cuing for attention first, identifying the purpose for the listening task, and speaking the instruction slower and with pauses may better serve the teacher and the child.

Active listeners make use of all environmental cues. The at-risk child may need to be shown how to use these cues, and in particular, how to make use of visual cues to assist listeners such as the speaker's facial expression and gesture or visual charts and displays.

Assessment

Novice Speakers

- Listen to a speaker and contribute some relevant comments to a conversation or discussion.
- Usually indicate when something is not understood.

Observation Guidelines

Social and Listening Behaviors

A student:

- listens attentively, sits still, nods in agreement, keeps hands in lap, stays in place, and so on.
- looks at the person speaking.
- waits turn for speaking and doesn't interrupt.
- listens for context.

Maturing Speakers

- Listen attentively and converse with others for a purpose.

Observation Guidelines

Cognitive Listening Behaviors

A student:

- makes appropriate comments on the topic, or to extend the topic.
- asks or answers questions to demonstrate listening and thinking.
- listens for detail.
- listens for sequence.
- listens for critical thinking.
- listens for enjoyment and appreciation.
- makes use of strategies to assist listening, for example, strategies to assist recall, or meaning.
- thinks about the purposes of listening.

Sniffer

Students follow teacher directions on a map to discover a dog's path to school.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- listen for key directional and spatial concepts
- recall the route in order
- use prepositional phrases

Teacher Notes:

Photocopy the blackline master on page 74 for each child to trace the route in pen. Or photocopy it onto an overhead transparency and mark the route using an overhead marking pen. One possible sequence for Sniffer follows. The bold phrases can be repeated for emphasis.

SUGGESTED STORY DIRECTIONS:

Sniffer the dog escapes from the backyard to follow Jimmy to school. Listen carefully to the route he takes and use your pencil to mark it on your own map.

Sniffer **trots along the road** with his tail wagging. He goes **through the duck pond.** He shakes himself and **runs under the slide.**

He sniffs **behind the swing.** He can smell Jimmy. He can also smell another dog. It might be Boxer, the dog from next door.

Sniffer **climbs over the seat.** Somebody left half a peanut butter sandwich there. Sniffer eats it.

Sniffer goes **to the mail box.** But the letter carrier hasn't collected the letters yet. And now Sniffer **follows the trail along the road toward the stop sign.**

Sniffer **turns left.** He **trots past the girl on the bike** and **down the road** leading **to the football field.**

Sniffer follows Jimmy's trail **between the goalposts** and **through the large trees.**

No cars are coming so Sniffer **walks across the road near the two-story house.** Sniffer **jumps over the fence.**

Now he **runs between the trees and the car.** He thinks he's lost Jimmy's trail so he **sniffs around the car.** He **squeezes under the gate and back to the two-story house.**

Quick, Sniffer! The school bell is ringing. **He goes up the lane next to the church and through the gate and into the schoolyard.**

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Ask students to recall, in the correct sequence, the route that Sniffer took to school. This could be a class activity if a smaller number of confident students could take turns. A further trial without the map in front of them would challenge slightly older students. Expect them to use key prepositions used in the directions, for example, **under** the slide or **behind** the swing.

Shapes Galore

Students direct a partner to make designs with shapes.

Goals

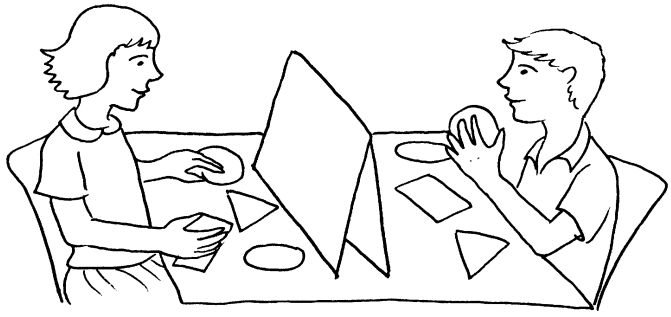
In this activity students will:

- actively listen for information
- practice giving instructions incorporating concepts of size, shape, color, and spatial relationships
- learn to ask for and give clarification if there has been a misunderstanding

Teacher Notes:

Each player needs a set of shapes in varied colors that match those of their partner. Use the shapes on the blackline master on page 75. A barrier is constructed between players so that players are unable to see each other's pieces.

Vary the number of shapes according to the students' ability level. The first speaker makes a design with the shapes and then gives instructions to a partner to create the same design. When completed, the barrier is withdrawn, the designs compared, and the learning task assessed.



Going Dotty

Students direct a partner to complete a design on paper.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- listen and follow oral directions
- understand specific words, such as *left/right, diagonal,* and number concepts
- practice giving accurate directional information
- learn to clarify and rephrase after miscommunication

Teacher Notes:

Each child needs a copy of the blackline master on page 76 and a pencil. A barrier separates partners who have agreed on a starting point, for example, bottom left corner. The speaker gives the "unsighted" partner directions to join the dots on the grid to complete a pattern or drawing to match his or her own. At the completion of the directions, partners compare designs. The designs will be identical if the communication has been successful. Roles are then reversed so that the listener becomes the speaker for the next turn.

Spotty

In a short story about a dog called Spotty, students listen for a particular word or feature.

Goals

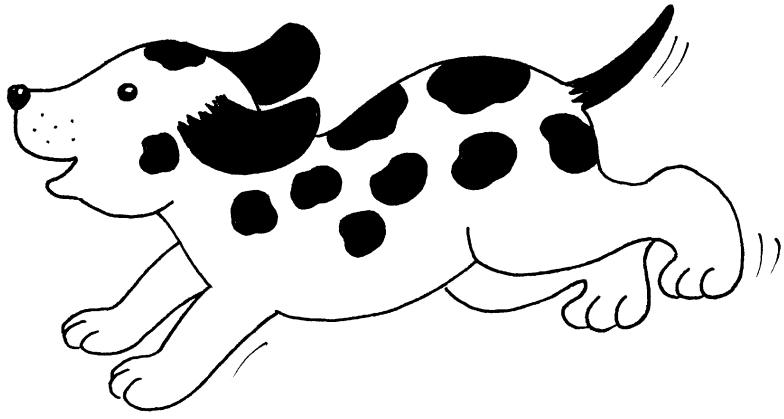
In this activity students will:

- listen to a short story from start to finish
- actively listen for a given word
- associate this word with a given action, for example, drawing a line to join dots

Teacher Notes:

Introduce students to a fictitious dog named Spotty. Explain that you are going to read them a short story about Spotty, and they will be asked to listen for special words and follow the directions you give.

Additional stories about Spotty can be created and used in conjunction with other paper-and-pencil tasks. For example, students might be asked to do a dot-to-dot with numbers.



ACTIVITY 1

Ask students to listen for Spotty's name as you read the story on the next page. Each time students hear Spotty's name, they are to draw a spot on a picture of Spotty. (See the blackline master, page 77.) Before beginning to read the story, ask students to listen for the specific things by asking questions such as *What is the dog's name?* or *What will you do each time you hear his name?*

At the completion of the story, they can count how many spots they have drawn on Spotty and later color them in.

ACTIVITY 2

Students listen for color words in the story. Explain that Spotty is a dog that loves colors and that he wants to reach a rainbow. On their own copy of the picture of Spotty and the rainbow (see the blackline master on page 77), children point to the dots between Spotty and the rainbow. When a color word is heard in the story, two dots can be joined, beginning with the dot closest to Spotty. When the story is finished, Spotty should have arrived at the rainbow.

Before beginning the story, ask students to suggest possible color words. Revise the instructions by asking questions such as *What will you do when you hear a color word?*

SPOTTY'S STORY:

Spotty is the most beautiful puppy Jo has ever seen. He is small and wrinkly and has large brown spots on his white body. Spotty's nose is black and wet and his pink tongue likes to lick Jo's hands. Spotty sleeps in a small basket with Jo's old yellow blanket in the bottom. Jo used to love the blanket when she was a baby.

Spotty needs a collar and lead, so Jo goes to the pet shop with her Dad to get them. She chooses a red collar and a purple lead. She also buys a bowl for Spotty's food. It is grey and made of plastic.

Spotty is still only a puppy and so he needs two meals each day—breakfast and dinner. Sometimes Spotty tries to eat things he shouldn't, like nuts and snails. But even a puppy knows what to do when he feels a bit sick. Spotty eats a few blades of green grass and then he feels much better.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Students draw pictures of Spotty, including any details they remember from the Spotty stories.

Activating Answers

Students are taught to anticipate information they will hear as they listen to a story.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- listen actively for information
- discover how prior knowledge of questions can assist recall understanding of what is heard

Teacher Notes:

Activating prior knowledge helps students understand what they hear. In the same way, knowing the questions and thinking about them before listening or reading helps students anticipate information and provides a structure for active listening, recall, and comprehension. Ask the class to listen for the answers to these questions or direct one question to each student or group of students.

PREREADING QUESTIONS:

- Where does Jamie live?
- How old is Jamie?
- What does Jamie like most in all the world?
- Why do you think Jamie wants to go to soccer camp on his next vacation?

JAMIE'S STORY:

The Hover family lives in Richmond in a wooden house next door to a park. Mr. and Mrs. Hover have a baby daughter, Anne, and two sons, Jerard, who just turned six, and Jamie, who is eight.

Jamie got a new soccer ball for his sixth birthday. After school each day the boys love to play soccer in the park. Sometimes the other children in the street join in. When Mr. Hover comes home from work, he plays with them until dinnertime. Jamie thinks this is the most fun in the whole world.

For their next family vacation, Mrs. Hover wants to take the children to the beach. Jamie hasn't said anything yet, but he really wants to spend his vacation at soccer camp.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Have students formulate their own questions based on the passage. For example, *What does Mr. Hover like to do after work?*

Oscar

Students listen for specific information during the reading of a short story.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- listen actively for information
- discover how prior knowledge of the questions can assist recall of facts and understanding of what is heard

Teacher Notes:

This passage is longer than Jamie's story in the previous activity and requires that students have a greater attention span. You may want to make up further questions for the passage.

ASK QUESTIONS BEFORE READING, SUCH AS:

- How did Oscar first hear of his trip?
- Can you remember four things Oscar packed in his suitcase?
- What did Oscar call his grandmother?
- What kind of weather did Oscar expect?

OSCAR'S STORY:

It was a day Oscar will never forget. A letter arrived for him in the mail from his grandmother who lives in Miami, a city far south of Washington, DC. Inside the letter was a plane ticket and it had his name on it! Oscar's mother smiled as she explained the surprise to her son.

"Nona has invited you to go and stay with her for two weeks during the next school vacation. She has even sent you your plane ticket. You leave on Sunday!" she explained.

"Four days to go!" exclaimed an excited Oscar.

Oscar pulled his dad's big black suitcase out from under his parents' bed and began to pack his things.

"It will be warmer down south," he thought. So he packed summer clothes. Of course, he remembered his bathing suit, towel, and his hat. Oscar packed his two favorite bears—Browny and Stripes—on top of his clothes. He also put in a book, a small box of toys, and some stationery to write to his Mom and Dad.

Finally, Sunday came and Oscar was up and ready by seven o'clock in the morning.

"Are you ready? The plane leaves at eleven o'clock," said his mom, "and Nona will be there to meet you three hours later." So Oscar and his mom and dad piled into the car for the drive to the airport. Oscar didn't want to miss that plane.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

- Brainstorm questions with students to compose the next part of Oscar's trip.
- Make up your own stories and questions or formulate questions prior to reading literature to the class. The text can be narrative or factual.

The Birthday Party

Students listen actively to recall and draw items from a birthday story.

Goals

This activity will encourage students to:

- listen attentively
- recall items from a story
- practice visualizing a scene to assist comprehension and memory
- represent their knowledge through drawing

Teacher Notes:

This activity works best if you have already introduced children to the concept of visualizing from spoken language. That is, they can *see* a picture in their minds in response to a description of an object or event. Children can draw each object on the blackline master on page 78. Take the opportunity when reading a story to verbalize the picture that you can see in your mind. (See page 29).

SUGGESTED INTRODUCTION:

Listen to this story. Later I will ask you to remember things about the story to draw on your papers. While I read each sentence in the story, make a picture of it in your mind. When I've finished, I want you to draw what you can remember. Think about the picture you made in your mind to help you. (Depending on the age of the children, you may want to suggest that they remember five things or as many as they can.)

STORY:

Kim and Lee were very excited as they blew up two balloons and tied them to the door. Soon their school friends would arrive for the birthday party.

Everyone in the family had helped to get ready. Dad hung colored streamers from the light and the room looked great. Grandma made a cake with a red racing car on top and she put six candles around it. Mom opened the bag of chips and the soft drinks and placed them both on the table next to a large bowl of popcorn. Big sister Mira had pinned the party game onto the wall, and Kim's little brother had even tied a bow around the cat's neck. Now they were ready.

Boo! Hiss! Hooray!

Students identify positive and negative sentence meanings.

Goals

When listening to a story, students will:

- listen attentively
- evaluate sentence meanings
- create a collaborative story by formulating sentences with different meanings

Teacher Notes:

Explain to the class that they should listen attentively for sentence meanings and respond by calling out *Boo* or *Hiss* if the sentence meaning is negative and *Hooray* if the sentence meaning is positive. Start with some trial sentences such as the following:

- Jenny's mom said she could have a birthday party. (*Hooray*)
- Her best friend couldn't come. (*Boo*)
- Jenny's dad gave her a new bike. (*Hooray*)
- She fell off and hurt her knee. (*Boo*)
- Jenny didn't have to do any homework for a week. (*Hooray*)

Begin to read the story below and pause after each idea for the class to *Boo* or *Hooray*, depending on the sentence meaning. Select children to continue the story by adding alternating *Boo* or *Hooray* sentences in succession.

EXAMPLE STORY:

Charlie won a million dollars in the lottery. (*Hooray*) He decided to take a cruise to the Caribbean. (*Hooray*) Two days out at sea a huge wave crashed into the boat. (*Boo*) The cruise ship sank. (*Boo*) But Charlie managed to climb into a life raft. (*Hooray*) No one came to rescue them. (*Boo*) Charlie and his friend found an old shirt and made a sail for the raft. (*Hooray*)

Continue the story with obvious good and bad events.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Further variations of this activity can help students determine the meanings of sentences or evaluate whether a statement is based in reality or fantasy. For example, students could be asked to respond *likely* or *unlikely* to realistic and fantastic statements.

What Nonsense!

Students detect and correct absurd sentences.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- listen attentively for meaning
- monitor spoken language
- correct inaccurate messages using grammatical knowledge or meaning

Teacher Notes:

There are many occasions when students will need to be alert for errors or inconsistencies in the language they hear. Good readers use this strategy constantly to formulate hypotheses about the meaning of the text and to self-correct any of their reading errors.

In this activity, students will identify and correct mistakes in simple sentences and short paragraphs. This activity helps students monitor the meaning of what they hear.

Ask students to listen to a silly sentence and identify the error. Most of them will be able to identify simple inconsistencies and explain what made them silly. For example, *Mom drove her bike to the supermarket.* (You don't drive a *bike,* you drive a *car.*)

Have students repeat each sentence, changing only the part that was incorrect. For example, *Mom drove her car to the supermarket.*

SUGGESTED SENTENCES:

- I kicked ten points in the basketball game on Friday night.
- Dad wore his new pie and shirt to work.
- On the way home from school we saw Tom's cat barking at the letter carrier.
- Every night we eat our breakfast in front of the TV.
- Mommy made an appointment with the dentist to have her ears checked.
- The picture on the TV was blurry so I turned up the volume control.
- What do you think of the new dress I bought to wear in the swimming pool?
- Don't forget to dust your teeth before you go to bed.
- The bird blew back to its nest in the elm tree.

LISTENING FOR ABSURDITIES IN PARAGRAPHS

The paragraphs on the next page require students to sustain active listening for longer periods and to identify conceptual inconsistencies rather than single-word errors.

SUGGESTED PARAGRAPHS:

- Carly's dad is a mechanic at Joe's Auto Repairs. Carly and her little brother Stephen sometimes go to his work on Friday after school to help drive the boats into the yard.
- Con spent the weekend making a tree house in the backyard. When he finished attaching the rope ladder, he invited his brother Dimitri, his dad, and the dog to come up for a chocolate cookie and lemonade.
- Mark won first prize at his friend's "Into the Future" fancy dress party. He went as an astronaut. His other school friends also went to a lot of trouble with their costumes. Stephen was all in green because he went as the Alien from Mars, and John looked fantastic as a dinosaur with big claws.
- Sally, Emma, and Roberta met at Beach Camp last year and enjoyed all the activities organized by the leaders. They had sand castle competitions, scavenger hunts, and snorkeling. Next year they all plan to enter the girl's under-ten beach volleyball competition.
- James Barnaby is a writer for *Wanderings* magazine. He often travels to faraway places for research on his articles. Next week he is travelling to the rain forest to write an article on polar bears.

Take the Message

Students listen to a message and retell the main points.

Goals

In this telephone role-play, students will:

- listen attentively to others
- retell main ideas

Teacher Notes:

Students will need to pretend that they are taking a phone message and that they need to tell someone else the important information they have heard. Novice speakers may need several repetitions and some assistance to restructure the information. Children in Grade 2 may be ready to try to take notes. Read or prerecord the messages below.

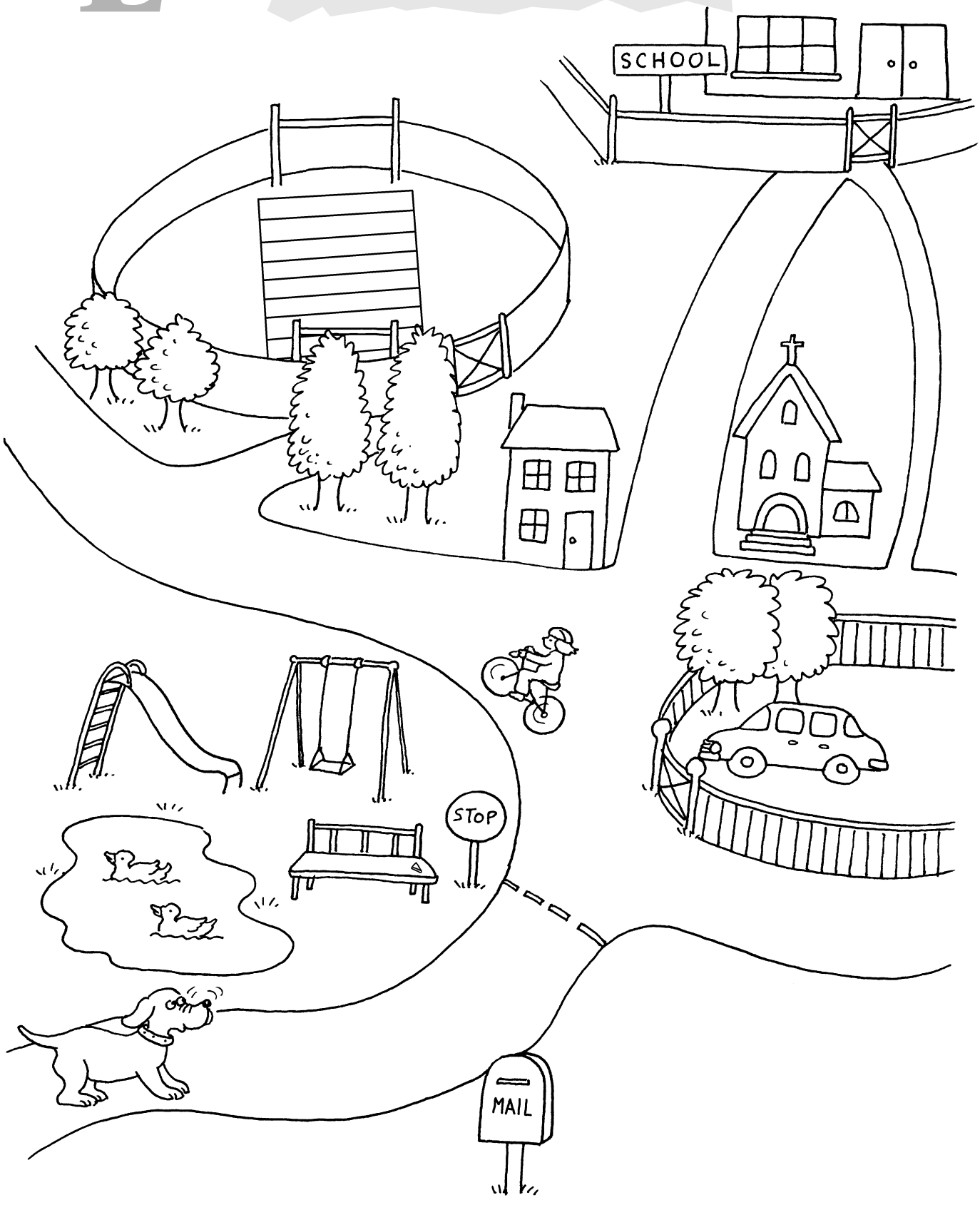
SUGGESTED MESSAGES:

- Hello. It's Mary Smith here. Could you please tell your mommy to call me back after six o'clock tonight? Thanks. Bye.
- Hello. Is that Pizza Haven? I want to order a large tropical pizza please. Home delivery please. I live at 20 Birdwood Avenue.
- Hello. This is Mr. Grey. Football practice has been cancelled tonight because of the rain. Will you please pass that on to your brother Tom?
- Is this the Whitely family? I'm Kevin from Triple FM. You have won two free tickets to the concert on Friday night. We will send them out to you.
- Hi Mom, it's Emma. I've just missed the bus and the next one doesn't come until 4 o'clock. Could you come and pick me up at the front gate of the school, please?
- Hello. Is this Burger Time? I'd like to book the party room for 10 people on Saturday, July 21, at 3:30 p.m. How much would that cost?
- Is this the Richmond town council? I've lost my dog, Nicky. He's black and white and has long hair. He is wearing a red collar. Has he been found by anyone?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

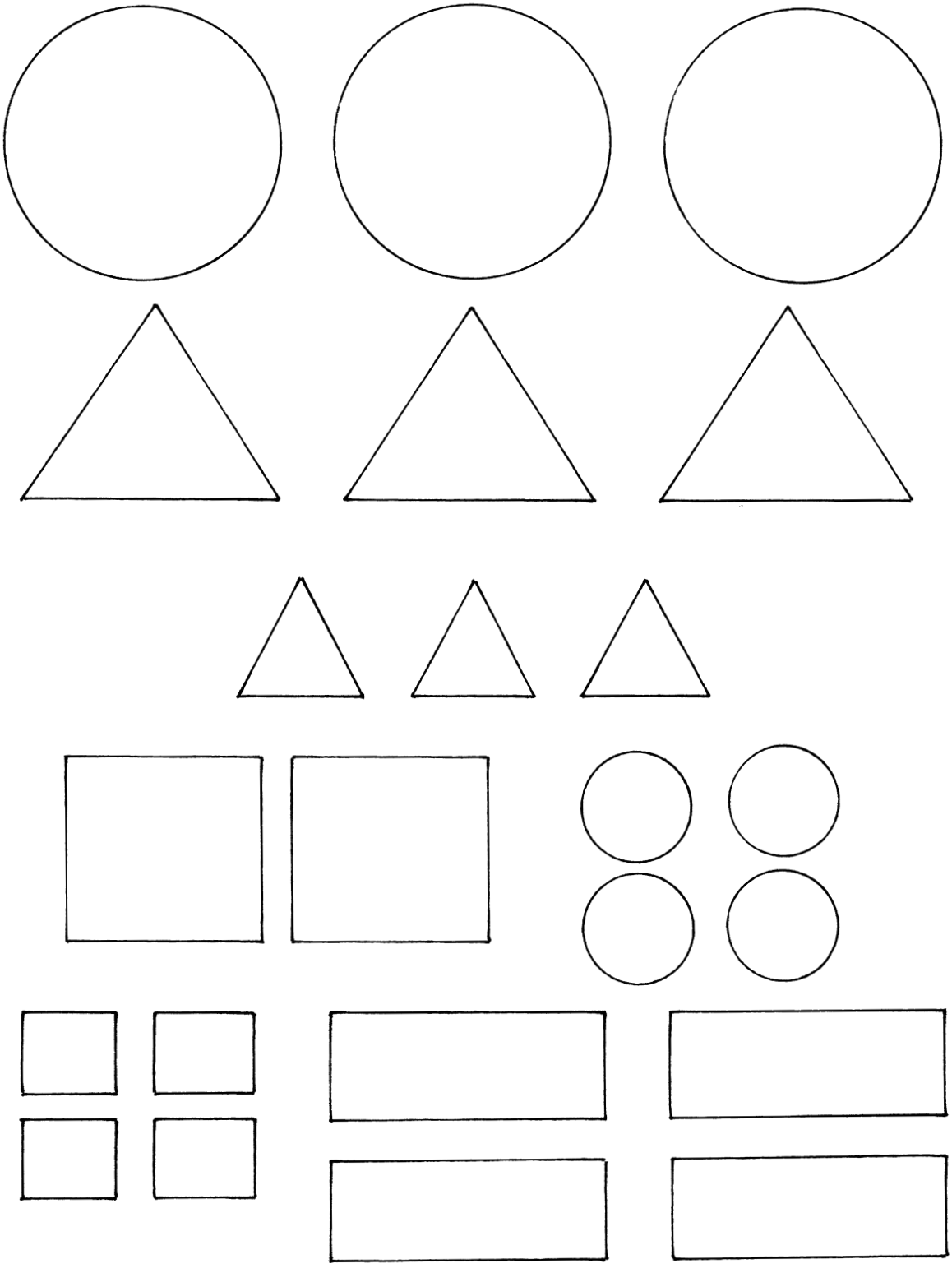
Students can practice giving their own messages to others. They can either create their own messages or deliver teacher messages, such as a message to the office, the p.e. teacher, and so on.

Sniffer



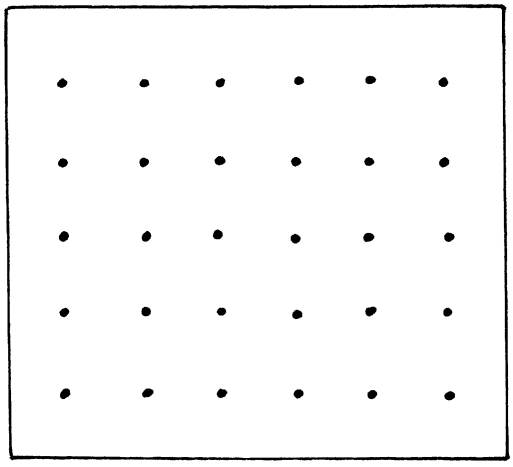
See also: “Sniffer” on page 63.

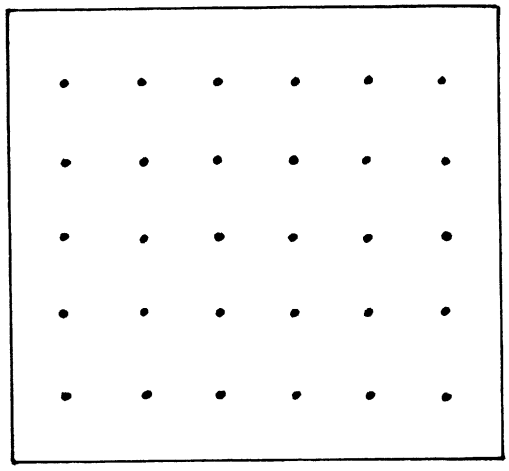
Shapes Galore

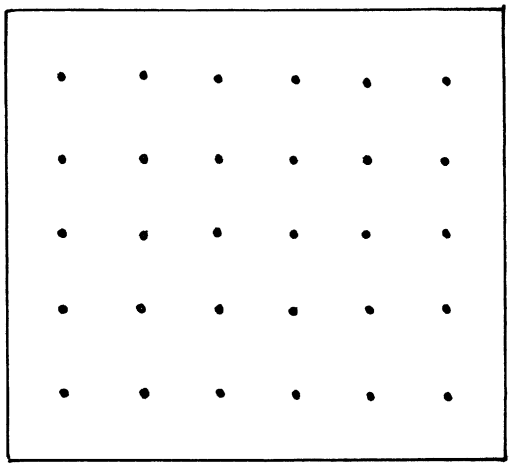


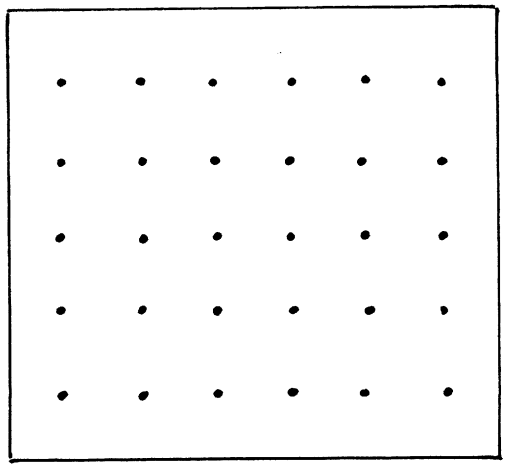
See also: "Shapes Galore" on page 64.

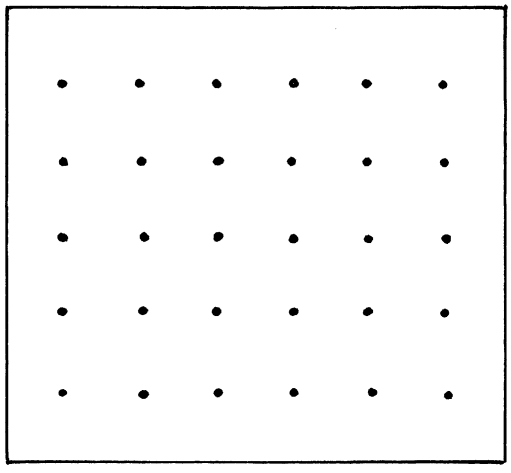
Going Dotty

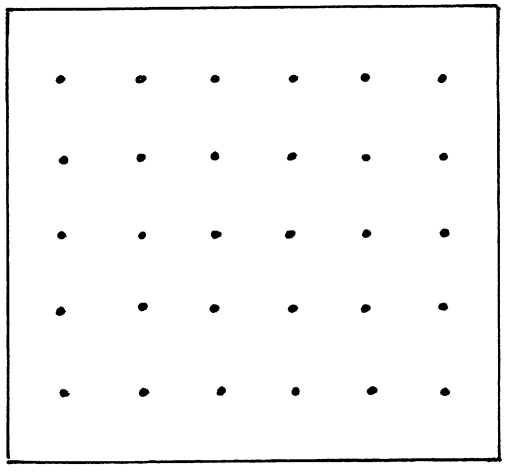






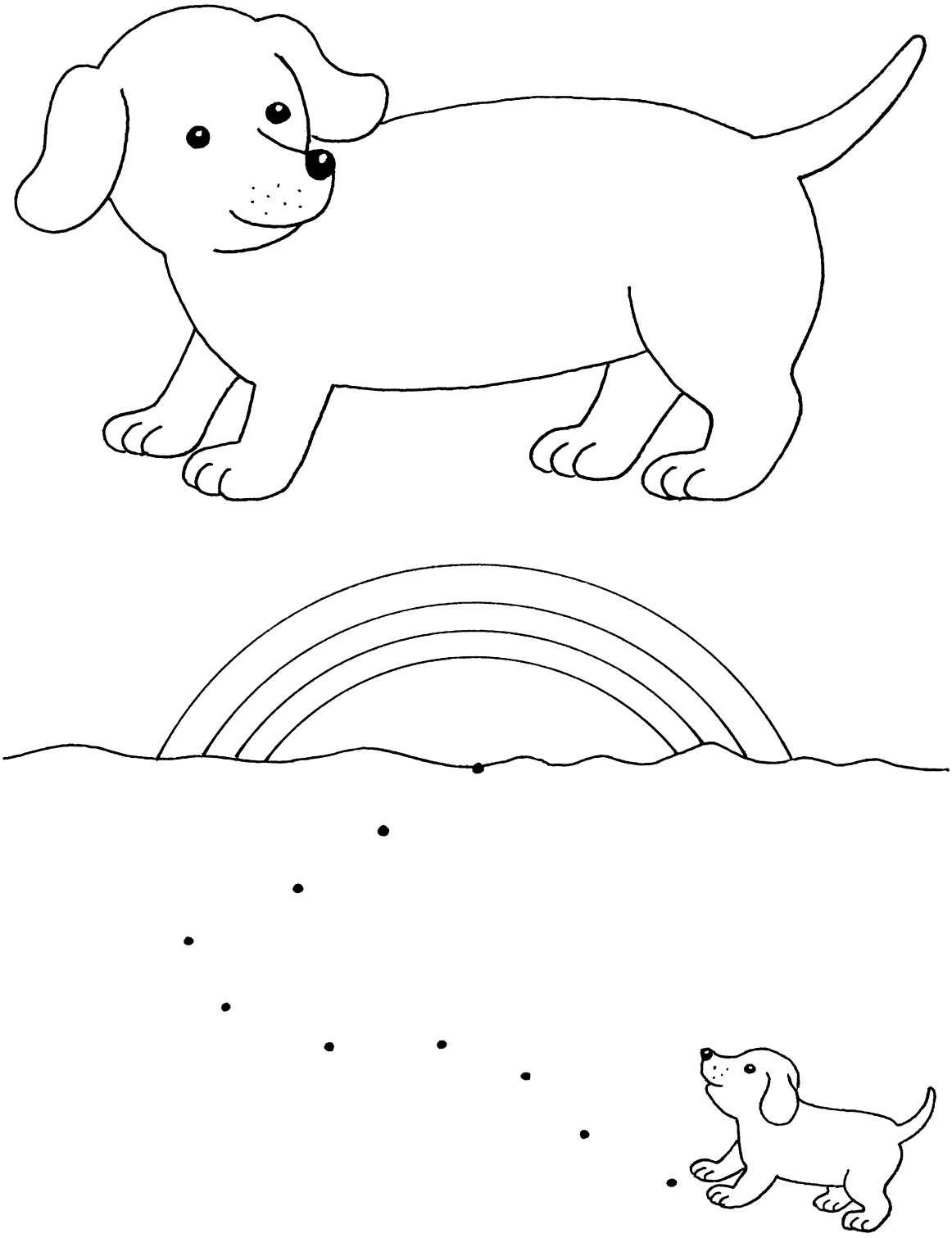






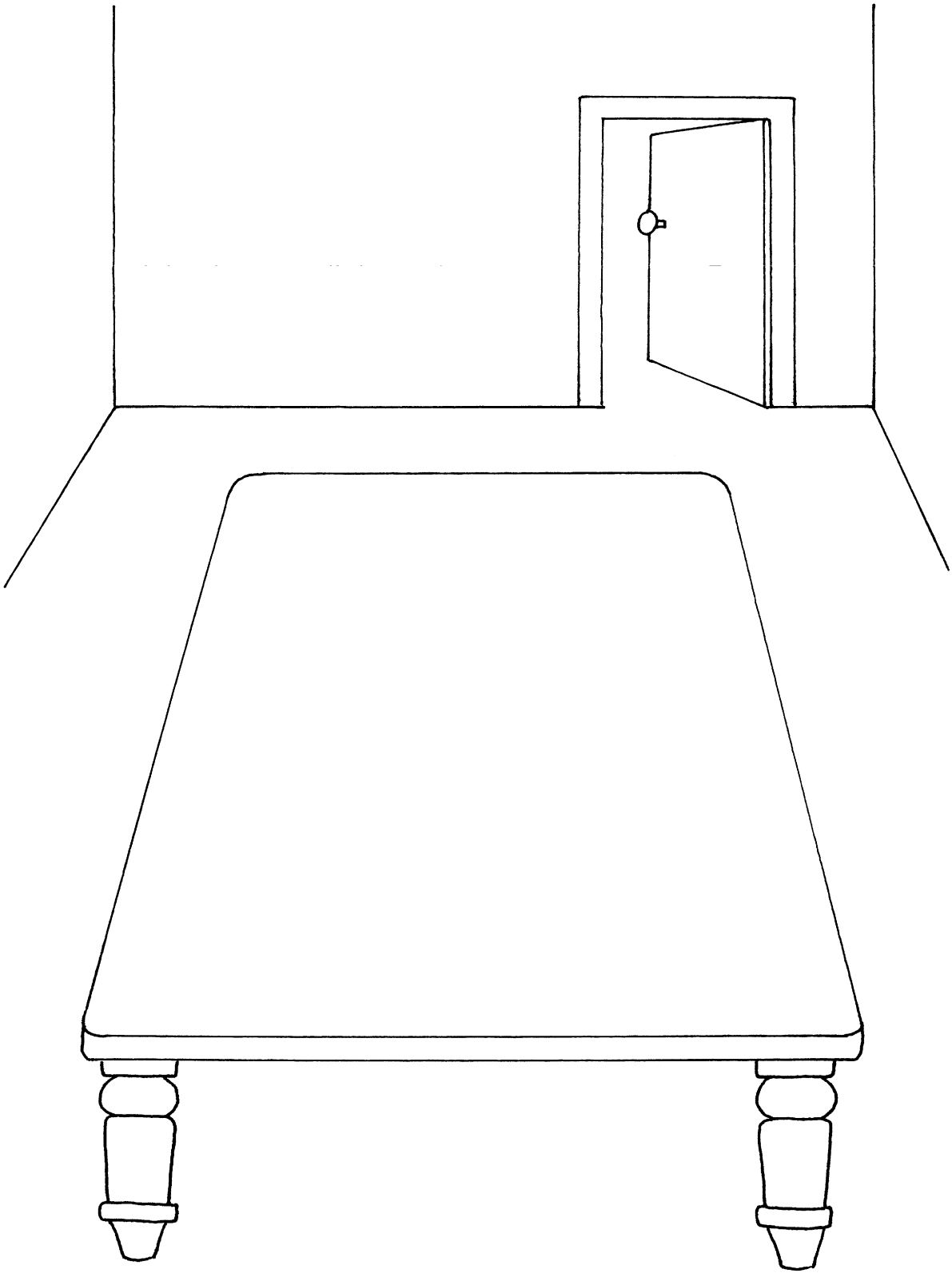
See also: "Going Dotty" on page 64.

Spotty



See also: “Spotty” on page 65.

The Birthday Party



See also: "The Birthday Party" on page 69.

Following Directions

Relevance to Literacy

Primary teachers consistently rate the ability to understand and follow directions as one of the most important skills students need to succeed in school. Unfortunately, failure to follow verbal directions often has social as well as academic consequences.

Since communication is interactive, students need to be able to give messages or directions to others as well as to follow them. In order to be successful in this area, they must be aware of the purpose of the direction, learn the importance of sequence in language, and select language that is accurate and relevant to the task. Too often, the first time we expect ordered and explicit language from children is in their writing.

Give students practice giving information orally to provide them with early oral experiences that focus their thinking and prepare for precise written language. Oral language also allows rehearsal and negotiation of meaning more readily than written language. The child's ability to verbalize the steps needed to achieve an outcome will also encourage more reflective thinking.

Stages of Development

Giving Directions

Children begin to give directions at an early age. Their first directions are usually commands used to get other people to satisfy their needs and wants, for example, *Put these on my feet.* Fortunately, the listener in these early exchanges is usually present and shares an understanding of what the word *these* could mean. By school age, students are able to give simple instructions in a "one-step-at-a-time" fashion. Some, however, find it difficult to appreciate that sometimes the listener does not share the same background knowledge. This awareness of the needs of the listener is slow to develop, and many children up to the age of seven years may fail to orient or provide a background for their audience. As children mature cognitively and begin to see a situation from another's point of view, they begin to provide essential background information and give simple directions in sequence to help others achieve a goal.

In the first years of school, we can expect children to provide up to three steps in sequence, even though they may not orient the listener to the goal of the task or tell all the materials needed to complete the task.

Often the ordering of the steps is inappropriate and the listener needs to ask clarifying questions to understand the directions. Young children's directions may lack the specific vocabulary for size, shape, direction, color, and action, and they will need the real object to be physically present so that they can use demonstration as well as words to convey their messages.

Following Directions

Auditory Short-Term Memory is a term familiar to many teachers. Unfortunately, the term is often used among professionals in a nonspecific way. There are a few guidelines to follow when determining and supporting the development of the typical short-term memory of students.

Generally, children can recall a number of related items (such as digits) at the rate of approximately two less than their chronological age. The growth in short-term memory for isolated verbal information tends to reach a maximum recall of approximately seven items. At this point, other strategies are used to aid recall such as chunking information. For example, to recall a telephone number such as 555–3322, we chunk the number into two parts.

Multiplying the number of recalled items by three provides a rough guide to the number of words in a sentence a child will be able to recall. However, grammatical complexity can also influence the child's ability to recall sentences.

A child with an auditory short-term memory span of four digits will not be able to remember instructions involving four separate actions. Children in the first year of school generally can only follow simple instructions limited to one or two directions presented one at a time. The ability to follow staged commands improves with age. If the oral instructions include long sentences with too many substeps, or involve language concepts and linguistic features beyond the child's understanding, they are often forgotten or performed out of order. *Point to the big red balloon and then color in the little boy's hat* involves a higher level of language processing than first appears. Not only are there two different actions to be completed but there are also two sets of modifiers (adjectives)—*big/red* and *little/boy's*—that must be processed.

Organization of Instructional Language

Instructional language is used to teach students. Directions are often a part of instructional language. A common variation of instructional language is **procedural language,** the aim of which is to describe how to do things. Young children can often follow several steps in a sequence, but they will need opportunities for clarification and revision. For example, when observing students as they follow the rules of a game, you might need to clarify by saying things such as *Oh, I meant that you have to pick up all of the red squares*.

Well-developed and more formal **instructional language** has a recognizable organization. While we do not expect young children in the first two to three years of school to be able to fulfill all of these criteria, it is still possible to introduce the important components of this structure and give them opportunities to practice. When well developed, the structure or framework for procedural language use involves:

1 Statement of a goal.
2 Identification of materials needed.
3 Detailed factual description of the sequential steps.
4 Evaluation of the outcome (optional).

Language Features

Instructional language employs detailed factual description. Statements or commands are also given, usually without the listener (actor) being mentioned: *Put one peg in every hole*. Linking words about time are used, for example, *first, after, now, as soon as*. The verb tense is usually in the present or is timeless.

In the Classroom

Practice for students should entail both giving and receiving directions.

There are many occasions when students are asked not just to listen and act immediately on what they have heard, but to retain information for longer periods in order to reflect or act on it later. Children differ in their capacity to *hold* that verbal information in their **working memory,** while they make associations, comparisons, and evaluations.

We often expect children to remember what they have learned (heard) from lesson to lesson, or even longer. Of course, whether verbal information is retained over longer periods **(long-term memory)** will depend on the efficiency of short-term memory and the ability to gather meaning from what is heard. It will depend also on the child's strategies for storage and later access.

The At-Risk Child

The at-risk child may be delayed in language development, have limited short-term memory and working memory, or may find it difficult to sustain attention. This unit will be helpful to these children as they learn strategies for following directions. Regular rehearsal and use help to keep the information fresh so that it doesn't decay in long-term memory. Retention can also be assisted by using the other senses through music, movement, or visual cues. Teachers can also generate an expectation of long-term memory and cue students to try to store knowledge for longer periods. For example, *Remember this for next week when we go to Science Works.*

Teachers must be aware of developmental factors related to memory capacity, instruction, and concept development. Children will become more effective learners if they are helped to discover how they can best remember and learn important information.

Effective teachers monitor their own classroom instruction and where necessary, modify the rate, length, and complexity of their verbal instruction according to the needs of class members. Studies have shown that if teachers slow their rate of speech, at-risk children have significantly greater success with the recall and understanding of directions. This may indicate that for some children the speed of processing of verbal information is a critical factor in learning.

Children with auditory short-term memory constraints will need instruction broken into smaller sequential steps. Constant repetition of instruction for at-risk children can have a detrimental effect on their approach to learning—*I don't really have to listen because Mrs. Bloggs will come over very shortly and tell me again what I need to do.*

The following teacher instruction protocol may be useful with these children.

1 **Alert** the student to listen. Call his or her name and make eye contact. The student should cease activity and be ready to listen. Do not give the direction until the student is ready.
2 Give the **direction**. Remind the student to listen actively as he or she will need to retell what is to be done.
3 The student then **repeats** the direction or **rephrases** its meaning. The student may need to **rehearse** the intended action.
4 The teacher **observes** the student's responses.

Concepts involving time, spatial relationships, color, shape, and directionality are essential prerequisites for directional language. The focus in the early primary years should be on the child's exploration, development, and verbal expression of these concepts.

Children need to understand and follow directions in order to participate in social activities and games with their peers. Failure to understand and comply with these routines is the basis of many children's social difficulties on the playground.

Assessment

The activities in this section will provide many opportunities for systematic observation of students' understanding and use of instructional language.

Novice Speakers

- Attempt to give directions and instructions to others.
- Follow one-step-at-a-time short, simple instructions.
- Demonstrate attentive listening in nonverbal ways.
- Usually indicate when something is not understood.

Observation Guidelines

- Begins to use specific descriptive language.
- Can give one or two ordered sequenced steps.
- Has immediate recall of approximately three items of information.

Maturing Speakers

- Explain familiar procedures or give simple instructions to peers.
- Ask questions and make comments that expand ideas.
- Provide feedback regarding the effectiveness of instructions.

Observation Guidelines

At this level the teacher should observe if the student shows an appreciation of the needs of the listener and provides some background information relevant to tasks. The student can:

- identify the goals of the task.
- list some of the materials needed to complete a simple task.
- recall and follow approximately three steps presented in a sequence.
- understand key language concepts involving number, size, color, shape, direction, time, and so on.

Listen and Draw

Students make additions to a drawing after listening to specific oral directions.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- attend to the detail of an instruction
- follow instructions that incorporate concepts of number, size, position, and so on

Teacher Notes:

This activity provides experience in active listening. Give each student a copy of the blackline master on page 95. Tell students to listen carefully to the directions and make additions to their pictures accordingly. Allow students time to follow each instruction before moving on. Some suggestions are listed below.

SUGGESTED DIRECTIONS:

- Draw a kite bigger than the one shown.
- Draw a fluffy cloud above the trees.
- Draw three people sitting on the park bench.
- Show the person in the middle holding an umbrella.
- Draw a sad girl looking out of the window.
- Color the front door red.
- Draw a dog tied up to the large fencepost.
- Draw a striped cat sitting on the fence.
- Draw six birds sitting on the electric wire.
- Draw a long stream of smoke from the chimney.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Select students to give other directions to add detail to this or another picture.

Ask some students to explain in their own words some of the alterations they made to their pictures.

Rusty the Robot

Using the set vocabulary, students give instructions to Rusty the Robot.

Goals

In this activity students will practice:

- giving instructions using a limited repertoire of words
- following instructions that focus on concepts of number and direction

Teacher Notes:

Introduce Rusty the Robot. Explain that after a lot of training, Dr. Brain has taught Rusty to follow directions. So far he only understands a few words. For this reason great care must be taken when telling Rusty what to do.

THE WORDS RUSTY UNDERSTANDS ARE:

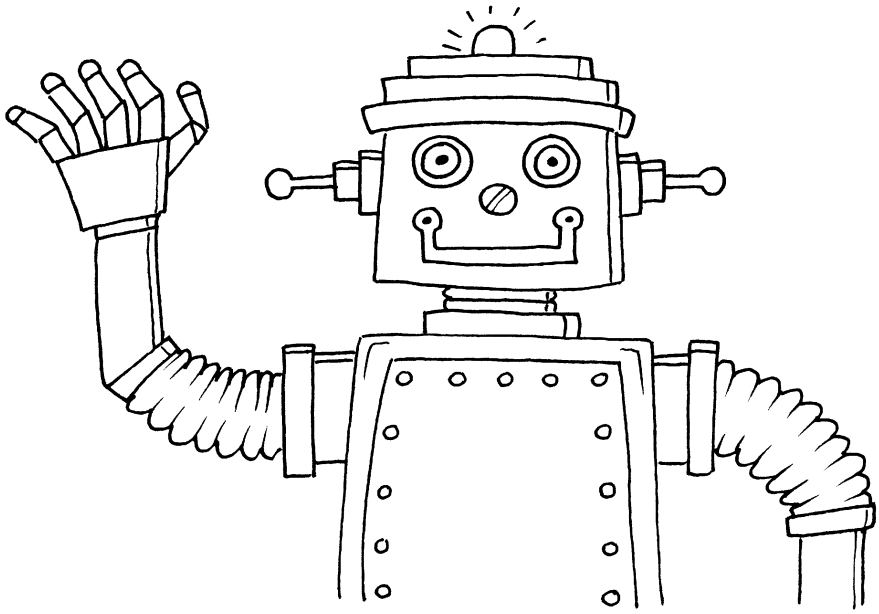
Number: *one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten*
Direction: *left, right, forward, backward*
Action: *turn, step, go, stop*

You may write these words on the board or put them on individual cards for Dr. Brain to carry.

Select a student to play the role of Rusty. Model giving Rusty directions so that he can move around the room, for example, how to go from the door to the back left-hand corner of the room. Remember to use only the words mentioned above.

Two students can role-play Dr. Brain and Rusty while the other class members observe.

As they become familiar with the activity, students can play the game in pairs. You can move between groups and guide students in making Dr. Brain's instructions clearer and Rusty's responses more accurate—he may still be unsure of left and right!



Clowning Around

Students give specific directions on a given theme to Clowny, a large doll puppet.

Goals

This activity encourages students to:

- give sequenced directions
- be specific in word choice
- provide sufficient information
- use correct spatial terms

Teacher Notes:

Introduce Clowny to the whole class and explain that they are going to teach him how to do something. Clowny is not able to ask them for extra information—he does exactly what they tell him! Students will need to think carefully about the words they choose, how much information they provide, and the order in which they give the directions.

When students give the directions, you interpret them on Clowny's behalf, in a literal manner to highlight possible limitations in the students' communication efforts. For example, when brushing teeth, Clowny picks up the toothbrush by the bristles. The student will then need to refine his or her directions.

Discourage students from pointing or touching the props. Younger students may enjoy the challenge of talking while they sit on their hands.

Capitalize on opportunities for focusing on new vocabulary, such as *eyelet*, when Clowny is tying shoelaces.

SUGGESTED TASKS AND PROPS:

Cutting up an apple: apple, knife, chopping board
Making a sandwich: sliced bread, knife, margarine, cheese or meat
Brushing teeth: toothbrush, toothpaste, cup of water
Putting on a long-sleeved shirt
Peeling a banana
Tying shoelaces: pair of large shoes
Writing a letter of the alphabet: pencil, paper, eraser
Reading a book: book, bookmark, light
Ironing a handkerchief: iron, flat surface, handkerchief
Drawing and cutting out a circle from cardboard: cardboard, scissors, crayon

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Clowny may need to be taught routines and rules of the classroom that will help students revise their own knowledge of what is required of them. For example, they can give directions for cleaning up their desks, eating a snack, or borrowing a library book.

Rubbery Figures

This activity requires students to attend to, understand, and carry out three-part instructions.

Goals

To successfully follow directions in this activity, students must:

- follow simple commands
- comprehend specific vocabulary, including body parts and words referring to position and direction, such as *above* and *toward*
- associate language with physical movement and position of the body in space.

Teacher Notes:

As students work toward comprehending three-stage commands, this activity can be adapted to two-stage commands or simplified for "Simon Says" action games.

Explain to the class that there will be three things they have to do with their bodies—they must hold each of the actions or positions until the end of the task. Encourage students to visualize each action as it is given and imagine how they might look when each of the three tasks has been completed. They must not move until all three commands have been given.

Perhaps a small bell could be rung or a flag waved to signal when they can begin to move. Similarly, at the end of the activity, when sufficient time has been given for recall and implementation, the bell or flag could be used to signal to students that they must freeze in their final positions. Talking between students should be discouraged to allow the important "self talk" that can facilitate recall. The order of the given commands may not be crucial for successful completion of the tasks.

Tasks can be adapted to incorporate more difficult concepts, such as *left* and *right, same* and *different*. Specific concepts can be taught and reinforced by giving a number of different command sets that use them, for example, parts of your hand, position words such as *above* and *below,* actions such as *wiggle* versus *shake,* and adverbs such as *fast* and *slow.*

SUGGESTED SETS OF INSTRUCTIONS:

Starting Position Sitting Down (on the floor or on a chair)

- Look at the ceiling.
- Put one hand on your knee.
- Shake the other hand.

- Cross your legs.
- Put your elbow on your knee.
- Lick your lips.

- Put one hand on your ankle.
- Sit on the other hand.
- Nod your head.

- Put your feet together.
- Put your chin on your shoulder.
- Clap your hands.

- Pull your ears.
- Scrunch up your nose
- Stomp your feet.

- Scratch your cheek.
- Raise your eyebrows.
- Wriggle your body.

Starting Position Standing Up

- Put your hands behind your back.
- Bend your knees.
- Stick out your tongue.

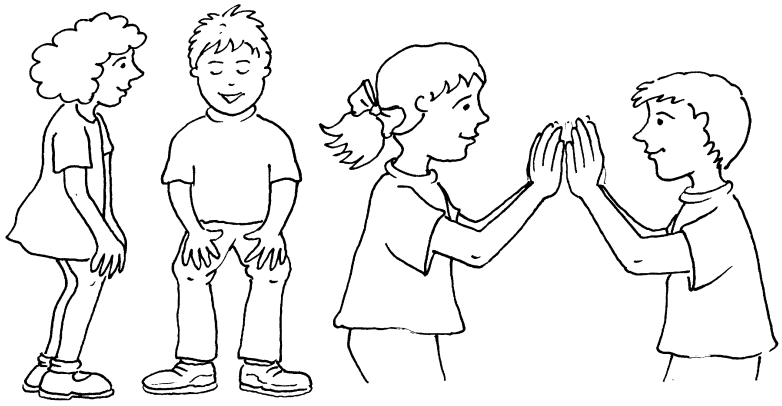
- Face the door.
- Put your hands on your shoulders.
- Stand on one leg.

- Bend over forward.
- Put your hands on your knees.
- Sway.

- Put your hands on your hips.
- Blow out your cheeks.
- Lift one knee.

- March on the spot.
- Point to the window.
- Open and shut your mouth.

- Cross your legs.
- Pat your head.
- Hold your nose.



PARTNER ACTIVITIES

- Stand up and face each other.
- Join hands.
- Touch knees.

- Stand back to back.
- Link arms.
- Put your chin on your chest.

- Stand side by side.
- Point your outside leg forward.
- Lean forward.

- Sit opposite each other.
- Touch soles of feet with your partner's soles of feet.
- Clap each other's hands.

- Sit back to back.
- Touch heads.
- Link arms.

NOTE:
In giving the commands, you may wish to omit some words to avoid undue repetition. You may also wish to provide structure words such as *first, then,* and *so on.*

Tell the Alien

Students give clear verbal directions about how to complete everyday tasks.

Goals

This activity requires students to:

- give explicit information
- master specific vocabulary such as linking words, action verbs, adjectives
- appreciate relevant versus irrelevant information
- evaluate the effectiveness of the instructions

Teacher Notes:

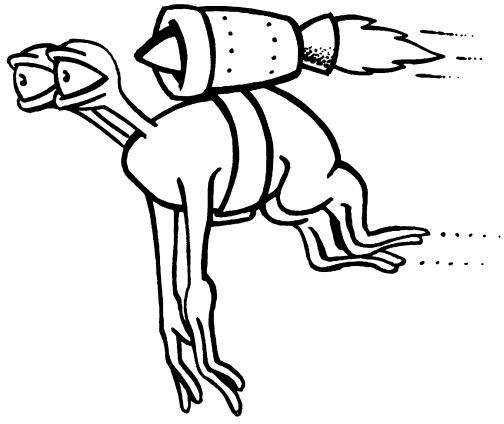
Ask students to imagine that an alien has arrived in their class and that they must explain to him or her how to do various everyday tasks. Nothing can be assumed and directions need to be as concise and as relevant as possible. Select a task for two or three students and allow them time to rehearse. One student becomes the spokesperson for the group and instructs the alien (teacher). At the completion of the task, the audience can discuss the effectiveness of the directions.

When students are familiar with the activity, they may take the role of the alien, attempting to *forget* prior knowledge and only following the directions given. For example, sweeping: *Hold onto the broom handle.* The alien holds the broom at the base, thus encouraging use of words such as *top, near, 20 inches.*

Younger and less linguistically capable children will benefit from having the object present for some tasks.

SUGGESTED TASKS TO TEACH THE ALIEN:

- Putting on a shirt.
- Reading a book.
- Making a phone call.
- Putting on a watch.
- Sharpening a pencil.
- Putting on a glove.
- Writing the letters *m* and *a* in lowercase.
- Making a milk shake.
- Washing hands.
- Wrapping a present.
- Riding a bicycle.
- Buttering a piece of bread.
- Running a bath.



Make and Say

This activity involves directing someone to make a matching construction.

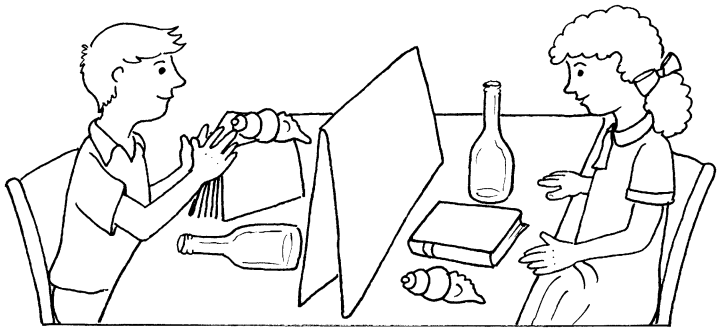
Goals

While giving directions, the students will:

- use specific vocabulary, particularly words involved in position and direction
- understand the sequence of the steps involved in completing a task
- rely on clear concise oral language

Teacher Notes:

Two students, separated by a physical barrier but seen by the rest of the class, are given identical sets of three objects. One student—the *maker*—is given a few minutes alone to combine the materials in a creative way. The maker's task is then to direct the other student—the *follower*—how to reproduce the model.



The follower should be silent throughout the directions, as this encourages the *maker* to use precise language. At other times the follower can take a more active role, for example, asking three questions to clarify the directions. These could be represented by cardboard tokens that are then passed in as the questions are asked.

FEEDBACK:

On completion, the barrier is removed and the result is evaluated.

- The follower reports on positive and negative points encountered.
- The maker comments on the follower's efforts and how he or she found the task.
- The audience evaluates the effectiveness of the interaction.

MATERIALS:

These could be stored in small containers, in duplicate sets. Ensure that the chosen materials are suitable for combining.

If two similar objects are included, complexity is significantly increased as features of size, shape, color, and so on will need to be described to aid differentiation, for example, two pegs—one new and one rusty.

SUGGESTED OBJECTS:

Straw, pipe cleaner, paper clip, length of string, cardboard cylinder, triangle-shaped piece of paper, toothpick, matchbox, peg, rubber band, rectangle-shaped piece of cardboard, cork, pin, and cloth material.

Witch's Brew for Super Slime

This fun drawing and planning task helps students identify materials and steps in a recipe.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- identify materials needed for a task
- practice using appropriate verbs to do with cooking—*cut, chop, pour, mix, spread, boil*
- practice giving directions

Teacher Notes:

Tell students that they will be helping Winnie the Witch make her new recipe for super slime! Tell students:

Draw the things you have chosen in Winnie the Witch's pot (see page 96). Tell your partner how to make the super slime, describing an action for each ingredient. For example, *Chop up six slippery slugs. Sprinkle with green jelly.*

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

You can further extend students' expression, by asking them what equipment they needed to prepare their ingredients. For example, they may have used *knife, chopping board,* and *kettle*.

Students can also state the use or goal for their slime recipe. For example, *My slime will turn teachers into caterpillars*.

The Budding Scientist

Students describe how to make something or how to investigate a problem.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- think about materials needed to perform an action
- identify steps to achieve a task
- practice specific language features, for example, imperative verbs
- use linking words with reference to time and sequence

Teacher Notes:

Choose an experiment from the suggestions below to model for the class. Pay particular attention to the two key language prompts—**What do we need?** and **What are the steps?** Students play the role of the scientist, experimenting or explaining steps needed to discover an answer. This enables them to rephrase and reorder what they say before writing it down.

In procedural language, the order of the steps is often vital and young students may need assistance. Students in the first two grades may need to work in pairs. Drawing the steps in sequence may help organize their verbal presentations. Older students may like to work alone or propose their own experiments.

"HOW TO" SUGGESTIONS:

- make pancakes
- test if a cork will float
- test to see if seeds will grow in the dark
- test to find how long it takes for a pear to rot
- find out the most common colored jelly bean in a bag
- find out the lowest temperature for the week
- find out what things are heavier than a bag of feathers
- find out how many children lying end to end will fit down the school hall
- test how long a line could be drawn by squeezing toothpaste from a tube
- find out how much milk Shredded Wheat will absorb
- make toast
- boil an egg
- advertise the school fair

By the Rules

Students explain the rules of commonly known games.

Goals

Explanation requires students to:

- give an overview of the main goal of a game
- describe in order the steps involved in playing a game
- indicate rules of a game
- use specific language terms for time and sequence

Teacher Notes:

Ask children to brainstorm all their favorite games. Encourage them to think of games played in the playground with little or no equipment, for example, hopscotch, marbles, hide-and-seek, "Simon Says," and card games such as *Snap, Fish,* or *Memory.*

These could be written on cards and then selected by a student who explains it to someone who is not familiar with the game. Students could imagine they have a visitor from another country who plays different games.

FRAMEWORK:

A framework needs to be presented to the class to facilitate recall of what is involved in each game and to assist with the organization of the explanation.

HOW TO PLAY A GAME

The Main Point of the Game:
For example, *In this game you try to stay very still when someone says, "Freeze."*

What You Need to Play:
"Think of all the things and people you need."

Steps for Playing the Game:
First of all you…
Next…
Then…
After that…
In the end…

Rules:
(These will be referred to during or after the steps.)
You can/are allowed to…
You can't/aren't allowed to…
At the end…

Make a Game

Students work in pairs with given materials to make a game and later instruct others how to play it.

Goals

Explanation requires students to:

- give an overview of the main goal of a game
- describe in order the steps involved in playing a game
- indicate rules of a game
- use specific language terms for time and sequence

Teacher Notes:

Supply each pair of students with a collection of materials with which they can make a game.

SUGGESTED COMBINATIONS:

- sheet of cardboard, scissors, ruler, pens, tokens, and a dice
- long strip of cardboard, 8 marbles, 2 pipe cleaners, and clear tape
- table tennis ball, cardboard cylinder, and 2 large feathers
- 2 craft sticks, a marble, and 2 boxes

Discuss the possible features of a game with students before they begin to make it. You might wish to specify the number of players, a scoring system, the time it takes to play the game, and the rules.

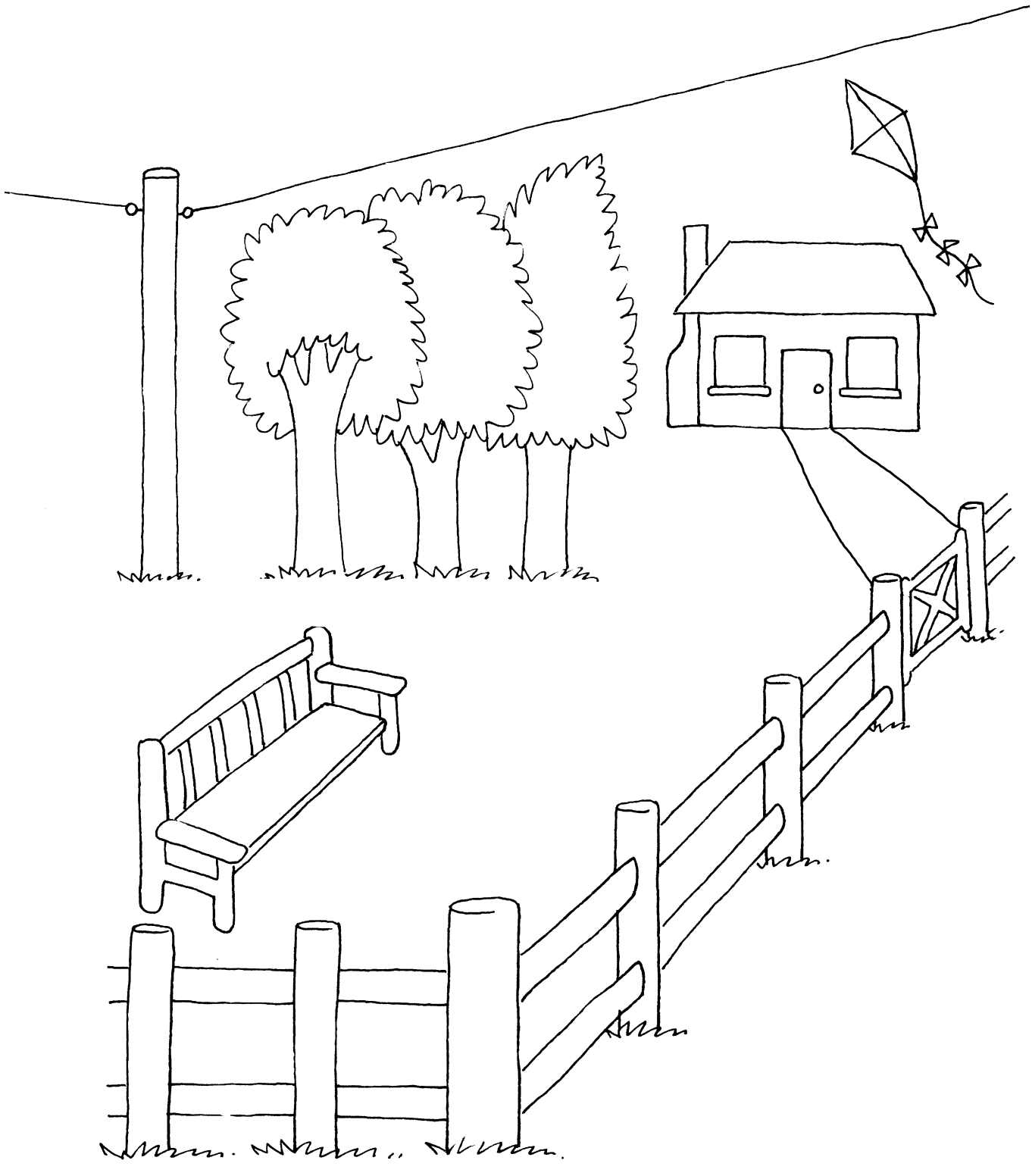
Students work in pairs to make their games. When the game is complete, they should join with another pair of students to play the game.

Pairs must explain their game to others before play begins. They should consider telling them:

- the name of the game
- what materials are needed to play the game
- a summary of the overall point or goal of the game
- some detailed description of the steps involved in the game
- the way the game ends

Written instructions can be made at a later time and the successful games kept as classroom resources.

Listen and Draw



See also: "Listen and Draw" on page 84.

Witch's Brew for Super Slime

See also: "Witch's Brew for Super Slime" on page 91.

Making Vocabulary Connections

Relevance to Literacy

This section focuses on a crucial area of literacy development: vocabulary and semantics (the knowledge of word meanings). The size of a student's vocabulary correlates most reliably to school success in most areas of the curriculum—in particular, with reading.

Each student actually has four vocabularies. The **Speaking Vocabulary** is the most important and of the most practical use to students. Not only is it the basis for growth in the other vocabularies, but it reflects the changing nature of our language. **Listening Vocabulary** is likely to contain some words not within the student's usual speaking vocabulary. It too, is very important, as much time both in and out of school is spent listening. Determining word meanings in the oral context is a sophisticated skill. In contrast to written language, there is limited time to infer meaning from context when listening. **Reading Vocabulary** becomes increasingly important in the upper grades as it enables students to work and gain knowledge independently of the teacher or class. **Written Vocabulary** is understandably the smallest and least useful of the four.

To communicate effectively, we must be able to select specific words quickly and accurately in different situations. When chatting with family and peers, a casual speaking vocabulary is used, possibly incorporating slang terms or colloquial expressions. Speakers in this situation will often hesitate, rephrase, and use *filler* words such as "oh well" or "you know" to gain thinking time.

There are many times in life when fluent oral language and accurate concise understanding and use of words is crucial. We must help children use their oral vocabulary in more literate ways and not just reserve this ability for written texts. Within the classroom, these occasions may include giving directions or instructions, explaining a point of view, debating an issue, and giving a report or speech.

Knowledge of word meanings and their interrelationships facilitates thinking, predicting, inferring, and reasoning. This is because connections have been made between words—words with similar or different meanings, words that link up to a particular topic, words that mean

something different in different contexts, and words that show relationships within and across phrase and clause boundaries.

The word knowledge that students bring to reading will influence their success with decoding and the ability to use meaning strategies to assist comprehension. Additionally, those students who are quick to make deductions about what new words mean can further expand their vocabulary through reading.

Written language makes strong demands on speed and accurate selection of appropriate words. There are fewer redundancies and the density of ideas per sentence is greater. Writers need to "get to the point" in a concise, unambiguous, and organized manner. **We must also give our students oral language tasks that make these same demands.** This prepares them for written language activities and at the same time develops successful oral language in its own right.

Another area of the curriculum that requires strong vocabulary is math. The link between math and language has been highlighted by Gawned (1990). Gawned states there are four critical types of language that provide meaning in math.

1 **Activity-Specific Language**—vocabulary for labels, attributes, functions, description, relationships, responding.
2 **Problem-Solving Language**—for reasoning, exploring, predicting.
3 **Language of the Math Curriculum**—sets and subsets, equality, measurement, space and time.
4 **Literacy in Math**—representing, recording.

In the Classroom

A child's receptive vocabulary sees a fourfold increase in the first few years of school.

Vocabulary expansion involves more than just learning more names (nouns). Class activities that highlight all parts of speech—verbs, adverbs, adjectives, prepositions, and so on—can expand students' understanding and knowledge of language structure. This expanded vocabulary becomes particularly relevant in written work. Even language-able students benefit from direct focus on vocabulary because they can then consciously apply their skills to the written form.

Many intermediate children still require opportunities within the school day to engage in play activities. In this way they continue to learn language through linking it with concrete experiences and role-play.

We cannot expect students to use new words until they are familiar with their meanings and understand the contexts in which to use them. Consider the changing meaning of the word *head* in the following sentences and in what contexts they are likely to be heard. Children with a limited or literal knowledge of word meanings may easily misinterpret these.

I think I'll head off to bed.
I hit my head on the head of the bed.
You go that way and try to head them off.

A final reason for addressing vocabulary growth in the classroom is the vocabulary connection with reading. Vocabulary knowledge facilitates prediction, even for beginner readers, who may rely strongly on pictures for cues to the text.

The At-Risk Child

Children who have limited vocabulary and poorly developed semantic organization are disadvantaged as learners and communicators because they cannot recall and express their knowledge in an organized way. Some key indicators of children with these problems include:

- difficulty retrieving words, particularly names or labels
- slow development in reading and/or limited development of sound-letter correspondences
- overuse of nonspecific words such as *thing, stuff, this*
- overuse of familiar and safe vocabulary—*got, good*
- fluent language but excessive use of *fillers* such as *like, well,* and *you know*
- poor understanding and use of words with subtle differences in meaning
- long-winded explanations with specific details omitted (difficulty getting to the point)
- inability to appreciate subtleties of word meanings in jokes and puns

Words about language—*sound, letter, word, sentence*—will need to be explained clearly. The teacher will also need to explicitly teach and model math-specific language and word relationships. Consider the potential confusion for a child unsure of the terms *plus, addition, add on, sum of, count on two,* and *three more* when these are used interchangeably by the teacher in successive sentences.

The activities in this section allow children to explore and develop their own word store and organize this knowledge for later recall and use. At the same time the activities will help make new connections between words and enable children to appreciate the power of words in jokes, puns, and idioms. These activities also promote practice of quick and accurate selection of specific words through brainstorming. Students will be encouraged to use convergent and divergent thinking about words and their meanings.

Assessment

Vocabulary development is inextricably linked to text genres, making formal observation guidelines difficult to separate from those in description, explaining, narrative, and so on.

Novice Speakers

- Use *and, then, but* to link ideas in speech.
- Self-correct to clarify meaning.

Maturing Speakers

- Understand and use some familiar idioms such as "hang on a minute."
- Sometimes use similes to make speech more effective.
- Understand and experiment with more complex grammatical connectives such as *because, if, after.*
- Compare grammatical alternatives for expressing similar meanings—synonyms.

Observation Guidelines

Look for and encourage:

- breadth of vocabulary knowledge in the four vocabulary modes
- ability to adjust vocabulary according to speaking roles and partners
- verbal fluency and speed of word recall—names and word associations
- vocabulary specific to curriculum areas, for example, reading and spelling, math, and social studies vocabulary
- vocabulary specific to topic areas such as animals, community workers, Olympic Games
- vocabulary used in description and classification, for example, color, size, classes, or comparisons
- vocabulary used to connect ideas, for example, *because, so, if,* and *then*
- vocabulary used to reflect on learning and thinking, for example, *remember, think, wonder*

Brainstorming

Students practice quick retrieval of vocabulary within a given category.

Goals

This brainstorming activity provides opportunities for students to:

- explore their vocabulary repertoire within a given category
- discover strategies for rapid word retrieval
- classify words into categories and subcategories

Teacher Notes:

When speaking, writing, or thinking, we often need to explore the range of words in a specific category. To be efficient, this exploration needs to be both rapid and extensive. This activity provides practice in word exploration and retrieval.

Write the following category topics onto cards and play the activity in a small group or as a whole class in any of the following ways.

1. After taking a category card, one member of the group throws a die. The next student has to think of that number of words in the given category. (Two dice will make the game more difficult.)
2. As a group, students are given a defined time period to think of words in the given category.
3. Students work individually within the group, as in 1 or 2 above. After comparing the words, they score a point for any word not thought of by another member of the group.
4. The given category can also be broken up into subcategories to form a type of "brainstorming tree." For example, clothes—women's, men's, baby's, uniforms, footwear, ski wear, summer, formal, and so on.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CATEGORIES:

- machines
- kitchen utensils
- furniture
- tools
- stationery
- ball sports
- containers
- girls' names
- relatives
- flowers
- nuts
- toppings for a pizza
- things in a fridge
- weather words
- feelings
- things taken camping
- body parts
- breeds of dog
- wild animals
- milk products

SUGGESTIONS FOR SUBCATEGORIES:

Things that are:

- pointy
- curly
- soft
- shiny
- juicy
- prickly
- slippery
- dangerous

Things that:

- have a switch
- have buttons
- have a handle
- you sit on
- need a battery
- run on electricity
- you hang up
- you push

Things made of:

- glass
- wood
- rubber
- paper
- cotton
- plastic
- cardboard
- leather

Depending on the age and language ability of the students, many other more specific categories can be presented. For example, the general category of body parts may be broken into further categories for brainstorming, such as parts of a hand, joints of the body, things you do with your eyes.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Extend the brainstorming to include two categories. Students must think of things that are long and thin, prickly and straight, hollow and alive, square and soft, or that you sit on and are soft, are hard and can be polished, or run on electricity and have buttons.

Word Circle

Students produce a chain of words associated in meaning.

Goals

This activity assists verbal flexibility. Students will:

- select a word connected through meaning to a previous word
- explain the association between words
- understand the associations made by others

Teacher Notes:

A small group of students sits in a circle. One of the students selects a starter word (see examples below) from a pile or is given a word by the teacher. The next student supplies the first word he or she thinks of on hearing this word. That word is then passed to the next student, who supplies another association.

The chain of words is recorded and compared with the chain formed by another group of students. Double meaning words and other aspects of the particular word associations can then be discussed. If any student in the group does not understand the connection between a supplied word and the word given, he or she should indicate by giving a thumbs down until the speaker explains the association.

SUGGESTIONS FOR STARTER WORDS:

- bridge
- super
- level
- rain
- ruler
- joke
- life
- cost
- hard
- soccer
- hurt
- table
- river
- cone
- dog
- pocket
- room
- rain
- cage
- roar
- heavy
- effort
- knees
- funny
- smoke
- mouse
- fall
- volcano
- dollar
- smell

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Children take turns giving the first word they think of when they hear the starter word. Then they explain the connection. For example:

fall —*Water* because water comes down in a waterfall.
—*Autumn* because we sometimes call Autumn *fall*.

Word Links

In this series of activities, children will increase their vocabulary and build associations between language concepts.

Goals

By using vocabulary cards, the children will:

- categorize objects according to set criteria
- give explanations of an object's function
- brainstorm items within a category
- explain associations between items pictured

Teacher Notes:

The blackline masters on pages 113–116 can be used to extend vocabulary, make new semantic associations, provide explanations, and categorize objects into new groupings. If photocopied onto cards and laminated, the cards become a language arts resource and can be used during free time.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

1 **Sort Me Out** Use some or all of the cards, and ask students to sort the cards according to certain criteria, including the following—animal/not animal; legs/no legs/number of legs; inside/outside the house; has teeth; with/without handles; can put things in it; makes a noise.

Children could also work in small groups to see if they can sort twenty randomly selected cards into their own categories, for example, food, things with handles, round things, things you wear, and so on. They must have at least two cards in each group.

2 **Concept Match** Each player is dealt six cards. One card is turned picture-side-up to form a central pile, for example, *car*. In turn, players discard a card onto this card and state how the two are associated. Player 1 could play a bus card and explain, *The bus goes with the car because they both have wheels*. If one player is unable to think of an association, he or she misses a turn.

The goal of the game is to be the first to discard all your cards. When players are relatively skilled, they can discard a card out of turn as soon as they can make an appropriate association. However they must indicate their turn by being the first to call out, "Match."

3 **Free Association** Players take turns using the cards in a free association activity. As a card is selected, the student must name two words that immediately come to mind, for example: **comb**—*hair, teeth*.

4 **Why Do You Need Me?** Use the cards with a dice and board game to practice giving explanations. As players move their token along the board they turn a card over each time they land. They must provide an explanation of why we need this item. For example, knife: *You need a knife to cut food.*

Parts and Wholes

Students will learn to understand the relationship between parts and wholes.

Goals

This activity requires students to:

- recall precise vocabulary to name parts of a given object
- identify an object from the naming of some of its parts
- name other objects that have a given part

Teacher Notes:

ACTIVITY 1: NAMING PARTS OF OBJECTS

It is important that students become particular about words so that precise vocabulary is learned. This activity helps students become aware of parts of objects—large and small—and then to learn their names.

SUGGESTED OBJECTS:

- book
- school bag
- parka
- clock
- shoe
- teapot
- telephone
- teddy bear
- television

Place the "object of the day" where all students can see it. They then brainstorm the names of individual parts. Prompts can be given by the teacher, for example, *what about the part you use to…?* Each contribution should be valued, even if it is too general a word, for example, *top for the lid of the teapot*. You might respond, *Yes, it is the part of the teapot which is on the top. Do we have another name for that?*

The blackline master pictures for Word Links on pages 113–116 can be used instead of objects. Ask children to write the labels of the parts known. Younger students can draw a line from the parts and color in a dot if they know its name.

Challenge students to recall the names of object parts from their own visual image of the object—that is, the object is not present and there is no picture prompt.

ACTIVITY 2: WHAT ELSE HAS A PART WITH THE SAME LABEL?

Using the name of an individual part from one of the objects in Activity 1, ask students to think "sideways" (lateral thinkers!), and suggest other objects that also have a part of the same name. Very different objects will be suggested, and this will help students realize how versatile words are and how the meaning of the word changes when it is used in relation to different objects. For example, button (on shirt), television, computer, jeans, shorts, hair dryer.

Prompt students to think of alternative word contexts. Point to the spine on your back and say, *Think of a book—the part down the back that holds the pages together.*

ACTIVITY 3: NAMING THE OBJECT WHEN GIVEN THE PARTS

Provide three or more names of parts of an object. Encourage students to visualize the parts and build on their mental pictures as more information is given. Pause after the first and second parts to allow time for all students to integrate the information.

SUGGESTED PARTS AND OBJECTS:

shell, yolk, white	(egg)
gutter, spouts, shingles	(roof)
elbow, wrist, hands	(arm)
skin, core, pips	(apple)
carts, cash registers, aisles	(supermarket)
arms, legs, cushions	(armchair or couch)
pews, altar, spire	(church)
handle, buckle, straps	(bag)
cuff, zip, waistband	(pants or jeans)
hose, ladder, siren	(fire engine)
scoreboard, stand, goalpost	(football field)
spout, handle, lid	(coffee pot or teapot, pitcher)
wheels, seats, doors	(vehicle)

Synonym and Adjective Spinner

In these games, students learn to replace common words with more varied vocabulary.

Goals

During the games, students will need to:

- brainstorm alternative vocabulary for commonly overused words
- visualize an image of a common noun based on their previous experiences
- recall specific descriptive words

Teacher Notes:

Write the numbers 1 to 6 in the segments of the spinner on page 117. Spin the spinner and choose a word from the synonym list. The aim of the **synonym game** is to accumulate the points shown on the spinner and be the first to reach the target (20). If the spinner shows the number 3, then the student must name three words with almost the same meaning as the word shown on their card in order to add three points to their score. For example, **big**—*huge, gigantic, large.*

If only two words can be thought of during the agreed time limit, then the player receives only two points instead of three.

Instructions for **adjective spinners** are as above, except players use words from the adjective list. The players must name adjectives that describe the word they have chosen. For example, **witch**—*skinny, ugly.* No points are awarded for the following adjectives: *big, little, good, bad,* or any colors.

SYNONYM LIST:	ADJECTIVE LIST:	
big	witch	spaghetti
said	knife	ice cream
put	house	shoe
walk	dog	rug
ran	table	grass
went	tree	weather
little	child	doctor
good	car	shirt
looked	pencil	snake
bad	computer	

Thinking Verb Dial

Students form sentences incorporating specific cognitive or *thinking* verbs.

Goals

Students will:

- practice using cognitive verbs, such as *imagine, wonder,* and *remember*
- observe how conversation utilizes cognitive verbs
- provide information, opinions, and thoughts on a given topic using cognitive verbs
- form sentences incorporating specific cognitive, or thinking, verbs

Teacher Notes:

The use of cognitive verbs allows the expression of thoughts, feelings, and opinions. These verbs facilitate the skills of predicting and hypothesizing. In written and spoken language, cognitive verbs are used to present a point of view, to back up an argument, and to form conclusions. In addition, their use in written narratives adds depth to characters and general interest to the story.

1 Photocopy and mount the "thinking verb dial" on the blackline master on page 118. Alternatively, make a larger dial for general use. Write the words required in the spaces on the dial.
2 Select a topic, such as those in the brainstorming activity on page 101. Spin the dial and use the verb it lands on to form the basis for the sentence.
3 Model the activity first in front of the whole class. Continue spinning the dial to create an interchange of opinion and ideas.

For example, on the topic of cars:

Think: *I think that cars are a big cause of pollution.*
Believe: *I really believe that people who use public transportation instead of private cars should be rewarded.*
Hope: *I hope that cars will be running on solar energy soon.*

The activity can also focus on one particular verb.

Imagine: *I imagine that it would be difficult to pole vault.*
I imagine that when I am 35 years old, I will have my own children.

Introduce a different verb tense focus by altering the tense of the stimulus cognitive verb. For example, *feel* becomes *felt* (past) or *will feel* or *might feel* (future).

Sounds the Same...But!

This activity helps students appreciate homonyms through drawing and discussion.

Goals

In these activities students will:

- develop flexibility in thinking of possible meanings of words
- provide explanations and definitions

Teacher Notes:

Although many words have more than one meaning, they are not usually confused when used in context. However, in order to appreciate the play on words in jokes, cartoons, and puns, we need to be able to switch rapidly from one meaning to the other.

Children need to be familiar with both meanings of homonyms to be able to link them to the correct spelling patterns.

ACTIVITY 1:

Photocopy pages 117 and 118. Then cut out each picture pair and laminate. Photocopy a second set of picture cards and cut them apart along the dotted line to make individual cards.

SUGGESTED CARD GAMES:

1 Using the path on any board game, students pick up a picture pair card each time they land and make up a sentence that incorporates both words. For example, if the child chooses the *plain/plane* card, they might say: *We were served a very plain snack on the plane.*
2 Using individual picture cards, play pair games such as *Snap, Fish,* or *Memory* by associating the two word partners of each homonym pair.

ACTIVITY 2:

The cards on the blackline master on page 120 represent a homonym with only one of its possible meanings illustrated. The students can work in pairs to discuss another meaning for each word and draw it on the reverse side. These double-meaning words are spelled the same (homographs).

ACTIVITY 3:

Use the cards on page 121, or make a set of cards for the following words—*fit, hard, kid, miss, play, pop, rest, rock, set, stick, tip, top, trip, bank, left,* and *park*. Students read the word and, working in pairs, think of two or more meanings. Use each word meaning in a sentence or illustrate the meanings by mime or gesture.

Colorful Language

Students extend their understanding of the colorful language of similes by imagining feelings and situations in which given similes might be used.

Goals

This activity promotes students' ability to:

- connect past and present events
- understand commonly used similes
- create original similes

Teacher Notes:

Some students, when they become fluent and independent readers, gloss over and become bored by passages of descriptive language incorporating similes and metaphors. They may not understand the connections underlying the language, or perhaps they have not been trained to take the step of creating a visual image from the words they read.

By focusing on similes in oral language and relating them to their own personal experiences, students gain a sense of ownership of this style of language use, which can later be transferred into their own writing and into an appreciation of what is written by others.

The following similes, or simile starters, can be written onto cards and used independently in a game or they can be read by the teacher from the book. Ensure that the simile is understood and discussed so that the connections between the subject and the simile becomes clear. For example, *tough as leather*—talk about where leather comes from, how it is prepared, things made of leather, how it feels, and so on.

One student may say *My steak was as tough as leather because it was really hard to chew and swallow.*

Note: Similes can also be introduced with the word *like,* for example, *He walked like a horse with a sore leg.*

ACTIVITY 1:

When did you last feel…

- as warm as toast
- as wise as an owl
- as sick as a dog
- as slow as a snail
- as brave as a lion

ACTIVITY 2:

What might be described…

- as old as the hills
- as smooth as silk
- as tough as leather
- as flat as a pancake
- as clear as a bell

ACTIVITY 3:

Complete the following:

- as gentle as…
- as cross as…
- as thin as…
- as colorful as…
- as fresh as…

Let's Get This Straight

In this activity, students explain some widely used idioms and further their understanding by acting out both real and literal meanings.

Goals

In this activity students will consciously reflect on the use of idioms in our language. They will:

- provide examples of when a particular idiom would be used
- explain the meaning of an idiom
- act out the literal as well as the real meaning of an idiom

Teacher Notes:

Much of the English language is idiomatic. Exposure to the use of idioms will increase students' understanding of idioms by providing opportunities for them to *read* the situation in which idioms are used and then deduce their meaning. Some students are mystified by idioms and fail to use them in their speech. This activity allows students time to consciously reflect on and talk about idioms.

Introduce the concept of words having a *hidden* meaning. Choose phrases you know are familiar to students. For example, *Hang on, Keep cool,* and *It's raining cats and dogs*.

You may be surprised by how enthusiastically students try to work out the meaning of less common idioms. Talk about when and why these phrases would be used. Share ideas about how such phrases came to be used in the first place. To introduce humor into the activity, ask students to imagine what would happen if people took the meaning of an idiom literally.

Students can work in pairs or in small groups to:

- describe a situation in which the given idiom would be used.
- act out a situation in which the use of the idiom would occur.
- act out the literal meaning of the idiom.

SUGGESTED PHRASES:

- I couldn't keep a straight face.
- He gets on my nerves.
- It's a piece of cake.
- It was a close shave.
- She got up on the wrong side of the bed.
- I'd better hit the sack.
- She let the cat out of the bag.
- They had a bird's-eye view.
- Dad flew off the handle.
- I nearly cracked up.
- Go out and let off steam.

Let's Laugh

Students learn to appreciate a play on words in jokes.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- identify pictures that answer clues
- discuss alternative meanings of double-meaning words
- point out the play on words in jokes relying on sound confusion

Teacher Notes:

Jokes often rely on the ability to rapidly shift between alternative meanings of a word or between two similar-sounding words. Some students find this difficult and need the extra support of pictures and opportunities to talk about what makes jokes funny.

ACTIVITY 1:

Photocopy the blackline master on page 122 and distribute to pairs of students.

The following jokes focus on the meaning or semantic aspect of language—a play on the double meaning of words. Read aloud a clue and ask students to select the picture that will provide the answer. Involve other students in discussion about the jokes and their meanings. For example, ask *What is black and white and red all over?* One answer is a newspaper, so students identify the picture of the newspaper. You should then focus on the words *read/red*. Discuss the spelling as well as the meaning differences. Is there anything else that is black and white and red all over? (an embarrassed zebra, perhaps!)

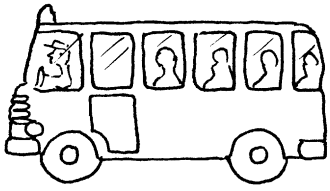
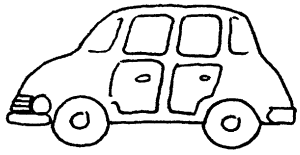
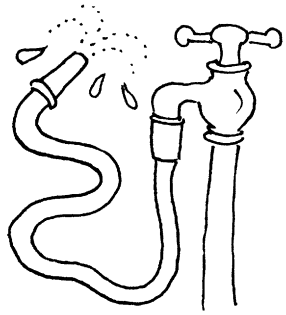
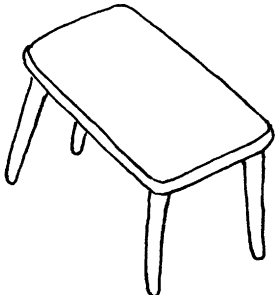
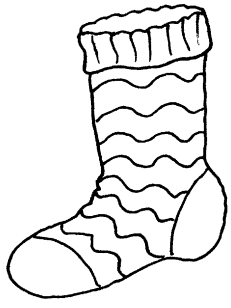
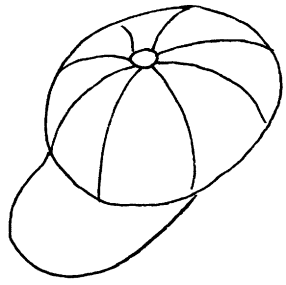
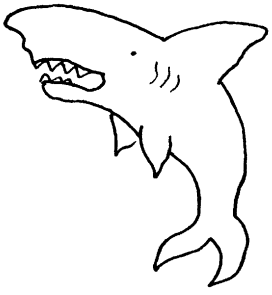
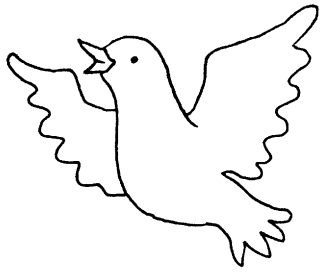
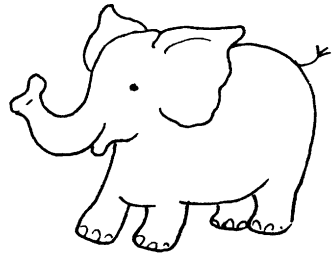
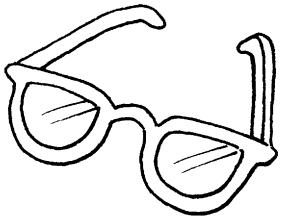
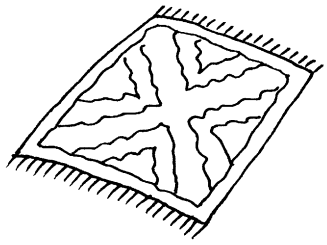
- What is Dad's favorite food? (popcorn)
- What building has the most storys? (library)
- What do you give a hurt lemon? (lemonade)
- What runs but has no legs? (the water tap)
- Who casts spells in a delicatessen? (sandwich)
- What bow doesn't tie? (rainbow)
- What stays hot in the refrigerator? (mustard)
- What has one horn and gives milk? (milk truck)
- What sort of nails are in your shoes? (toenail)
- What do you call a cat born in October? (octopus)

ACTIVITY 2:

The following jokes rely on the identification of subtle sound differences between words. For example, *What does Cinderella seal wear?* (Glass flippers.) Discuss the *fl/sl* contrast in the words *flippers* and *slippers* and the relationship between the seal and the flippers.

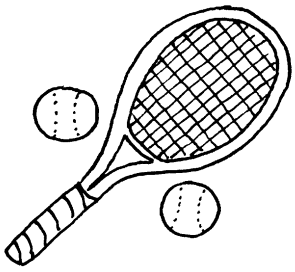
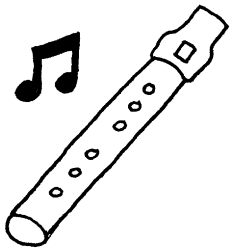
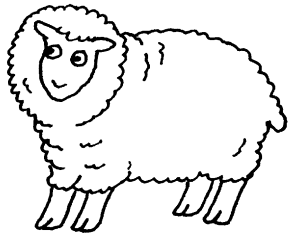
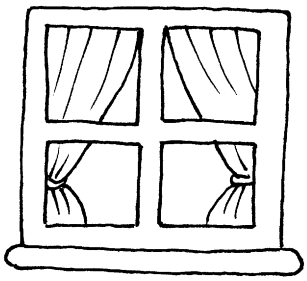
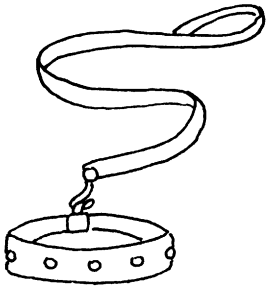
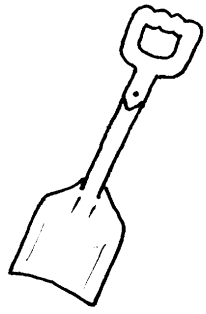
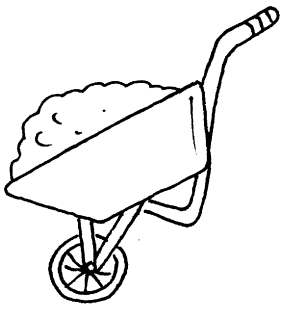
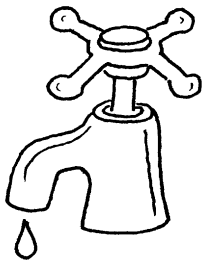
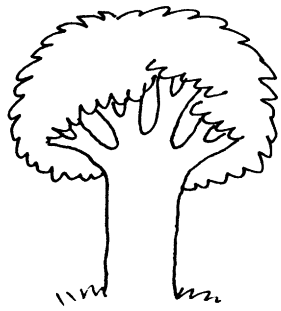
- What is the biggest ant in the world? (giant)
- What does a cat put its head on to rest (caterpillar)
- What do two speeding witches say? (broom, broom)
- What do sick pigs use? (oinkment)
- What do you call an egg that knows everything? (eggspert)
- What do frogs like to drink? (croak a cola)

Word Links

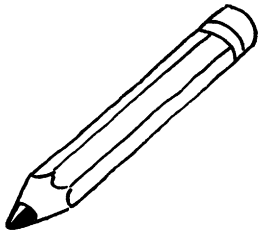
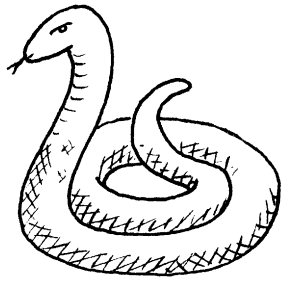
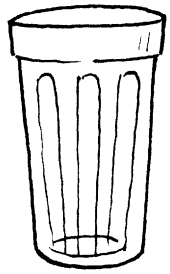
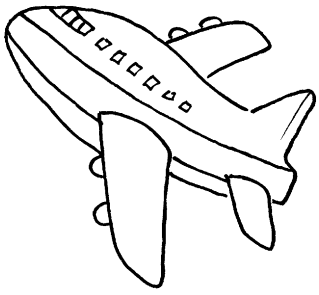

See also: "Word Links" on page 104.
"Parts and Wholes" on page 105.
"Twenty Questions" on page 129.

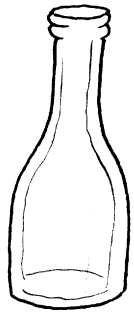
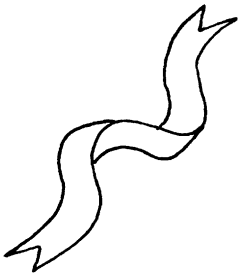
Word Links

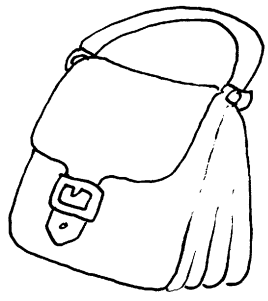










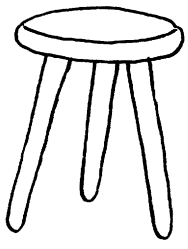
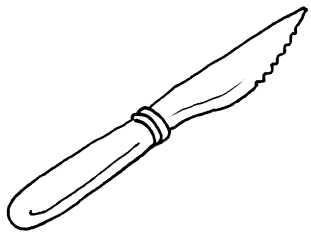

See also: "Word Links" on page 104.
"Parts and Wholes" on page 105.
"Twenty Questions" on page 129.

Word Links

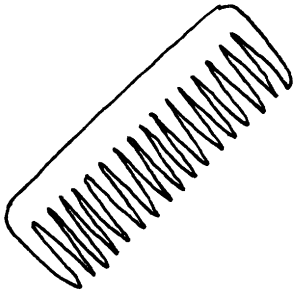



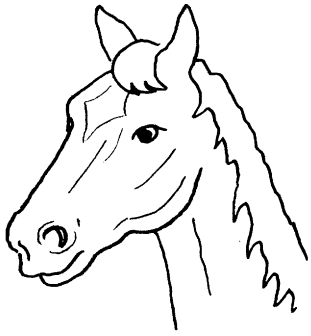


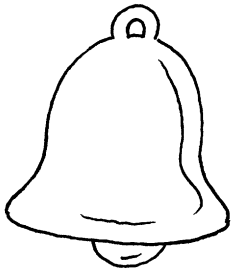



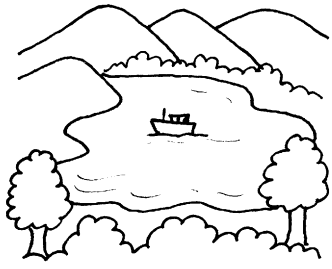
See also: "Word Links" on page 104.
"Parts and Wholes" on page 105.
"Twenty Questions" on page 129.

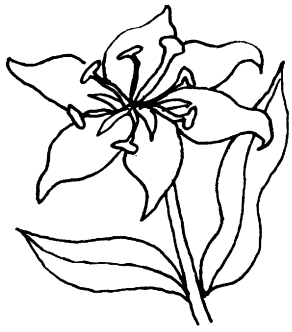
Word Links

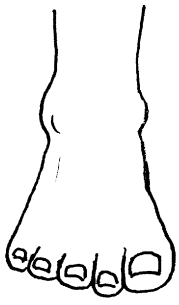


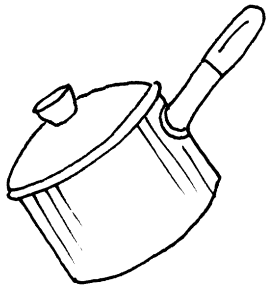


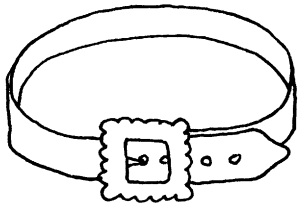


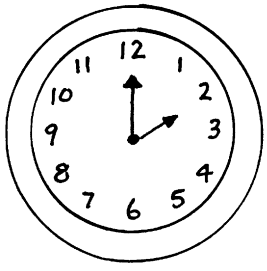


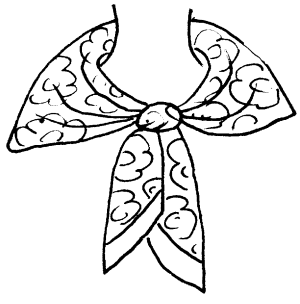






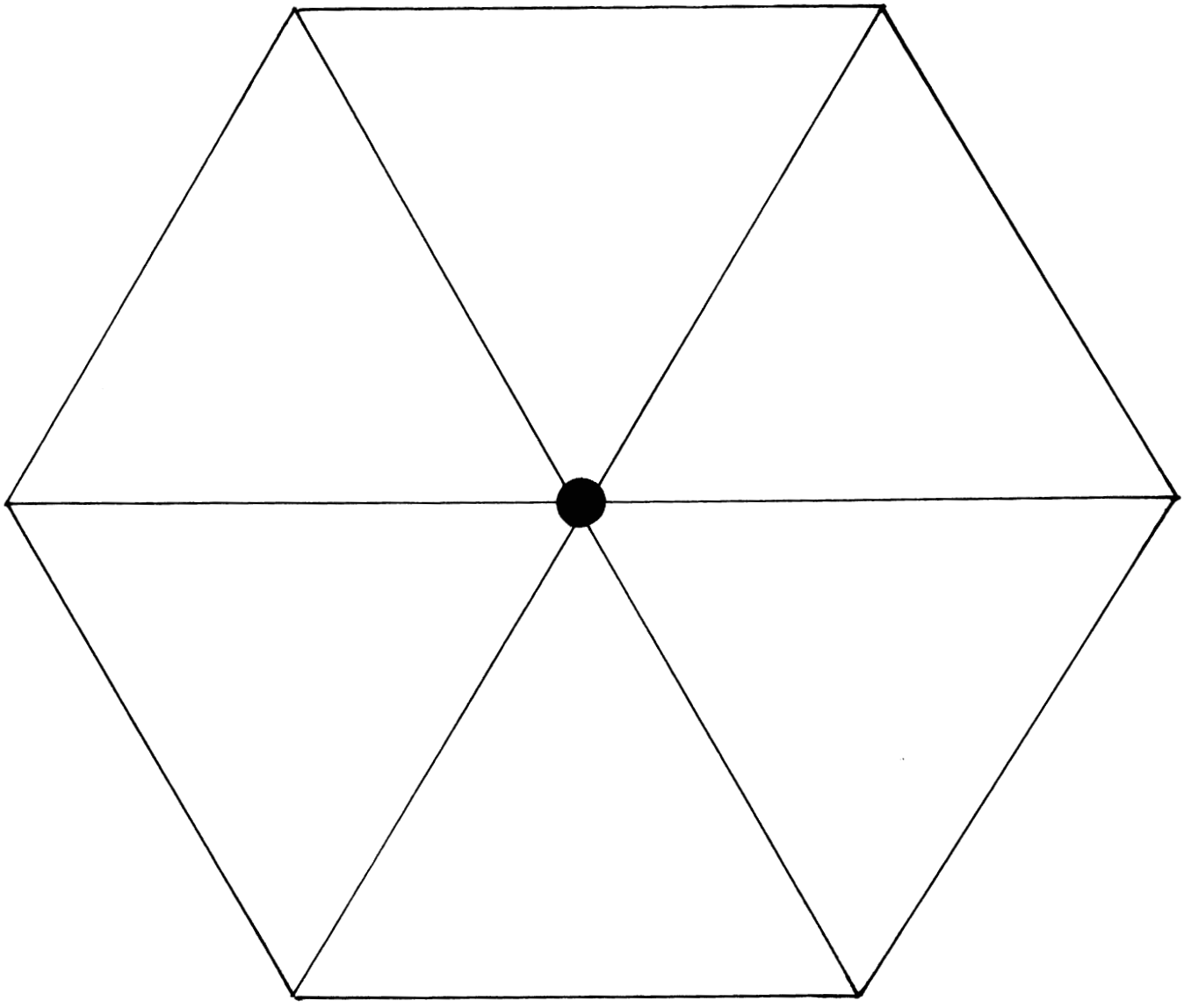






See also: "Word Links" on page 104.
"Parts and Wholes" on page 105.
"Twenty Questions" on page 129.

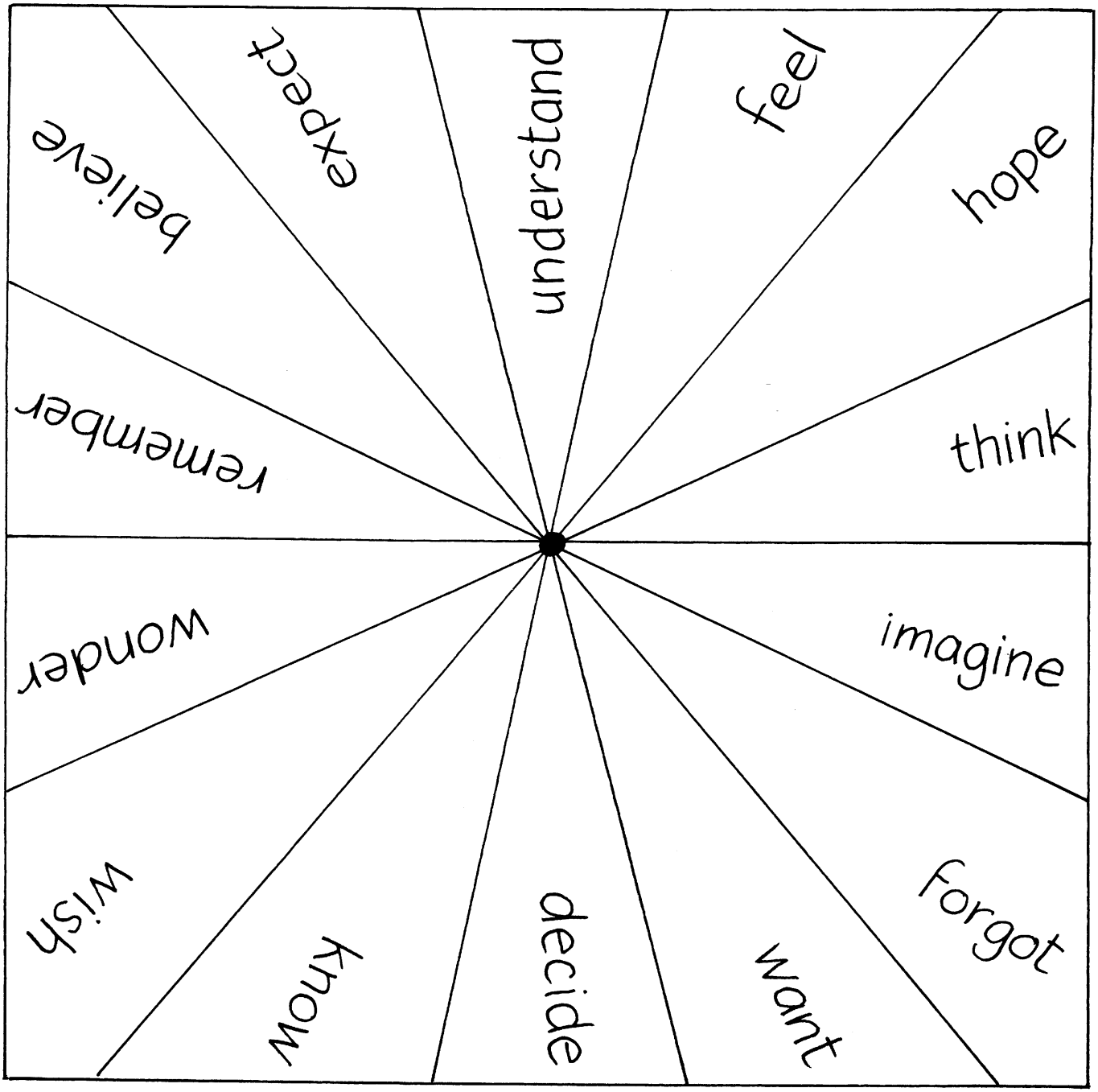
Spinner

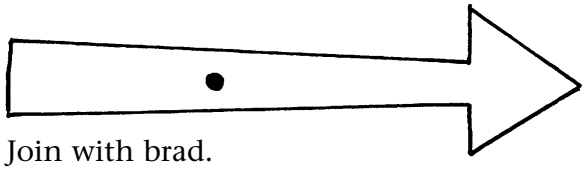


Photocopy the spinner onto tagboard. Place a pencil through the center. Spin the pencil.

See also: "Measure Up!" on page 34 and "Synonym and Adjective Spinner" on page 107.

Spinner



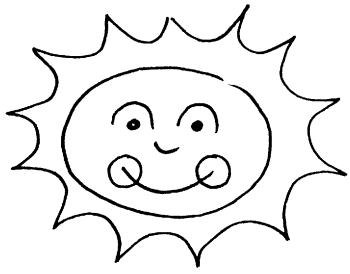
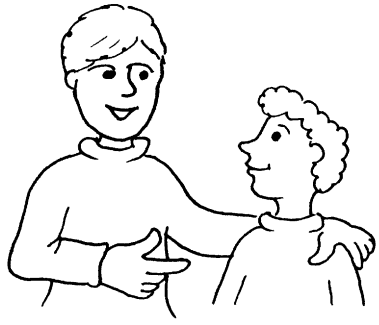
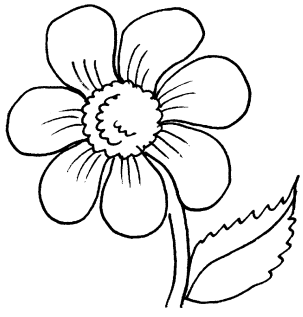
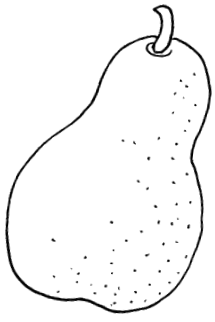
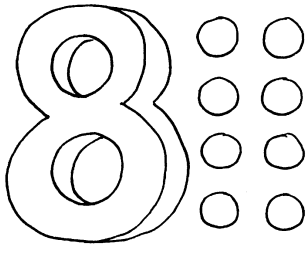
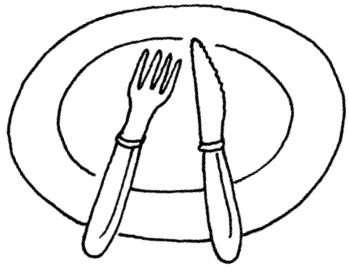


Join with brad.

See also: "Thinking Verb Dial" on page 108.

Sounds the Same... But!

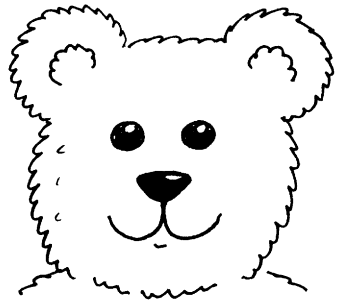
Activity 1

 Sun	 Son
 Flower	 Flour
 Pear	 Pair
 Eight	 Ate

See also: "Sounds the Same... But!" on page 109.

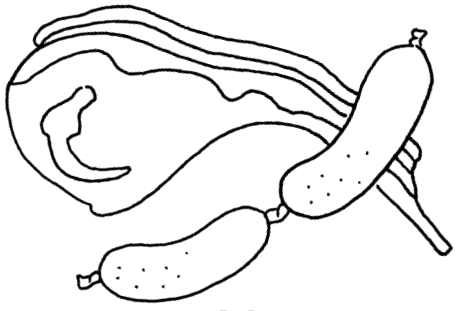
Sounds the Same... But!

Activity 2

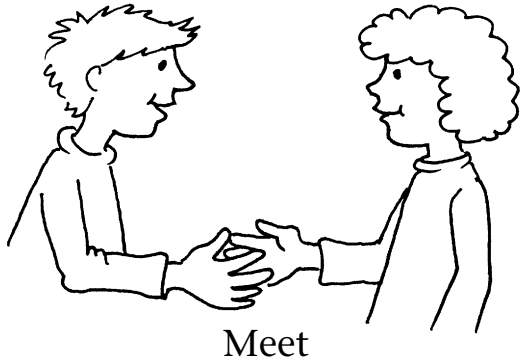


Bear

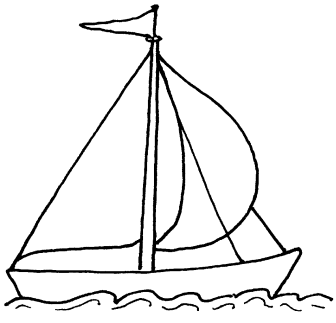
Bare



Meat

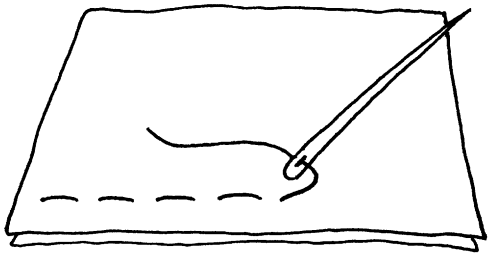


Meet

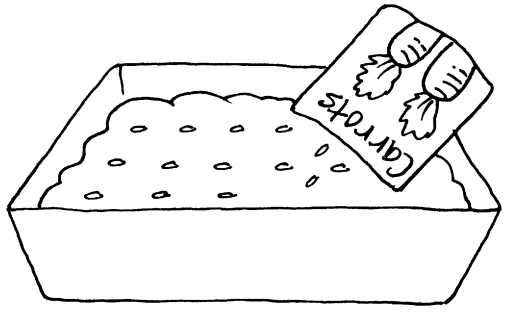


Sail

Sale



Sew

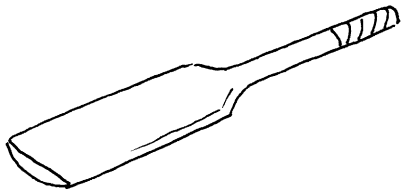
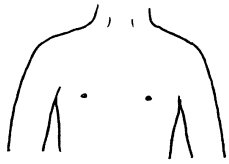
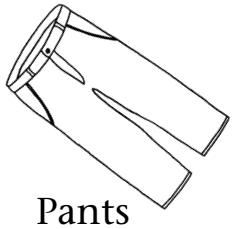
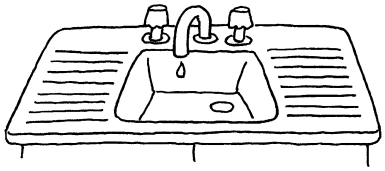
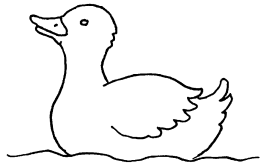
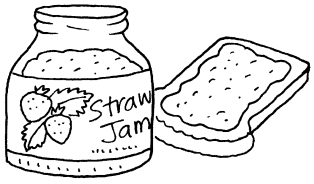
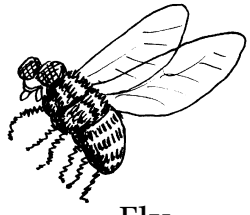
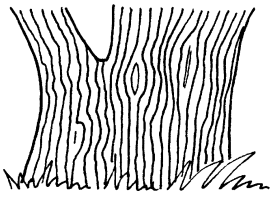
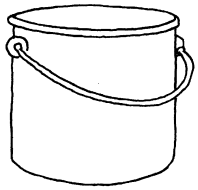
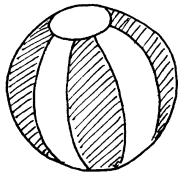
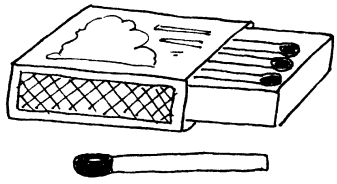


Sow

See also: "Sounds the Same... But!" on page 109.

Sounds the Same... But!

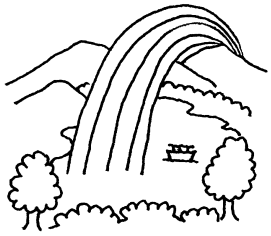
Activity 3

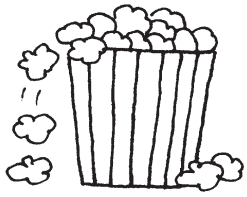
 Bat	 Chest
 Pants	 Fair
 Sink	 Duck
 Jam	 Fly
 Bark	 Can
 Ball	 Match

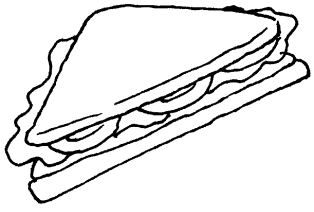
See also: "Sounds the Same... But!" on page 109.

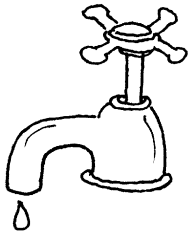
Let's Laugh

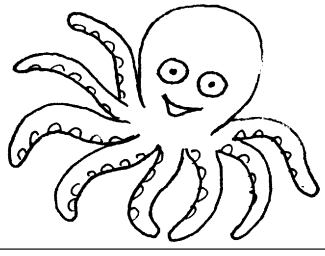
Activity 1

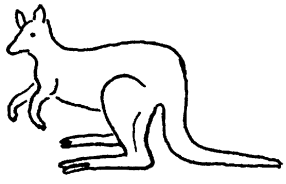












See also: "Let's Laugh" on page 112.

Asking Questions

Relevance to Literacy

Questions are a vital part of the school environment. However, they may serve very different purposes in school than in the wider community. At home, if a parent asks a question, it is generally because she or he needs to know the answer. Classroom interactions involving questions may appear quite unnatural. Teachers frequently ask questions to ascertain whether students have learned the content of the lesson or can understand and recall what they have seen, heard, or read.

In some classrooms, students feel pressure to demonstrate their knowledge (memory) of facts. Other students may see little reason to answer pseudo questions to which the teacher already has the answers. Furthermore, students can tell when a response does not appear to match what the teacher has in mind as the preferred or correct response. Questions can and do serve a number of valuable purposes for both teachers and students in directing thinking and learning. Asking a question is a seemingly simple activity and is often taken for granted. However, learning to ask a question appropriately will benefit students and teachers.

In many classrooms, teachers' questions predominate over student questions. Questions are not always the most effective way to promote communication in the classroom. Dillon (1990) suggests a mix of alternative techniques, such as statements, reflective comments, and silence to enhance the communication process.

If we want children to actively participate in the learning process, we should ask ourselves:

- Why do I want to ask this question?
- What will I do with the answer?
- What types of questions do I ask of my students?
- What are the opportunities for asking questions and what are the rules (often unspoken) for asking them in my classroom?

Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives provides a framework for teachers to help them evaluate the level of thinking skill required for different learning tasks. Questions should be used to stimulate these levels of thinking:

Knowledge—How many legs does a spider have?
Understanding—Can you tell me how the spider spins his web?
Application—What does a spider's web remind you of?
Analysis—What is the function of the hair on the spider's legs?
Synthesis—What ways might there be to catch a spider?
Evaluation—Do you think spiders are dangerous? Why? Why not?

Effective teachers plan their own questions to provide a balance of types of questions, including open-ended reflective questions. They also match questions to students' needs and abilities and encourage their students to take the role of the questioner. **Scaffolding questions** assist students to focus, extend, and redirect their thinking, thus helping them move forward from what they know to the next stage of development (Vygotsky, 1962, Cambourne, 1988). As a result, children learn to direct themselves in their learning, using the same cues and questions (Lehr, 1985).

Stages of Development

Child's Understanding of Questions

The following information about a child's development of understanding of questions will help teachers of children in the first three years of school.

Age	Questions Understood
3	simple *who, why, where, how many?*
$3\frac{1}{2}$–4	*how long* and *how much* not always accurate *what would you do if…*
4	*how far* not always accurate
$4\frac{1}{2}$–5	*when* and simple *agent—action* questions *how often* and *how long*
5–6	*what happens if…* questions

Child's Ability to Ask Questions

The following is a chart showing the early development of question forms.

Age	Questions used
3	first questions—statements with rising intonation, *what's that?*
3–$3\frac{1}{2}$	large increase in use of *what, who* questions
$3\frac{1}{2}$–4	*how, why, when,* for detailed explanation Asks *what was* and *what were* questions
4	*what do/does* questions
6 and older	re-emergence of *why* questions

Adapted from *Speech and Language Development Chart* (Gard, Gilman & Gorman, 1993).

In the Classroom

Students deserve to be shown how to use questions to aid learning and develop thinking strategies, social problem solving, and planning. Explicit discussion about how questions make us think and reshape our knowledge is useful to encourage children to ask a broader range of questions of themselves and others. For example, *Is that a thinking question?* This metacognitive approach also facilitates reading comprehension and math problem solving.

Children will often feel more confident talking and asking questions when they are in small groups. Model the types of questions and indicate to students why they might use these questions. For example, *I want to find out more about Sarah's vacation. What questions could I ask?*

If students have the opportunity to take the role of the teacher or questioner, as in a collaborative learning situations or news time sharing, they will start to see the relevance of different questions and have a greater sense of involvement and responsibility for their learning.

Another opportunity for demonstrating the use and power of questions is during reading. Too often we wait until children are fluent independent readers before we introduce the notion of **pre-reading, during-reading,** and **post-reading** strategies. Instead, if we demonstrate self-questioning strategies from the earliest stages of shared book reading, we provide children with a familiar structure of reflective self-questioning to facilitate their independent reading comprehension. For example, pre-reading questions can set the scene for active understanding—*What do I think this book is about?* During-reading questions help the child attend to the plot—*What might he or she do next?* Post-reading questions encourage the child to reflect and evaluate the story—*How did this book make you feel?* (Munro, 1989).

The At-Risk Child

Some students are at risk because they cannot sustain attention and many have missed either the question or the important preceding information. While other behavioral strategies may be necessary to address this problem, we suggest that teachers also refer to the teacher instruction protocol outlined on page 82.

Other students with inadequate language experience and comprehension difficulties lack the concepts needed to respond adequately to questions. These areas will need to be addressed through appropriate programs for the underlying problems.

The ability to ask and respond to questions plays an important role in social interaction within the classroom and in the development of relationships between children on the playground. Children with subtle language delays, slow response times to questions, and limited ability to quickly reciprocate with questions are treated with impatience and exclusion by their peers.

Teachers need to be mindful of the following when asking questions of at-risk students:

1. Many question-and-answer situations in the classroom are rapid exchanges. Some children with language processing delays will need extra time to process the question.
2. Some at-risk children also need extra time to formulate their verbal answers. You can show that you are aware of these needs by giving the child more time.
3. Be mindful of the cognitive and linguistic demands of different question types and match these levels to each of your students.
4. Questions requiring the recall of names are often difficult for students with learning difficulties (see page 99). You may offer alternative choices or allow the child greater flexibility in his or her responses. For example, *Con, tell me something we learned about…*
5. Some students' struggle with language may not be obvious but they do present as inconsistent performers, nonreflective, and disorganized in their approach to learning. These students will benefit from training in self-questioning so that they may become more independent learners.
6. Students with learning difficulties are often so anxious about being asked questions that they are unable to concentrate fully on classroom discussion. Discuss privately with these students how you will let them know it is their turn.

Assessment

The questions that students ask can reveal what they are thinking about and where they are putting their energies. Monitoring these questions helps teachers understand students' learning styles as well as their confusions and assists teachers to plan ways to help them (Comber, 1990).

Novice Speakers

- Ask and answer questions seeking information and clarification.
- Ask, accede to, and refuse requests in agreed ways.
- Interpret and use simple statements, commands, and questions.
- Stay on the topic and ask and respond to questions when discussing shared experiences with teachers and peers.
- Usually indicate when something is not understood (asking questions).

Maturing Speakers

- Identify a speaker's topic and ask questions seeking explanations or more information.
- Ask questions and make comments that expand ideas during one-to-one, small-group, and class discussions.
- Attend to responses of others and review or elaborate on what has been said (answer follow-up questions...).
- Observe procedures for class activities (taking turns, asking questions, interrupting speakers).

Observation Guidelines

Does the student ask questions:

- to explore possibilities beyond the present?
- to further his or her understanding?
- to check procedures and clarify information?

Yes or No?

Students listen to questions and give a *yes* or a *no* answer.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- understand words for specific concepts such as *color, number, size, comparison, time*
- consider features of use, function, and parts
- understand collective nouns

Teacher Notes:

Tell students to think carefully about the questions you are going to ask. The answer to each question must be *yes* or *no*. If some students wish to argue a point, explain that the focus is on listening to the question and giving the generally accepted answer. The way in which you ask students to respond will depend on the size of the group. For example, students could make a *yes* card and a *no* card and hold up the appropriate one.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS:

Number
Does a hand have six fingers?
Does a chair have four legs?
Does six come before seven?
Is five more than three?
Is eight less than ten?

Color
Is a stoplight green?
Is paper always white?
Is blood red?
Is hair sometimes purple?
Are spots always red?

Comparison
Is walking faster than crawling?
Are butterflies bigger than ants?
Can a baby be bigger than a dog?
Would a car weigh more than a horse?
Can a boy run faster than a rabbit?

Parts
Does a chair have a seat?
Does a clock have hands?
Does a bed have a lid?
Does a saucepan have a spout?
Does a flower have petals?

Location or Materials
Do gloves go on feet?
Can tiles go on walls?
Can a pig be made of glass?
Does a newsstand sell carpet?
Can a leg be made of plastic?

Category
Is a daffodil a flower?
Are apples and oranges vegetables?
Are *Tom* and *Scott* girls' names?
Is an oboe a musical instrument?
Is *judo* a sport?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Ask students to suggest other questions in each of the categories. Older students may wish to write their questions and give them to other students to read and answer.

Twenty Questions

Students learn to ask questions to identify a mystery picture.

Goals

In this activity students ask *yes/no* questions to identify a picture. They will:

- ask questions to successively narrow the semantic class
- see the importance of using specific vocabulary
- apply knowledge gained to exclude or include possible choices

Teacher Notes:

Use the picture sheets for Word Links on pages 113–116. Ask one student to leave the room while another student identifies a picture from the array. Ask the first student to return and ask questions with *yes/no* answers to eliminate pictures until he or she can identify the mystery picture.

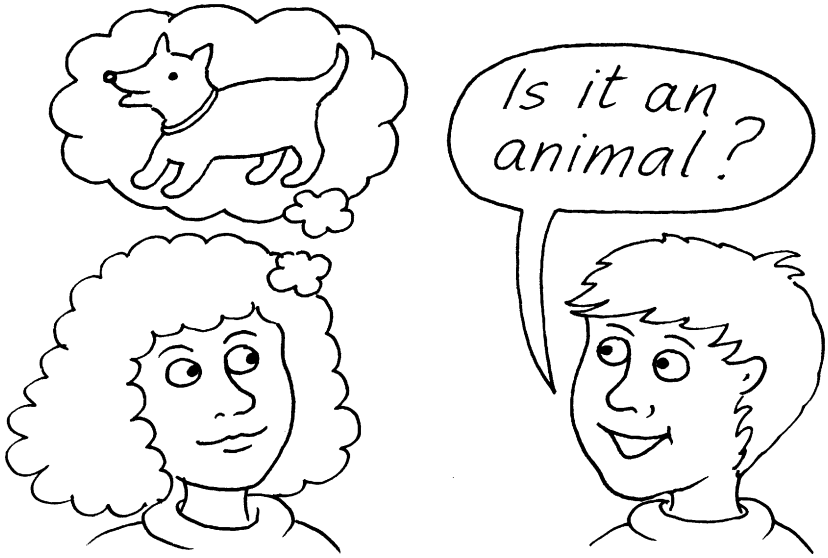
Novice Speakers need:

- explicit modeling of how to ask questions to differentiate between pictures. For example, *Is it used inside the house?*
- explicit modeling of how to apply knowledge to exclude pictures. For example, *You said it wasn't alive, so it's not the bird or the tree.*
- to place a counter on pictures they have excluded.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Students select an animal as the mystery creature to be identified by others through questioning.

By specifying the semantic class of the mystery object (animals) students are required to make finer conceptual distinctions and use knowledge of subgroups. Possible questions may include reference to being wild/tame, native to the United States, its size, whether or not it is eaten for food, if they carry young in a pouch, and so on.



Roll a Question

Students use a board game to ask questions of others or to tell about themselves.

Goals

On cue from a symbol on a board game, students must:

- ask questions
- tell information to another person

Teacher Notes:

GAME 1:

Enlarge and copy the blackline master on page 136 onto cardboard. Have students color the gameboard and laminate it to preserve the game.

Two to four students can play the game. They will need a counter each and a die. In turn they throw the die and move that number of places forward. If they land on the question mark, they must ask a question of the person next to them. If they land on the mouth, they must tell the person something about themselves. Some squares on the board game have instructions to either move forward, go back, or miss a turn. The player who reaches the finish line first is the winner.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

When students land on the question mark, they pick up a question card. On these cards are words that must be incorporated into the question. Vary the types of words to be included, for example, *how, if, piece, save, large, bony, give, match,* or *why.*

GAME 2:

Enlarge and copy the seaside scene on the blackline master on page 137. You may wish to color it before laminating it. On a blank die write the names of the students playing the game on each face. (Up to six students can play, or if only three play, write each name twice.) Alternatively, you can attach adhesive labels onto a regular die.

The die is rolled to select the starting player. This student rolls the die onto the picture and, observing the immediate area around the die, asks a question about it. For example, if the die lands on the people sunbathing—*Did you put on your sunscreen?*

The question is answered by the person named on the die. The die is then passed to this person who throws it and asks the next question. If the player throws his or her own name, the die is thrown again. The winner is the first person to ask three questions.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

You can use any *busy* picture to play this activity. Those pictures that include a lot of activity are the most suitable. Some suggestions can be found in the Resources section of the book on page 175.

Meet a Famous Person

Students interview their favorite famous person.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- formulate questions appropriate to a person or situation
- understand which type of questions lead to the most interesting replies
- learn to respond to questions from a particular point of view

Teacher Notes:

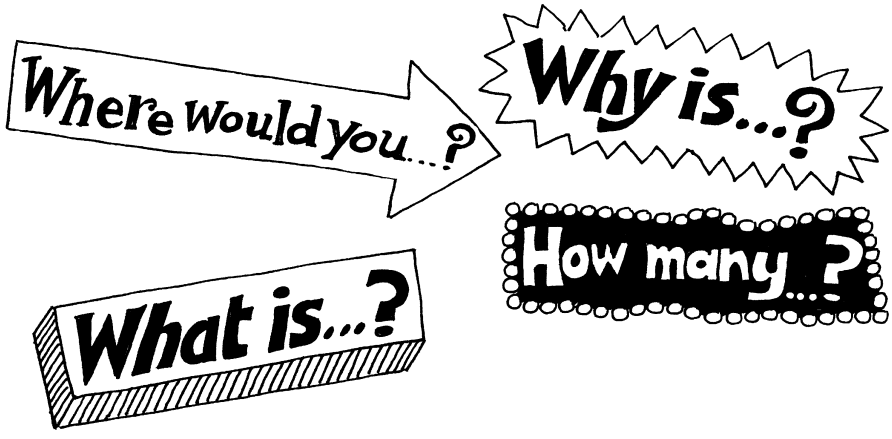
Introduce the activity and discuss with the class the role of questions in gathering information. Some questions lead to simple *yes* or *no* answers. Others open the way for expressing facts, opinions, feelings, and so on.

1 Students each choose their favorite person and draw a picture of this person to show the rest of the class.

2 They then choose four question starters (see blackline master on page 138) from which they formulate questions appropriate for an interview with this favorite person. They should keep in mind that this person may have been interviewed many times before and asked the same obvious questions. They should try to ask questions that will give an interesting answer. Remind them to be polite at all times. As each student presents these questions to the class, other students answer the questions on behalf of the favorite person.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Two students work together to create an interview role-play by asking and answering the questions. Extend this activity into real life by interviewing people relevant to a current class topic.



Question the Story

Students listen to brief stories and formulate questions about them.

Goals

This activity will strengthen students' ability to:

- listen attentively to the plot of a short story
- formulate questions about what they have heard in the story
- pose questions that give direction to how the story might conclude

Teacher Notes:

Read each of the following passages to students one at a time. Allow them time to consider each one and formulate questions about what they have heard. Discuss possible starting words and phrases for the questions. For example, *How?, Who do you think…?, What will happen?, Why did…?* and so on.

SUGGESTED STORIES:

1 Four puppies were playfully rolling a ball in their yard. Their mother was sleeping peacefully in her kennel. Suddenly the gate swung open and one by one the puppies crept out.

2 David was so hungry that he felt as though he could eat a horse. He slid out of bed, crept downstairs, and made his way to the pantry. He was just about to open the cookie jar when there was a loud thud coming from the direction of the front door.

3 Carlos loved to play on the class soccer team. The challenge of kicking the ball toward the goal excited him. The match began well for Carlos and by halftime he had managed to score two of his team's four goals. After the halftime break Carlos seemed to be slower. His coach looked worried. Then suddenly, Carlos looked at his watch, ran off the field, and out of the gate.

4 Grandpa's soup was the best in the world. He picked fresh green vegetables from his vegetable garden, sang as he chopped them into tiny cubes, then tipped them into the large pot on the stove. When all the ingredients were in the pot, Grandpa washed the dishes, tidied up the kitchen, and sat down to rest while the soup bubbled. Before he rested, Grandpa always took off his big red apron with the three buttons along the top. As he removed his apron on this particular soup-making day, Grandpa let out a concerned cry—one of the buttons was missing!

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

While reading a book to the class, pause at appropriate places and have "Question Time." Use a large cutout question mark to signal this time. Select students to pose questions, such as—*What does the story so far make you want to ask?*

Dilemmas!

In response to pictures, students form questions to assist their understanding of a situation.

Goals

After examining pictures of problem situations, students will:

- interpret relevant information from visual details
- develop questions to understand how the situation occurred
- identify possible solutions through questioning
- identify with another person's perspective

Teacher Notes:

Our understanding of what we see and read is facilitated if we have been taught to ask ourselves questions as we process and monitor the information gathered. These questions help to form hypotheses, which can guide our active thinking strategies and lead to better problem identification and solution.

Use the *dilemma* pictures on the blackline master on page 139. Show a specific picture and ask the class to formulate questions to ask the person in the picture. Select one child to take the role of the pictured person and to respond to the questions.

The goals of the questions are…

1 To establish the problem
2 To determine how the situation came about
3 To find a solution to the problem

Students may need to ask questions about the resources available or the actions already taken by the person. The questions asked will depend on the answer given to the previous question, so students will need to be attentive.

For example, **to a person stranded on the desert island:**
Did you get shipwrecked? No.
How did you get on to the island? My plane crashed.
Are there any other survivors? Yes, but he is almost dead.
How long have you been on the island? About two weeks.
Are you a good swimmer? No.
Do you have any matches? Yes.
How many trees are there on the island? Six.

Children will like to replay the question-and-answer routine giving opposite or different answers to the questions. Does this lead to a different solution?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

1 Ask students: *Imagine you are writing a speech bubble for a cartoon you have drawn. What words would the person in the picture say in the situation you have created?*
2 Make a collection of advertisements or pictures from magazines and calendars and use these to promote further verbal or written captions or stories.

Getting to Know You

Students learn to ask questions in order to get to know each other.

Goals

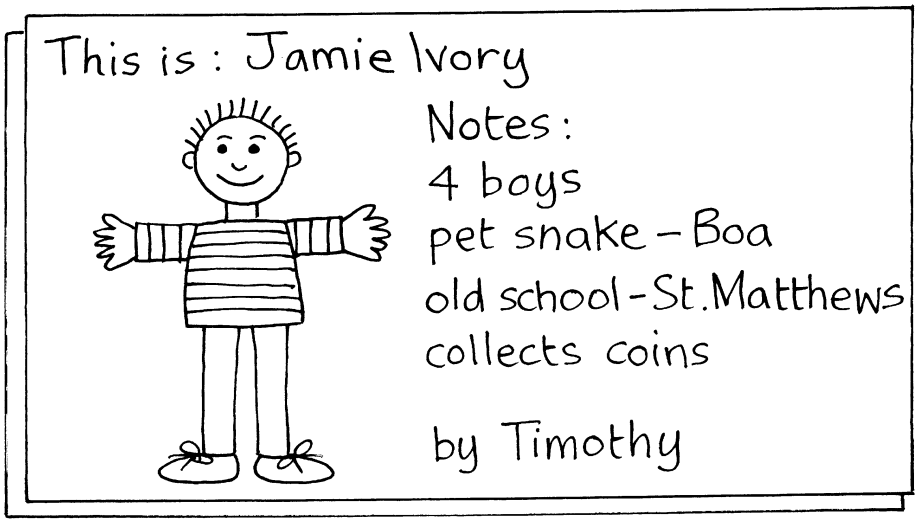
In this activity students will:

- ask questions to obtain information from another person
- recall information heard
- summarize and present information to the class
- practice the formal language of introductions

Teacher Notes:

This activity is an excellent way for classmates to get to know each other better at the start of the year or to introduce one group or class to the other. Each student is paired with another student who is not already a friend. Instruct them that it will be their job to find out about their partners by asking appropriate questions. Spend a little time discussing which types of questions will lead to interesting information, given that most students will be about the same age and live in the same area. School photographs may be used for a class display. Each child is given a card or piece of paper on which to draw a partner and draw or note five important things about him or her. These notes are then used by students as reminders when they introduce their partners to the class.

For example, *Good morning everybody, I'd like to introduce you to Jamie Ivory. Jamie has four boys in his family as well as a pet snake, which he calls Boa. He used to go to St. Matthew's School but he moved to this school because… He collects… and when he grows up he wants to go to…* and so on.



Thinking Web

Students use questions to help formulate goals for obtaining information.

Goals

Students are introduced to webs to help them:

- formulate appropriate questions on a topic
- use questions to organize and plan information gathering

Teacher Notes:

Demonstrate the use of the Thinking Web (see blackline master on page 140) to show topics that will be covered in the next class unit. Each spoke of the web is for a question related to the topic. Show the students how these will become the framework for the class investigation. For example, Health: *What is good health? Which people work in the health area? How can you improve your health? What are common health problems?,* and so on.

Later, when students are preparing for a topic, give each one a blank copy of the Thinking Web. Each student writes his or her own topic in the central shape. Then students suggest questions they would like answered about the topic. Help them write the most appropriate questions on the spokes of the Thinking Web. This becomes the framework for their investigation.

Appropriate topics for young students may include: best friend, pets, school, wintertime, the beach, birds, police, fire safety, the Olympic Games, Captain Cook, gold, farms, the National Weather Bureau, Arbor Day, stamp collecting, hobbies.

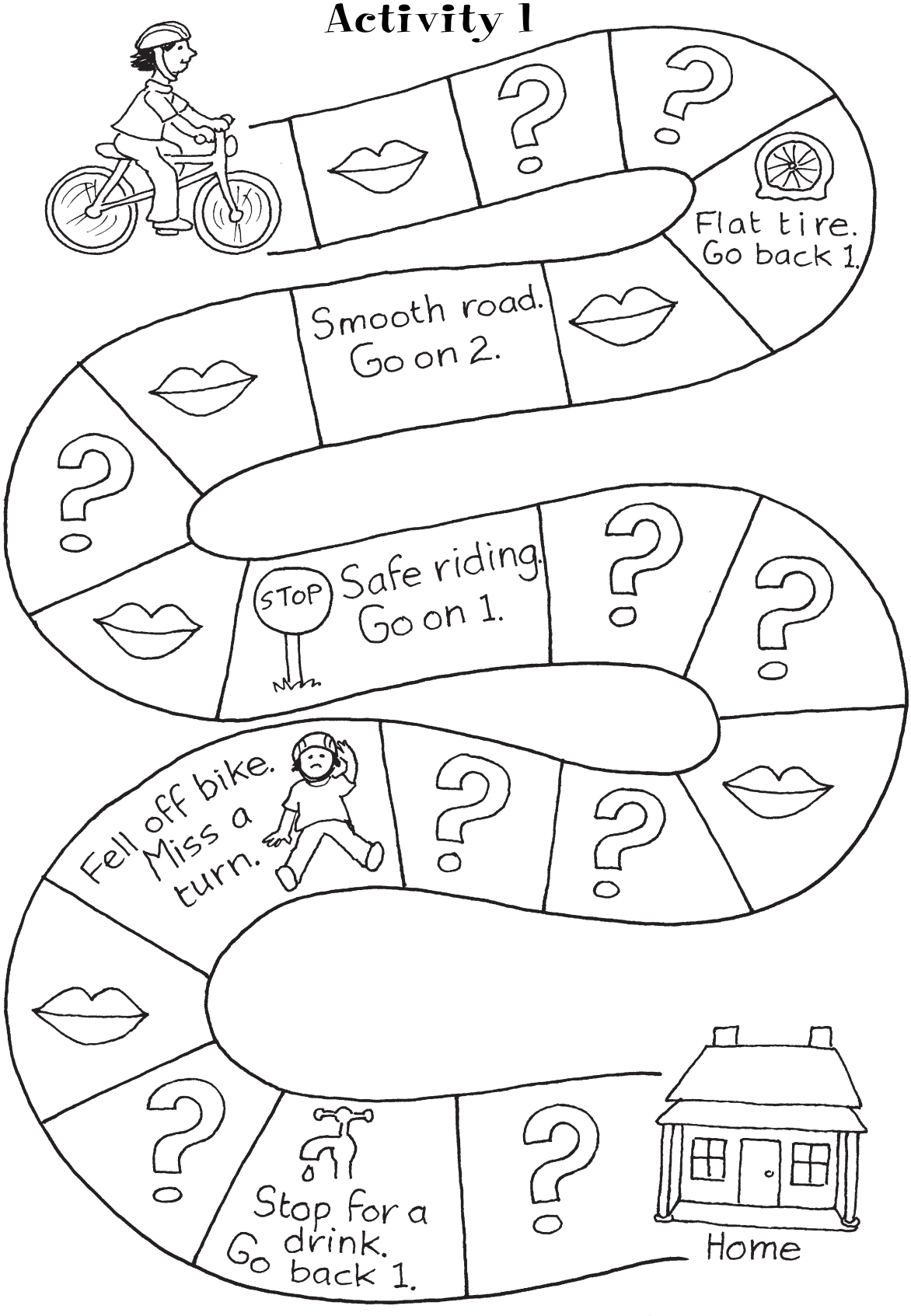
EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Use Thinking Webs to…

1 Prepare for a class field trip.
2 Prepare for a visitor to the school.
3 Interview someone about a topic.
4 Prepare a report to the class.
5 Organize an individual project.

Roll a Question

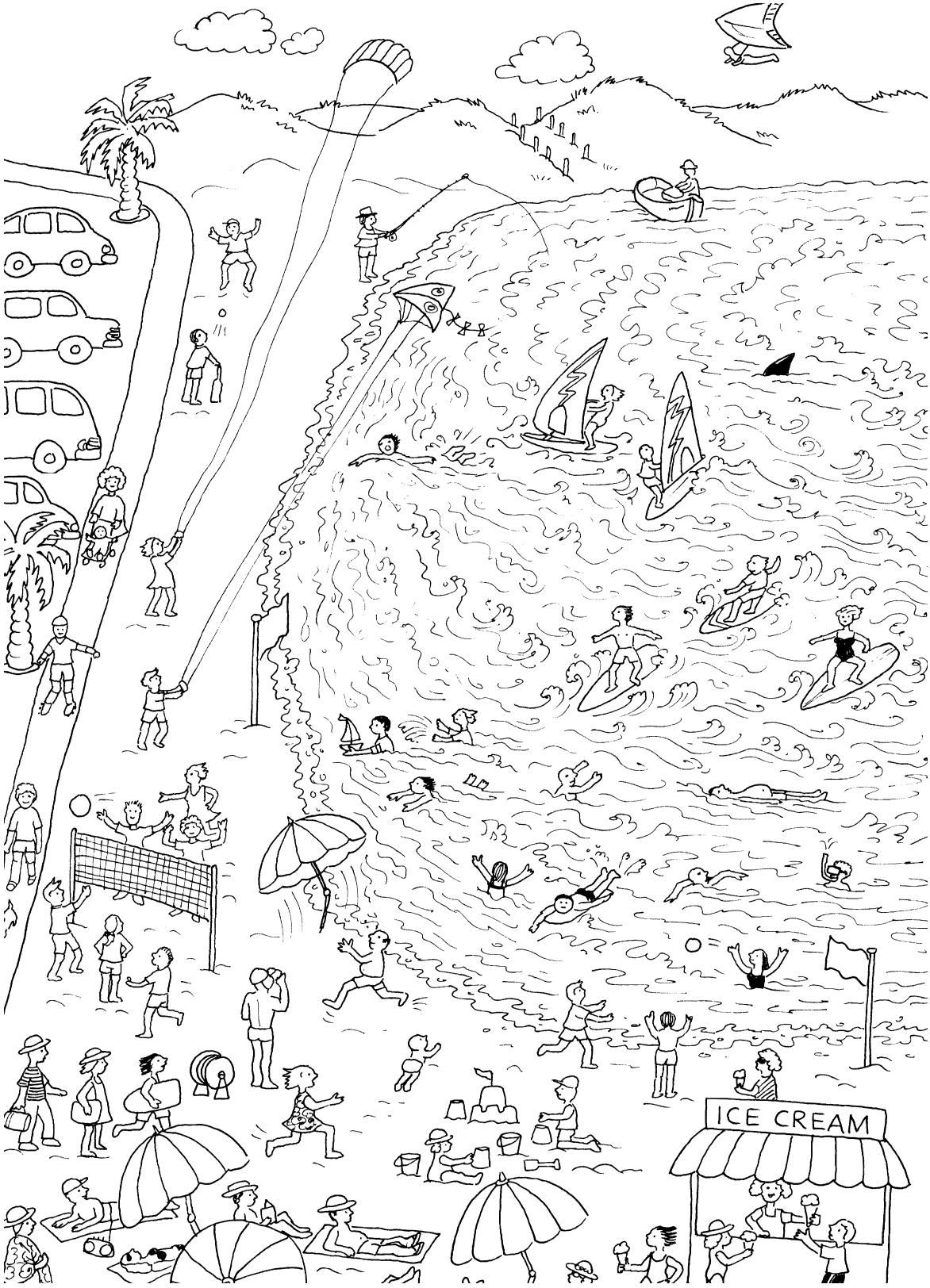
Activity 1



See also: "Roll a Question" on page 130.

Roll a Question

Activity 2



See also: "Roll a Question" on page 130.

Meet a Famous Person

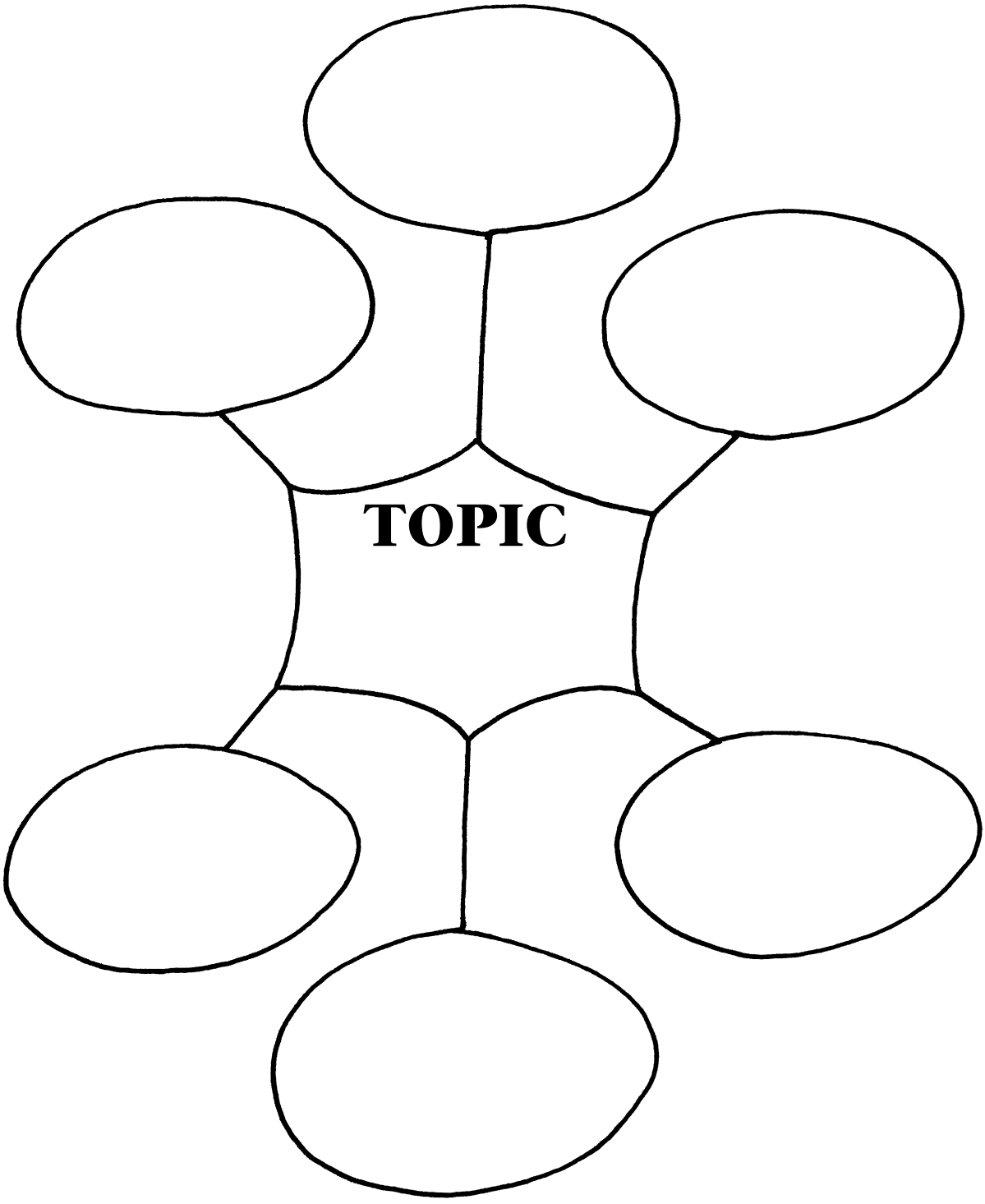
Starter Questions

See also: "Meet a Famous Person" on page 131.

Dilemmas!

See also: “Dilemmas” on page 133.

Thinking Web



See also: "Thinking Web" on page 135.

Discussing and Reasoning

Relevance to Literacy

Several types of oral language genres have been combined in this section. By the end of third grade, children are beginning to understand and engage in a range of speaking tasks that will eventually lead them to debate an issue. Children need to be familiar with describing, reporting, and explaining first, as these are precursor skills to discussion.

Some children come from homes where discussion and explanation are a common part of everyday life. At an early age they are able to talk about things or events in an abstract way and can confidently express and justify their opinions. This prepares them for many of the classroom interactions related to literature and learning.

Other children need to be introduced to these discussion and explanation processes, and teachers should model these in both formal and informal contexts.

Stages of Development

During the school years, language is vitally important in the development of reasoning and discussing. It allows children to think divergently, clarify ideas, and revise what they say. Well-developed oral language skills support children as they try out new ideas and make new connections, hypothesize, and compare alternatives.

By the second and third grades, children are able to reflect on more abstract concepts and appreciate that not everyone agrees with their opinions. They become more able to deal with the discussion genre as they develop consistency in their ability to *see* situations from another perspective. They can give reasons for their own actions or opinions but may not yet be ready to argue both sides of an issue independently.

Blank (1978) has detailed four levels of reasoning related to the discourse demands in the classroom. These can be used to guide evaluation and planning.

Level 1 is when the child is asked to **focus on the immediate environment** and match his or her perception. For example, *Tell me what this is* or *Give me the pencil.*

Level 2 requires more refined **focus on salient aspects of the environment.** For example, *What's happening in this picture? What color is the cat?*

Level 3 requires the child to **think beyond the immediate situation** and record perceptions. For example, *Show me the ones that we don't eat. Tell me what we did before we read the story.*

Level 4 also requires the child to **think beyond the present** in order to reason about perception. He or she is required to think about what happened in the present or could happen in the future and to consider cause-and-effect relationships. For example, *Why is the boy wearing a crash helmet? What could he do?*

It is at Level 4 that higher-order thinking skills are used, for example, explanation, prediction, justifying a prediction or decision, identifying causes, formulating solutions, explaining how to achieve goals, and inference. Sophisticated language forms are needed at this level. An awareness of the student's level is essential for guiding class discussion.

Organization of Explanations

Explanation deals more with processes than things. It involves giving an account of how something works or the reasons why something happened. It has the following organization:

1 Statement about the phenomenon
2 Sequenced explanation of how or why something occurred

Language Features

The first type (explaining *how*) often uses language features related to time relationships, such as *first, then, finally.* The second type of explanation (explaining why) often requires explanation of cause-and-effect relationships and so uses causal connectors, such as *if, so, because,* and *so then*. Explanation often involves talking about nonhuman participants, such as the wind or mountains. It is common for action verbs to be used.

Organization of Discussion and Argument

The function of a discussion is to present information about an issue. This generally involves giving more than one point of view. In its well-developed form, speakers can present both sides of an issue and then conclude with a recommendation. The discussion genre has a recognizable structure.

1 Statement of the issue
2 Presentation of arguments for and against the issue—statements of different points of view
3 Recommendation

In the oral form of discussion, a recommendation or conclusion is often omitted since students are allowed to sustain their own points of view. In the written mode, however, a recommendation is generally required. A natural extension of the discussion genre leads us to **exposition,** the purpose of which is to explain or to persuade an audience to your point of view, as in a debate.

Language Features

In the discussion genre, the focus is again on general things such as books or animals. The simple present tense is used as are logical connectors such as *while, because, firstly,* and *which* to show the exact relationships between their ideas. As the speaker is often considering differing points of view and verbalizing thought processes, cognitive verbs—for example, *think, feel,* and *disagree*—will be used.

In the Classroom

As with the development of the other text genre in the classroom, it is recommended that there should be **three main stages of the curriculum** for discussion and argument—**modeling, joint reconstruction,** and **independent construction** of the text (Knapp & Callaghan, 1989). In the early years we are mostly concerned with the modeling and joint construction phases. Teachers should model how texts are used and organized. Attention to language features may also be given through tasks such as sentence cloze activities and brainstorming vocabulary related to the topic. Highlighting the connecting words and cognitive verbs helps us talk about our thinking processes.

Discussing and explaining in the first year of school should revolve around observations of real things that children can see or have experienced firsthand. Teachers can, however, guide children to reflect on and talk about the causes and effects of behaviors and actions and to tell about how things work. Many of these early discussions are teacher-led and based on shared book reading where particular aspects of the written text, such as the character's motivation, are discussed as a group. As the children learn the accepted patterns of interaction in the classroom, topics can be further elaborated. Children learn to stay on the topic and explore and expand the ideas of previous speakers.

Many other opportunities to develop skills in explanation, discussion, and reasoning occur in and grow out of collaborative learning situations. Here children are allowed to explore a range of ideas and interactions not possible in a more traditional classroom.

When exploring class themes or integrated units, the teacher can ask children to give their opinions and justify them. Teachers can then follow up the discussion by modeling how to present specific points or the advantages and disadvantages of certain choices. The class may then vote on these positions. This prepares students for the more cognitively demanding language tasks of the middle grades.

Edward de Bono's *Six Thinking Hats for Schools* provides a fun and informative way of helping children identify and practice different ways of thinking (de Bono, 1992). These are:

White hat—facts, information
Black hat—bad points, weaknesses, assessment
Red hat—tell feelings, emotions, and hunches
Yellow hat—good points, how will it help
Green hat—creativity, different suggestions, proposals
Blue hat—thinking about thinking

The At-Risk Child

Some children have subtle problems dealing with the abstract. They find it hard to visualize and to link new ideas with past experience. These may be the students who, when asked to tell things that are *red,* will look around the classroom for clues rather than drawing from their own experience.

Children with language difficulties and cognitive delays are often egocentric and rigid in their thinking and verbal explanation. They cannot seem to move from their own point of view. For example, *Dogs are always friendly because my dog is friendly.* This impacts their successful participation in discussion.

Children who experience difficulty in extended discourse, such as in storytelling or reporting, are less likely to be successful with expository text. Persuasion builds on many earlier skills now combined in new ways. For example, a discussion about the need for children to wear school uniforms will draw on the ability to describe and report on previous experiences and to explain cause and effect. It will also require active listening skills and explicit vocabulary use.

Children with inadequate vocabulary skills and limited grammatical development are also at risk. They may have difficulty expressing their ideas and opinions coherently. For example, incomplete mastery of verb tenses is reflected in this ambiguous communication—*Daddy come home from work. He bring new car.* The listener is unable to tell without some further investigation if Daddy did come, is coming, or will be coming home with a new car. More problems are encountered if the child is unable to construct sentences with embedding or to use connecting words.

The activities in this section emphasize a range of higher-order thinking skills that aim to prepare children for the demands made in the middle and late elementary years.

Assessment

Children considered maturing speakers in other genres might still have difficulty with the organizational features of the explanation and discussion genres. They may be able to participate in informal discussion and give simple explanations of how things work and why things happened. With support, they may be able to provide alternative solutions and rudimentary argument.

Novice Speakers

- Stay on the topic and ask and respond to questions when discussing shared experiences.
- Listen to a speaker and contribute relevant comments to a conversation or discussion.

Maturing Speakers

- When prompted, extend the contributions of others in group and class discussions (speculate about other people's reactions in a particular situation).
- Listen to and comment positively on the contributions of others in discussions.
- Identify a speaker's topic and ask questions seeking explanations or more information.
- Ask questions and make comments that expand ideas during class discussion and try to give explanations.

What's the Use?

Students consider and explain the uses and alternative uses for real objects.

Goals

This activity requires students to:

- analyze an object in terms of its function
- explain the function of an object precisely
- think laterally about other objects that may perform the same function
- imagine and explain alternative ways in which each object might be used

Teacher Notes:

Discuss with students the use or function of objects, using questions such as *What do we use a… for? Who uses a…?*

Explain that objects may have the same general function but that specific functions will differentiate between them—for example, scissors, nail clippers, and a knife all cut things but differ in what and how they cut.

Using objects such as those listed below, play these games with the whole class or a smaller group of students.

ACTIVITY 1:

Ask a student to select an object and explain its uses. Then pose the question—*What would you use if you didn't have one?*

After giving suggestions, the student can then ask three other students in the group for their opinions. The group can vote for the most original, the funniest, and the most practical solution!

ACTIVITY 2:

Students discuss different ways in which an object could be used. For example, *fork*—stake for a young plant, support for a hand puppet, marker for the top of a pie, drumstick, crochet hook, hoe for planting seeds.

Again, the group of students could vote for the most original or amusing suggestion.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Books can be made based on these ideas using repetitive phrases. For example, *If I didn't have a… I could always use a…* (Activity 1).
Did you know a… could be used as a…? (Activity 2)

SUGGESTED OBJECTS:

string	large button	soup ladle
spoon	glove	umbrella
hair clip	flyswatter	peg
safety pin	feather	envelope
ruler	extension cord	drinking straw
elastic	tweezers	straw hat
plastic mug	shoelace	business card
cork	scarf	hair net
paper clip	coin	garden trowel
washcloth	dish towel	
toothbrush	medicine cup	
computer disk	small bucket	

What Am I?

Students answer language riddles.

Goals

In this class activity students will:

- integrate auditory language cues
- access semantic knowledge for making appropriate matches for meaning
- practice providing semantic cues for others

Teacher Notes:

Read the following riddles slowly, pausing after each one to encourage students to reflect on the information. If they select an inappropriate solution, provide feedback as to why their suggestions were not correct. For example, ***carrot***—*No, carrot is not a fruit.* Young students find this task easier if the semantic class has already been selected, for example, *This is an animal*.

SUGGESTED RIDDLES—ANIMALS:

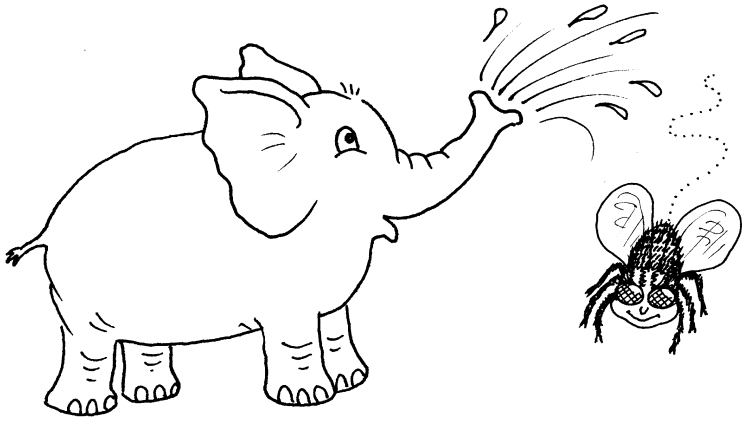
I have wrinkled skin.
I am very large.
I can squirt water. (elephant)

I am long.
I have no legs or teeth.
I can be poisonous. (snake)

I live on a farm.
I am very clean but I like to play in the mud.
My tail is not straight. (pig)

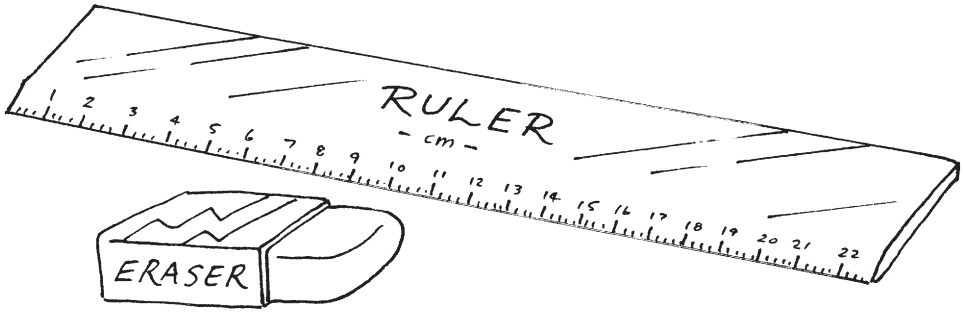
I am small.
I have wings.
I spread germs. (fly)

I'm brown and furry.
I can go a long time without drinking.
People can ride me but they might not find it comfortable. (camel)



SUGGESTED RIDDLES—THINGS FOUND IN THE CLASSROOM:

I can be made of wood or plastic.
I'm straight.
I have numbers and little lines. (ruler)



I come in lots of different shapes.
I don't work well with a pen.
I help when a mistake is made in writing. (eraser)

I am small with a hole on one side.
I am used near the trash can.
I keep pencils pointy. (sharpener)

I open and shut.
You can see through me.
I have a frame. (window)

I am found on the wall.
I turn on and off.
I am used whenever the class leaves the room. (light switch)

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

1 Using the pictures from "Word Links" on pages 113–116, students can work in pairs or small groups to formulate their own clues for language riddles. They present these orally for the other class members to solve.
2 Use the language riddle activity to revise or introduce vocabulary for a class unit of study. For example, community workers, types of food, transportation, pets, seasons of the year, and so on.

Vive La Difference!

Students explain differences between pairs of objects.

Goals

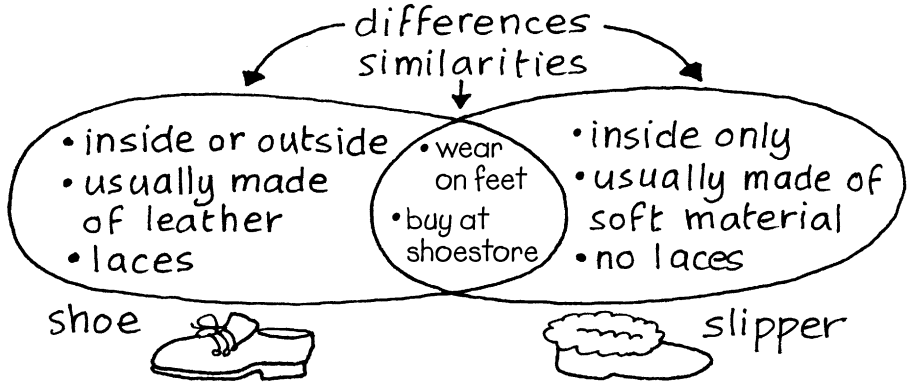
In order to explain differences between object pairs, students will:

- consider physical features of both objects, such as color, size, shape, material used
- think about what each of the objects is used for
- compare and contrast the objects
- use specific vocabulary to express the differences

Teacher Notes:

Write the word pairs listed below onto card stock to make a lasting class resource. Students can work in pairs or a small group or as a whole class. Vary the number of differences requested depending on the size of the group and the ability of the students. Use an egg timer or a stopwatch to set a time limit.

Introduce the concept of similarities and differences by using a Venn diagram as illustrated below. When contrasting two objects, such as a stool and chair, those features that are common to both objects are written in the area of the diagram between the intersecting circles. Those aspects that are unique to one object are recorded in the circle next to its name or picture.



A number of student pairs or small groups may work on the same task at one time. When they have finished, they can share their ideas with another group.

SUGGESTED WORD PAIRS:

sweater/shirt	mug/glass
kite/parachute	door/window
tent/camper	dish towel/sponge
sandal/shoe	handkerchief/tissue
hat/cap	gate/fence
ice cream shop/supermarket	sandwich/hamburger
doll/puppet	knife/fork
beach/swimming pool	street/freeway

Please Excuse Me, I'm Late!

Students make excuses for being late for school.

Goals

In this amusing activity students are required to:

- formulate an excuse (reason) based on a given stimulus word
- express concepts of time and consequence of behavior
- maintain appropriate verb tense

Teacher Notes:

Give each student a stimulus word to be used as the basis of an excuse for being late for school. Words that express time and consequence should be highlighted as these help students to express the causal relationship between events (*so, because, then, after, when, but*). A student's response may be reality or fantasy based. For example, on wet socks: *Please excuse me for being late but my socks were still wet and so I had to put them in the dryer for ten minutes,* or *I'm sorry I'm late but I just got a pet elephant for my birthday and after I'd taken him for a walk, he drank lots of water and sprayed it all over my socks, so I had to go back and change them.*

SUGGESTIONS FOR STIMULUS WORDS:

Socks, ambulance, keys, party, dog, police, visitors, breakfast, dreams, Dad, rain, plug, money, shoe, alarm, homework, car, Mom, sister, brother, glass, lunch, telephone, Grandpa, Grandma, water, milk, kettle, hat, garage, video, toast.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

1. Once children have given their excuses orally, they could use their excuse as the basis for a recounting of the event in writing.
2. Ask specific children to provide an explanation of why the character in a book behaved in a certain way.
3. Brainstorm with the class reasons (excuses) for not doing your homework, forgetting to bring your lunch, not having a tidy bedroom, and so on. Discuss whether we should accept these excuses. Explore why or why not.

Sticky Situations

Students explain what they would do in difficult situations.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- identify emotional responses to difficult situations
- discuss possible/probable consequences of behavior
- pose questions regarding future behavior

Teacher Notes:

Students take turns assuming character roles. They explain what they would do and say if they were in the difficult situations suggested below. "Sticky Situations" can be read to the students or read from a card or the blackboard. Answers should be reality based and possible alternatives considered. You, a group leader, or other student should ask leading questions to encourage the speaker to explain further. For example, *What if...? How would you...? What might happen if...? What else could you...?*

SUGGESTED STICKY SITUATIONS:

Role-play characters are in bold type.

- A **passenger** arrives at the airport without a ticket
- A **waiter** spills food on a **guest's** clothing
- A **person** took the wrong grocery bags home from the supermarket.
- A **child** arrives at a birthday party on the wrong day.
- **You** have a dog and he has pulled the wash off your **neighbor's** clothesline.
- A **child** rode his bike through wet concrete and got stuck.
- **You** and your **friend** have a job weeding someone's garden. Your friend tells you that you have pulled out flowers, not weeds.
- **You** borrow your **friend's** computer game and it gets damaged.
- Somebody sat on the cake **you** were just about to take to your Grandpa's birthday.
- **You** find a hundred-dollar bill in the book you borrowed from the library.

3-D Character Triangle

Students discuss a character's behavior.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- retell relevant deeds, description, and dialogue belonging to a character
- explain why the character behaved that way
- provide and suggest alternative behaviors and explanations

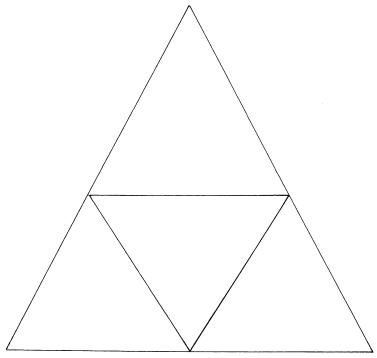
Teacher Notes:

Display the character triangle on the blackline master on page 155. Show that each point of the triangle represents an aspect of the character that helps us understand him and his role in the story.

For example, The **wolf** in *The Three Little Pigs:*
description—mean, sly, hungry-looking
deeds (actions)—blew houses down, climbed on the roof
dialogue (sayings)—*Little pig, little pig, let me come in!*

Later provide lead-in sentences to assist students to explain and justify their suggestions.

- My character looks… because…
- He/she did… because… (climbed on the roof so he could get down the chimney)
- He or she could have… because… (pretended he was the mail carrier so they would open the door)
- I would have… because… (bought my meat at the butcher's because it was quicker)
- My character said… because… (he wanted to trick the little pigs into letting him come inside)



Danger Island

Students pose solutions to problems on Danger Island.

Goals

In this activity students work in pairs to:

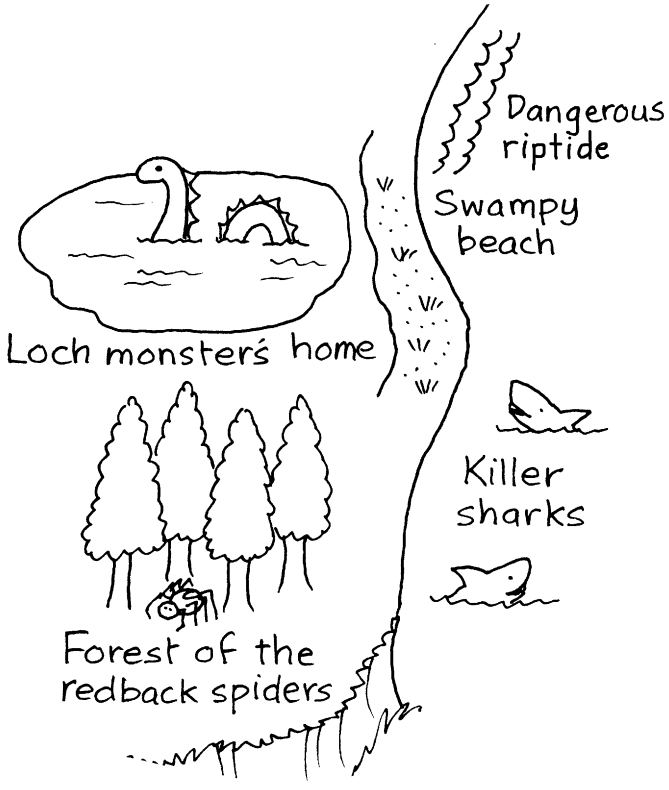
- anticipate problem situations
- identify possible solutions
- explain and justify solutions
- present solutions to an audience

Teacher Notes:

Danger Island seems to present new dangers at every turn. Ask students to work in small groups. Show each group a copy of the map of Danger Island on page 156 and highlight the dangers marked on the map. It is the group's task to plan the recovery of Queen Isabella's valuable gold necklace that has been stolen and hidden somewhere on the island. During the rescue mission, the group must devise a way of getting on and off the island as well as to identify at least five potential problems and to provide five appropriate solutions to the dangers that they encounter during the mission. The groups then present their ideas to the rest of the class including where the gold necklace was hidden.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

The groups each draw their route on the map and dictate their problem/solution story onto audiotape so that these can be later typed for a class display.



Let's Debate

Students work in teams to present one side of a debate.

Goals

In this activity students will:

- select information to support an opinion
- plan an oral presentation to the class
- explain and justify opinions
- evaluate arguments from a different perspective

Teacher Notes:

This is an introductory activity to help students understand the role of debate. Select an issue and work with the class to brainstorm the arguments for and against it. Select students to state their opinions and support them with reasons. They will find it easier to argue and defend something that they already believe, so it may take some encouragement before they are able to see that other people may view the same situation in a different way. For example, *What does Mommy think about that? Why?*

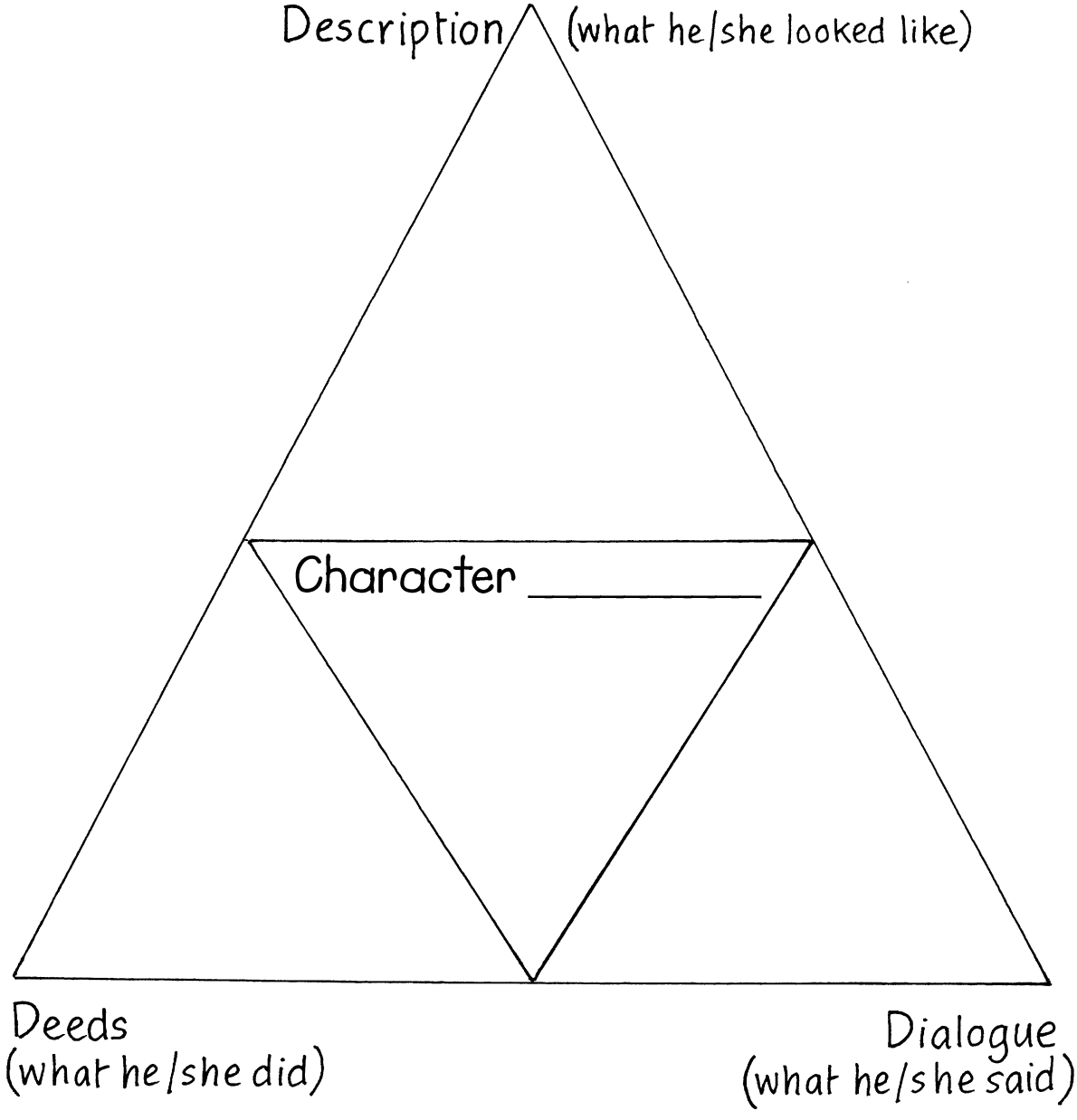
Once students are familiar with the format and a range of issues, organize a mini-debate to show how you can present different points of view.

Students will need time to discuss and rehearse what they will say. You may need to present a concluding summary of the debate.

SUGGESTED ISSUES:

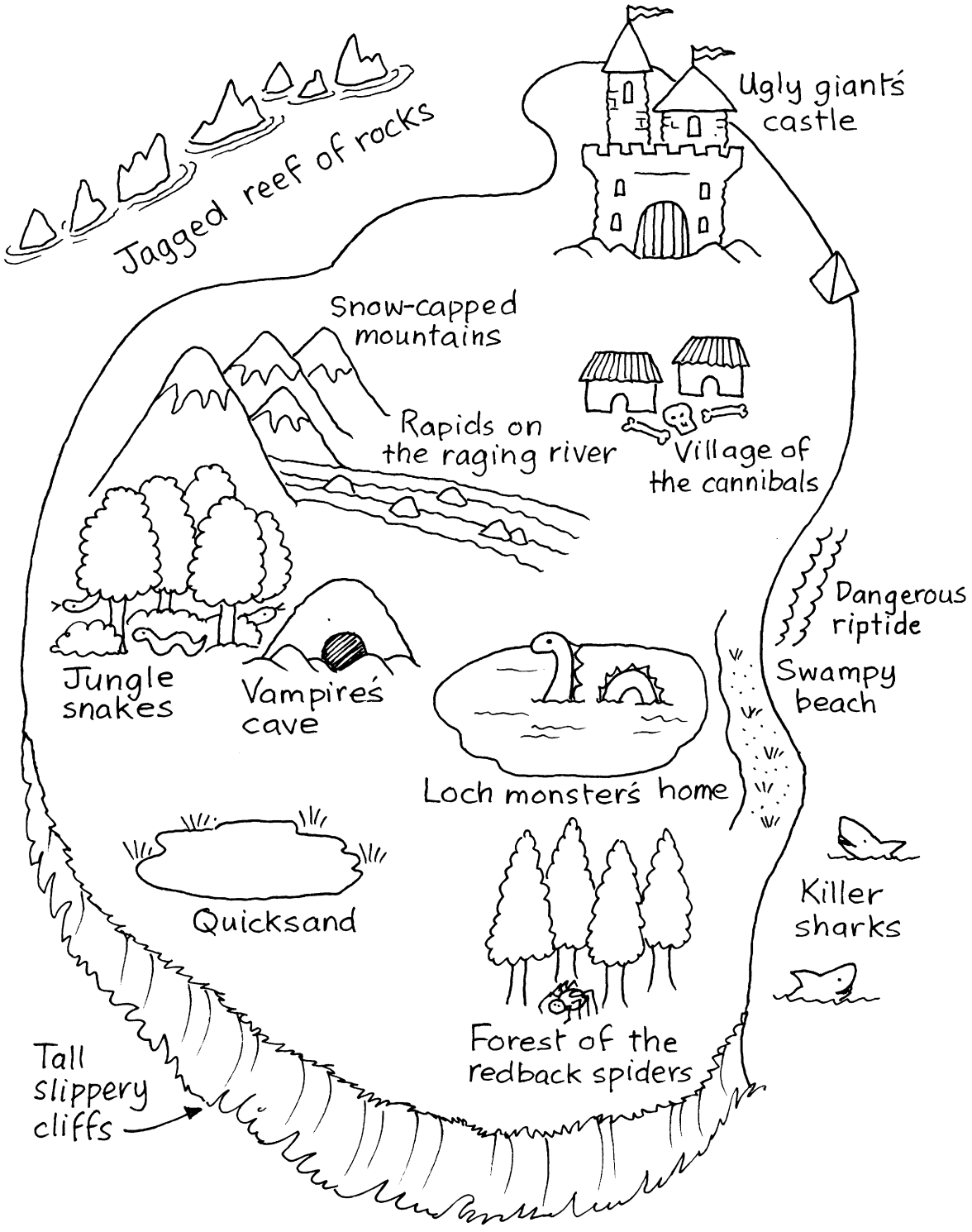
- Lollipops should be sold at the school cafeteria.
- Children should not get any allowance.
- Rides at Luna Park should be free.
- Parents should let their children watch TV during the week.
- Chocolate should be banned.
- Little sisters should be allowed to do whatever they like.
- A cat makes the best pet.
- Markers are better than crayons.
- Football is the worst sport.
- Every school should have a uniform.

3-D Character Triangle



See also: "3-D Character Triangle" on page 152.

Danger Island



See also: "Danger Island" on page 153.

Language Interaction

Relevance to Literacy

Children come to school with varied life experiences and interaction with others. Some have quite sophisticated language skills, which they use well for many different purposes, perhaps to form friendships, to control others, or to inquire about new things. Other less confident speakers and listeners demonstrate very little understanding about how language may change in different situations. For all children, however, a readjustment will need to be made as language interactions and rules for talking and listening at school are likely to be very different from those at home.

Verbal interactions at home usually involve just a few familiar speakers and listeners, so rules about taking turns, interrupting, or asking questions are often not clearly formalized. The child is supported in these situations by parents and peers who can clarify misunderstandings. But school is part of a much wider community, with people from diverse backgrounds, and what is acceptable behavior and speech at home may not always be acceptable at school. When children come to school, they must learn to play the *school game*. Understanding the rules is an important factor in school success and in the development of a positive self-image as a learner.

In the Classroom

Many of our classroom rules and conventions are arbitrary. Others serve a useful purpose in guiding interactions, furthering learning and giving all students an opportunity to talk. If children do not learn these expected patterns of interaction, many of which occur without explanation, they can be quickly labeled by teachers and peers as disruptive and rude troublemakers.

Consider class rules. There are teacher expectations and rules about where you can go and when, when and to whom you can talk, how loud you can talk and how often you can have a turn, what times you should do each activity, and how you should behave when you are doing it.

Many of these rules involve a range of verbal and nonverbal behaviors, such as looking at a person when you speak to them. Teachers can have different expectations of appropriate behavior. Children must learn to be flexible and adjust to changing expectations. The use of indirect requests is part of the sophisticated language user's repertoire but is

often misunderstood by less competent speakers and listeners both within the classroom and on the playground. When the teacher says, *We only have five minutes left so I want you to work hard and finish your work,* what she or he implies is that talking should stop now so that everyone can concentrate.

Children need to learn that different styles of talking (polite/casual, slang/formal) are needed for different occasions. Competent speakers can change their style and manner of speaking, as well as the content of what they say depending on the situation, the purpose of the interaction, and the status of the person to whom they are speaking. As observers we can note the different way Jenny talks about her school with friends compared with how she reports on the same topic to the school principal.

Role-playing communication situations can heighten awareness of aspects of communication that are usually unconscious or taken for granted. It allows us to experiment with different language purposes and situations and to alter our way of speaking accordingly. Because we are playing a role, our language style and choice of words can be manipulated without feeling personally under attack.

Of course, teachers should also provide real experiences where students can demonstrate their flexibility and competence in oral language. A teacher can develop students' skills in verbal-social interaction by assigning real speaking roles (jobs) within the classroom, such as class reporter or message monitor.

Many teachers use collaborative activities to facilitate independent learning and to improve verbal and social skills in their students. However, cooperation and negotiation do not just happen naturally. For these collaborative learning opportunities to be an efficient means of learning, children will need to be guided in the expected verbal and nonverbal behaviors (Hill and O'Loughlin, 1995).

Stages of Development

Oral interaction skills develop gradually from a very early age when babies first cry and their parents respond. Babies soon learn that oral communication is pleasurable and routines of social interaction and play become established and repeated. As children develop, they participate more and begin to observe the effects of their interactions on other people. They begin to see the different roles people play and learn the appropriate ways to open, close, and conduct interactions. In this way children have begun to construct *scripts* for interactions and use these to guide their expectations in future situations. By school age, children have generally encountered and learned hundreds of *scripts* related to such diverse oral interactions as asking a friend to come and play or coaxing Mom to buy an ice-cream cone.

Children as young as three years have an overall framework for conversations and will modify their patterns of speech when talking with younger children. By four years of age, most have acquired some of the rules for conversational interaction, such as taking turns in a conversation, maintaining the topic, and repairing conversational breakdown. They will also demonstrate a variety of formats of speaking with listeners of different ages, adapting the clarity and politeness of their speech for different listeners (Creaghead and Tattershall, 1985).

Learning to play together cooperatively takes time, but five- and six-year-olds usually respond to social conventions. They try to use language to persuade, threaten, praise, or make promises to their peers rather than always resorting to physical actions to interact and resolve conflicts. At this age, children are able to play simple games and adhere to the rules.

The At-Risk Child

Just as some children have difficulty deciphering the underlying rules or patterns in spelling or math, there are children who do not comprehend the social rules for using language. They may behave the same way in all contexts and fail to pick up on people's subtle cues, such as changes in body posture that indicate displeasure or boredom.

This is a common occurrence in the learning-disabled student, who will often miss or misinterpret the rules that guide behavior. Ineffective processing of information from social settings makes it difficult for such a child to anticipate consequences and plan further action. Language-learning-disabled students are further disadvantaged because they do not always understand or use the nuances of language and word meanings. The interaction skills for making friends and cooperating with others is often poorly developed. Explicit discussion of expected behaviors, accompanied by frequent visual cues (such as signs or charts), as well as class modeling of social problem solving, will help the learning-disabled student participate in classroom routines.

Most socially disruptive children do not intentionally set out to be problems for their teachers. They may understand the classroom rules, but because of limited attention span and poor impulse control they often talk over others, interrupt when it's not their turn, and talk loudly at inappropriate times.

Many social conventions are culturally determined. Some cultures may indicate respect and acknowledgment of status by not looking at the listener as they speak. Other cultures have quite formalized patterns of behavior, such as for greetings and requests for assistance.

Assessment

Novice Speakers

- Speak audibly on most occasions.
- Understand purpose and own role in routine classroom activities.
- Use talk to establish relationships with others.
- Use appropriate greetings, introductions, and farewells.
- Compare greetings and farewells used at home and at school.
- Ask, accede to, and refuse requests in agreed ways.
- Make connections between home language and school English.
- Interpret and respond to nonverbal cues in ways appropriate to their own cultures.
- Anticipate stages in familiar spoken texts.

Maturing Speakers

- Discuss the effects of different audiences and topics.
- Discuss the reasons for class rules.
- Compare ways in which spoken dealings with familiar people vary.
- Consider occasions to adjust voice volume according to purpose and situation.
- Demonstrate ways to use nonverbal cues such as gesture and facial expressions to show emotion and responses.
- Discuss ways in which different kinds of talk can affect other people.
- Experiment with varying voice tone and volume to indicate emotions.
- Observe procedures for class activities.

Observation Guidelines

Teachers may like to also consider whether the student:

- initiates conversations.
- concludes conversations.
- waits a turn to speak rather than interrupting.
- takes and shares different roles and responsibilities in a group.

Good Speakers and Listeners

Students discuss the characteristics of a good speaker and a good listener.

Goals

This activity increases students' awareness of the features of effective communication. They will:

- develop awareness of the purposes of speaking and listening in learning
- understand the rules of conversation
- evaluate themselves as speakers and listeners

Teacher Notes:

Conversation is a two-way process. It relies on the active involvement of both speakers and listeners as turns are taken to exchange ideas, information, and feelings.

Discuss these issues: **listening helps me learn** and **talking is a way of learning.**

Not only should students **practice** speaking and listening, but their importance in **thinking and learning** should be explicitly described and valued. Adults should model the ways in which they use speaking and listening effectively.

Highlight the role of speaking and listening in social interaction through explicit discussion and modeling, for example, greetings and farewells, turn taking, listening attentively, and considering the listener's feelings, reactions, and point of view.

Suggestions for what makes a good listener and a good speaker should evolve from discussion. Use some of the ideas listed below to guide your discussion. Make your own wall chart for the classroom.

To Be a Good Listener I Need to…

- remember that listening helps me learn.
- concentrate on what is being said.
- think about what is said and get the main idea.
- adjust my own ideas now that I have new information.
- help the speaker by looking and acting interested.
- wait my turn to talk.
- respond to what is said by making comments or asking questions.

To Be a Good Speaker I Need to…

- remember that speaking is a way of learning.
- organize my thoughts and ideas into words.
- choose what is important to say—keeping in mind what the audience already knows.
- adjust what I say and how I say it in different situations depending on
  —who I am speaking to
  —where I am
  —my reason for talking
- use voice, speech rate, and intonation to get my message across.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Use the wall chart as a guide for students to evaluate their own performances as speakers or listeners. Ask them to select one thing in which they think they could improve. They can also evaluate each others' performances by focusing on a positive point.

Imagine!

Students adjust the volume and clarity of their speech in accordance with the demands of the situation.

Goals

This activity prompts students to:

- consider how volume is adjusted to the speaking situation and purpose

Teacher Notes:

Demonstrate different voice volumes (loud, soft, and medium) and ask students to brainstorm occasions when each of these tones are used. For each category you can discuss the *where* or situation in which the particular volume is needed and the *why* or reason for using that volume level.

For example:
Loud: in a noisy room, calling out a tennis score, to stress what you say, to make it easier for someone who cannot hear well
Soft: in an elevator, when you do not want others to overhear you

Conversely, you can give students a specific setting or circumstance and ask them to suggest what sort of voice they would use and to give reasons for their choice. Assist students to appreciate and accept differing opinions by making a summary statement, such as *In a hospital we would usually speak softly but* ***it depends on*** *how well the person can hear, whether or not there are other patients in the room, how sick the person is,* and so on.

SUGGESTED SITUATIONS:

- You want to tell a secret to your best friend in the playground.
- You are in a church at a wedding.
- You answer the phone and it is someone calling from overseas.
- It's windy and you and your friend are flying a kite.
- You are at an assembly waiting for the principal to come in.
- You are in the library choosing books to borrow.
- You are trying to comfort a very young baby.
- You answer a question in class.
- You are playing hopscotch and your friend has forgotten the rules.
- You are announcing the next performer in the class concert.

Who's Doing What?

Students are given roles and responsibilities in the class concerning communication.

Goals

This activity encourages students to:

- use polite language appropriate to school routines
- practice introducing people
- take a leadership role within the class

Teacher Notes:

Just as there may be a cafeteria monitor or a library monitor chosen for a week or month, consider also the following jobs in your classroom:

- class messenger
- class host
- phone duty person

Brainstorm duties these roles would entail and make a chart of them. Discuss and agree on the appropriate language to be used in the job and write it down. For example, the phone duty person should answer the phone, *Hello this is Grade 2 and I am Timothy. May I help you?*

Students can practice the roles in organized role-play. For example, *Sally, you pretend to be Tom's Mom, who knocks at the door to ask something. Nadia, you be the class host and go and answer the door. Remember what the class host says.*

SUGGESTIONS FOR CLASS JOBS:

Class Host:	Answer the door—*Hello, my name is…. Can I help you?* Take the guest to the teacher or go and get the teacher. Thank the parent helper. Assist with the roll call.
Class Messenger:	Take a message to another class—knock on the door. *Hello, I am...from Grade...and I have a message from Mr….* Give the note or relay the message and ask, *Do you want me to wait for an answer?*
Phone Duty Person:	Answer the phone, make a phone call when asked by the teacher, for example to ask about a student who has been ill.

Signs

Students learn to understand and create signs that represent behaviors associated with classroom rules and routines.

Goals

This activity requires students to:

- interpret visual symbols
- act on interpretation

Teacher Notes:

Just as oral language is a system of symbols delivered through the auditory channel, signs are symbols with a visual stimulus. Interpretation of signs is connected with underlying internal language.

Use signs as an alternative way of communicating behaviors expected of your students. They can also be used as reminders and to reinforce your verbal instruction.

Discuss signs by using some of the following questions:

- Where do you find signs?
- Why do we use signs?
- Are signs with pictures only better than those that have words to read?
- Can young children and people who speak other languages understand signs?

Ask students to suggest classroom situations for which signs could be made, such as cleanup, storytime, or lunchtime. Make your own signs or use some of the ready-made signs on page 173. Ask questions to prompt students to name the behaviors that are linked to each sign. For example, **hands up:** *What must we remember to do when we wish to have a turn to talk?* Eventually, students should be able to follow the signs without teacher prompting.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

1. Signs need not be restricted to rules of the classroom. They may be used for fun to represent the mood of the classroom on a particular day or a reason for celebration. For example, a sign could be made to show *Beware—crabby teacher!*
2. Idioms can be illustrated and used in the same way as other signs, to communicate required behaviors, such as *put your heads together,* or *lend me a hand*.
3. The important functions emphasized in the activities of this book can also be represented by signs, such as *time for speaking, time for listening, time for thinking*.
4. For homework, ask students to create a sign applicable to use in their home. For example, *No dogs on the couch.*

Who's Listening?

Students learn to adjust the way in which they say things according to their audience.

Goals

This activity promotes students' ability to:

- compare greetings and farewells used at home and school
- select appropriate language depending upon who is listening

Teacher Notes:

School gives young students exposure to the wider world and is an excellent setting for teaching the *social rules* of language. While all language contributions should be encouraged and accepted in the classroom, from the very beginning students should be taught that there are different ways of saying things. It is not that language is *right* or *wrong* but that some situations allow the use of casual speech and others necessitate a more formal or careful form.

Use the characters on the blackline master on page 174. Choose one of the following scenarios and ask students to pretend to talk to the different characters.

You need to tell the following people to come to the telephone to answer a call.

Aunt: Aunty Sue, there's someone on the phone for you.
Friend: Hey, Jenny—phone!
Principal: Excuse me, Ms. Bond. There's a phone call for you.

Note: Not all scenarios will be appropriate for all of the characters.

SUGGESTED SCENARIOS:

- You are walking with… You are being left behind and you want to tell him or her to wait for you.
- You want to ask for a bite of…'s ice cream.
- Tell… that your dog has gotten out and has been missing for two days.
- Give… the good news that your grandma won at Bingo on Saturday.
- You are at the movies and you have to tell… that you are not feeling well.
- You need to borrow a pencil from… to finish writing a letter.
- You are given bologna in your sandwiches and you hate bologna. Tell… that you really can't eat them.
- …has a new puppy. You want to hold it.
- You see… in the supermarket. What would you say?
- …is lifting something really heavy. You want to help.

Hang On, That's Slang!

Students discover the meaning of slang words.

Goals

This activity promotes students' ability to:

- consider when it is appropriate to use casual language forms
- think about why certain words are used as slang
- discuss word use with adults

Teacher Notes:

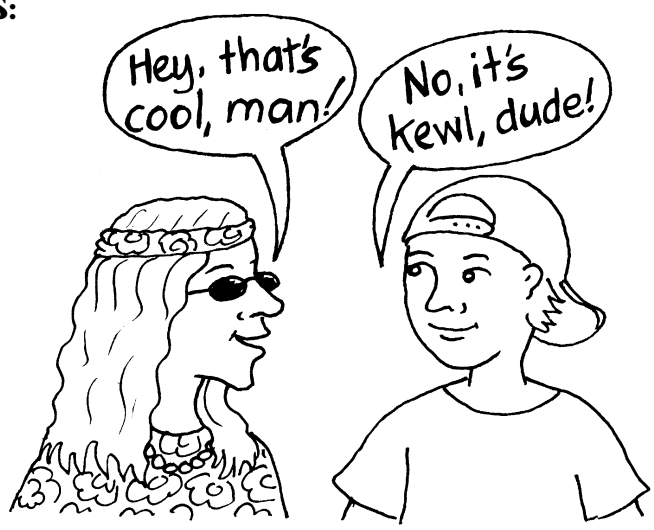
With students, make a list of slang words. Explain that these are words or phrases appropriate to use in casual settings with friends or family, but they are inappropriate when used before strangers or formal circumstances. Spend time in discussing the words in your list. Ask questions such as:

- *What does it mean when you say it?*
- *When would you say it?*
- *To whom would you say it?*
- *How do you think it first came to be used in this way?*
- *What else can it mean?*

You can also introduce the idea that words such as these will change as time goes by. Mention words used when you were a child and ask students to ask parents and other adults which words were popular when they were young. Make a list of these words and what they once meant.

SUGGESTED WORDS:

- ace
- ballistic
- cool
- dude
- gross
- far out
- yuck
- neat
- awesome
- radical
- wicked
- get real
- be a sport



Body Language!

This activity focuses on the use of gestures, body language, and other nonverbal factors in communication.

Goals

This activity promotes students' ability to:

- interpret the meaning of gestures and body language
- use nonverbal communication to act out a speaking situation
- describe actions and facial expressions

Teacher Notes:

Talk with students about nonspeech factors in communication. Demonstrate different body actions or postures and facial expressions and ask students to describe the message that they receive.
For example:

- Walk in to the room with quick stomping steps.
- Sit with arms folded, shoulders tense, and face stern.

You can also ask students what you might have said in the situation. For example, in situation one, you might have said, *I want you to stop what you are doing and quickly line up. I forgot that we have an assembly.*

Choose students to take part in acting out a scenario as suggested below. Set the scene for them and then give each character a short description of his or her part, including what might have been said. Remind them that they should mime their part using their body and facial expression, but that they should not speak. Continue to support the mime by narrating and commenting.

After each scenario, students in the audience can describe the actions and facial expressions observed and comment about what they communicated.

Prompt this by asking questions such as: *How did… show you that she was…?, What did…'s expression tell us?, How did… feel when … stared?*

SUGGESTED SCENARIOS:

Scene: in the classroom
Event: a new student arrives at the door
Characters:

1 Student walks to the door to welcome the new student.
2 Two friends whisper.
3 A student stares at the new student.
4 One student looks up but then continues with a game.

Scene: a dentist's waiting room
Event: a toddler is having a tantrum
Characters:

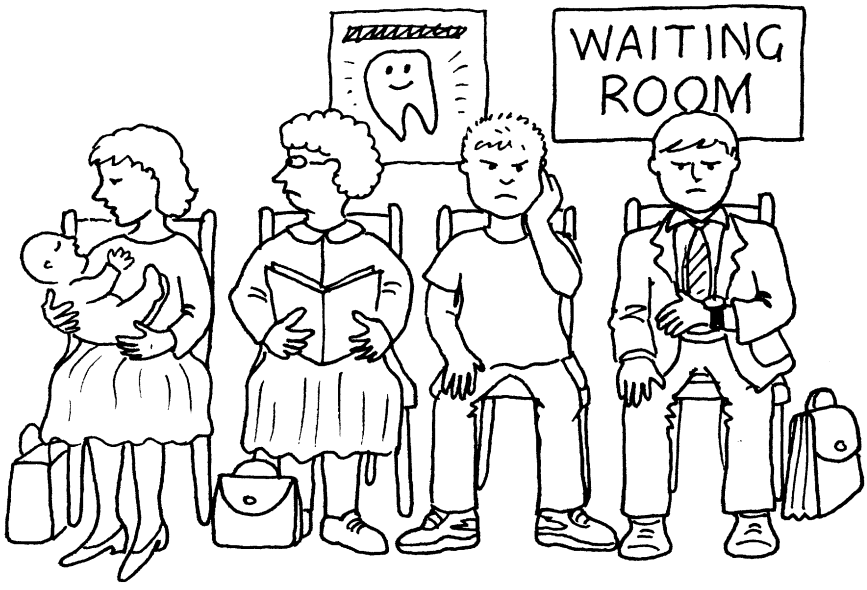
1. The mother is upset and tries to quiet her child.
2. An old lady disapproves and stares.
3. A young boy tries to help by offering the toddler a toy.
4. A teenager is in pain with a toothache.
5. Another man is impatient because the dentist is running late.

Scene: on the playground
Event: a football breaks a classroom window
Characters:

1. Two children argue as to who was at fault.
2. The teacher on duty approaches.
3. The principal comes out of her office to see what the fuss is about.
4. One child is cut by a piece of falling glass.
5. Another child comforts the injured child.
6. A parent offers to help keep students clear of the area.

Scene: the family room
Event: Father enters and turns off the television
Characters:

1. One child protests.
2. One child happily continues playing cards.
3. One child sulks on the couch.
4. One child glares at the father in silent anger.



Act It Out

This activity includes role-play activities for different social conventions.

Goals

Through role-play of different social situations students will:

- develop an awareness of language codes used in different everyday situations
- adapt word choice, sentence structure, and manner of speaking
- draw on past experience

Teacher Notes:

The following role-play scenarios depict common uses of language in everyday life. The characters will change and may differ from each other in age, social status, and gender.

Assign two or three students to each role-play and allow them time to rehearse the situation. Remind students that body language is often as important in conveying messages as the language used.

After the role-plays in each section, discuss the type of language used.

RESOLVING CONFLICT:

- Brother and sister argue about whose turn it is to take the trash out.
- Little brother cheats at a board game.
- Two children want to watch different TV programs after school.

ASKING FOR INFORMATION:

- Ask how much a poster in the window costs.
- Ask how you become a library member.
- Ask where the girl sitting next to you on the bus bought her football scarf.

PERSUASION:

- You want to swap something for a prize marble or a favorite baseball card.
- You want to persuade your parents that you are big enough to ride your bike to school.
- You want the teacher to let you be class monitor for the week.

MAKING A COMPLAINT:

- You received the wrong burger at a fast food restaurant.
- Someone else seems to be using your desk or hanging their bag on your hook.
- You don't think you received the correct change after buying an ice-cream cone.

INTERRUPTING:

- You want to tell your teacher you have forgotten your lunch.
- Your mom is on the phone and you need to ask her if you can go to play at a neighbor's house.
- You want to interrupt two teachers talking in order to report that a child has fallen off the slide.

How Would You Feel?

This activity focuses on emotional reactions to speech.

Goals

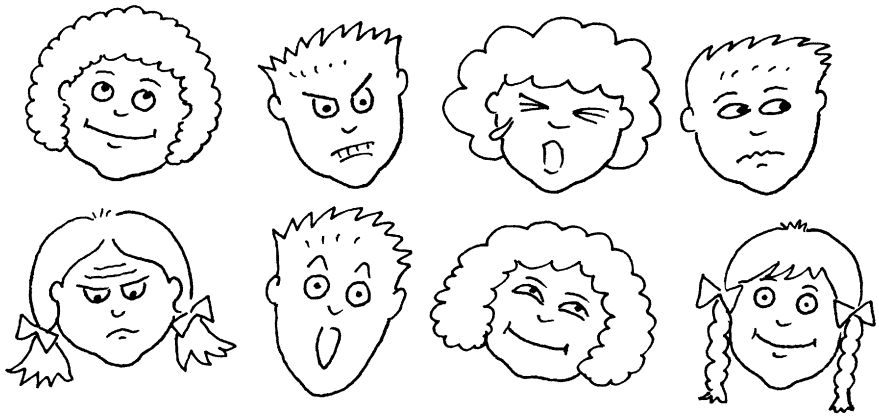
This activity requires students to:

- express their feelings through language
- analyze both the content and manner of speech
- discuss how different ways of talking make people feel

Teacher Notes:

1 Talk about how people can influence the way you feel when they talk to you. It is not only **what** they say, but **how** they say it that will affect you. For example, *Oh you've had your hair cut!* (Say one complimentary, the other using a disapproving manner.)

2 Brainstorm some feeling words, such as *proud, angry, hurt, nervous, worried, scared, relaxed, confident, accepted, lonely, trusted.*



3 Using some of the suggestions below, ask students to express how they would feel if these comments were said to them. Encourage them to explain their feelings.

4 Discuss how and why different people react in very different ways to the same comment. *Does it depend on who is talking? How you feel toward the person? Where you are when the comment is made? How you are feeling at the time?*

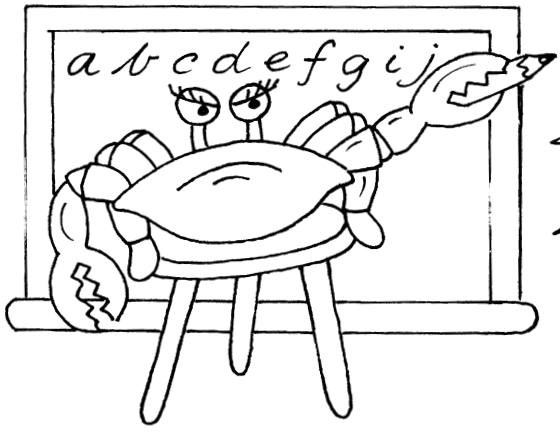
SUGGESTED COMMENTS:

- *You know so much about skateboards.*
- *Be careful on that slide—it's very high. A boy fell off one like that.*
- *You look as though you should have gone to bed earlier.*
- *Let's sit together on the couch and read one of your favorite stories.*
- *We already have enough people in our group.*
- *Could you please draw the pictures—I love the way you do it.*
- *Your uniform is too small.*
- *You're big enough to clean your shoes by yourself now.*
- *Well done, you remembered to bring back your book.*
- *You're like a little bee buzzing around.*
- *What's happened to your hair?*
- *Gosh, your feet are enormous!*

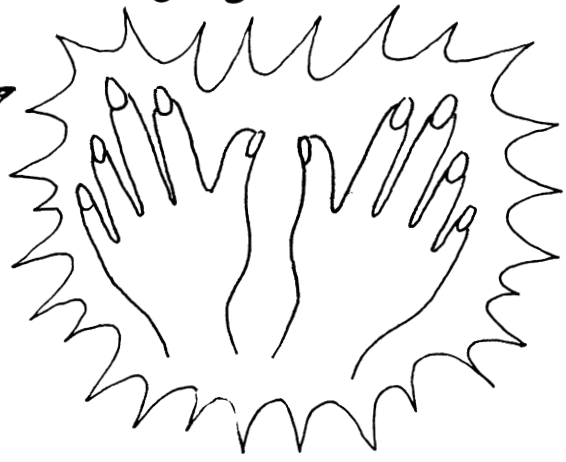
Signs

Be on Time

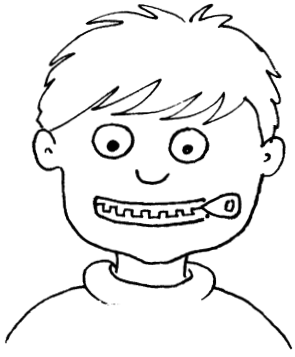
No Playing Ball Inside



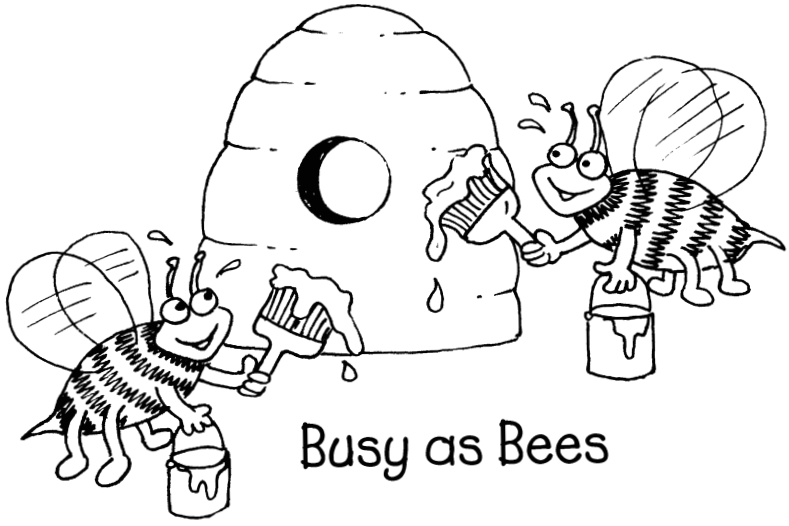
Crabby Teacher



Clean Hands



Silence



Busy as Bees

See also: "Signs" on page 165.

Who's Listening?

Brother

Sister

Aunt

Friend

School Principal

Grandpa

See also: "Who's Listening" on page 166.

Resources

Children's Literature

Books are an ideal starting point for introducing a language arts activity. Reading stories together introduces children to a wealth of new ideas and experiences. However, students must be offered more than just stimulating class discussion. Choose tasks that will lead to active engagement with the text and will act as a springboard for greater awareness and appreciation of oral language in its own right. Set goals for that verbal interaction and create opportunities for modeling a range of language genres. The following resources will provide extended activities to help meet these goals.

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Gray, Nigel. *Running Away from Home,* Crown Publishing Group, 1996.

Mahy, Margaret. *Jam,* Little, Brown & Company, 1986.

Sluyter, Dean. *Why the Chicken Crossed the Road,* Putnam Publishing Group, 1998.

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Smith, Dorothy. *Gran, Please Tell Us a Story,* Brunswick Publishing Corporation, 1986.

van Allsburg, Chris. *Tell Us a Story,* Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996.

Wilmer, Diane. *Nuts About Nuts,* Forest House Publishing Company, 1990.

Wright, Lynn F. *Momma Tell Me a Story,* WorryWart Publishing Company, 1995.

Describing

Aliki. *Feelings,* William Morrow & Company, 1986.

Butler, Dorothy. *My Brown Bear Barney in Trouble,* Greenwillow Books, 1993.

Fox, Mem. *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge,* Kane/Miller Book Publishers, 1995.

Messenger, Norman. *Making Faces,* DK Publishing, 1993.

Scheller, Malanie. *My Grandfather's Hat,* Simon & Schuster Children's, 1992.

Thompson, Carol. *In My Bedroom,* Doubleday, 1990.

Wild, Margaret. *Remember Me,* Albert Whitman & Company, 1995.

Recounting and Reporting

Baker, Jeannie. *Window,* Puffin Books, 1993.

Clyne, Densey. *Catch Me If You Can!,* Gareth Stevens, 1998.

Howell, Richard, and Howell, Lynn. *Winifred's New Bed,* Alfred A. Knopf Books for Young Readers, 1985.

Matthews, Downs. *Polar Bear Cubs,* Simon & Schuster Children's, 1991.

Following Directions

Butterfield, Sherri M. *I'm Following Directions,* The Learning Works, 1995.

Making Vocabulary Connections

Cummings, Phil. *Goodness Gracious!,* Orchard Books, 1992.

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Terban, Marvin. *In a Pickle & Other Funny Idioms,* Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983.

Thaler, Make. *Fang the Dentist,* Troll Communications, 1997.

Asking Questions

Maris, Ron. *Are You There, Bear?,* Puffin Books, 1986.

Unwin, Pippa. *Great Zoo Hunt?,* Doubleday, 1990.

Discussing and Reasoning

Alborough, Jez. *Where's My Teddy?,* Candlewick Press, 1997.

Ball, Duncan. *Jeremy's Tail,* Orchard Books, 1991.

Clement, R. *Counting on Frank,* Gareth Stevens, 1995.

Lester, Alison. *Yikes!* In *Seven Wild Adventures, Who Would You Be?,* Houghton Mifflin Company, 1995.

Scieszka, Jon. *The Stinky Cheese Man & Other Fairly Stupid Tales,* Viking Penguin, 1999.

Scieszka, Jon. *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs,* Puffin Books, 1997.

Language Interaction

Cave, Kathryn. *Something Else,* Mondo Publishing, 1998.

Gedye, Jane. *Dinner's Ready!,* Doubleday, 1989.

Goffe, Toni. *Bully for You,* Child's Play-International, 1991.

Gretz, Susanna. *It's Your Turn, Roger!,* Dial Books for Young Readers, 1987.

Handy, Libby. *Boss for a Week,* Scholastic, 2000.

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