

Collect a Joke
Loop
Cards
Trash
Tick
or

Bingo

50 Great Activities For Any Classroom

What's the Question?

MINI WHITEBOARDS

RANDOM QUESTIONS

Treasure
Hunt

Matching Games

points system

Quiz
Trade
Quiz

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PREFACE

As a teacher I am always looking for ways to engage the students in my classroom, as well as develop a sense of ownership in them over their learning. This has led to me trying many different activities and ideas, both of my own creation and suggested to me by other teachers.

I enjoy designing new problems for my students to solve, and testing them out. Sometimes they work, sometimes they don't. But that never puts me off trying something new. I believe that my students thrive in the learning environment that we have created together, where we are able to try something new, and learn from the experiences. After all, isn't that what learning is all about?

Over the relatively short period that I have been teaching, I have become very interested in using computers to help further the learning that takes place in the classroom, whether this is making use of the computer room, or using interactive software on the board. In pursuit of this, I have set up my own website dedicated to creating and sharing interactive computer based activities for use in the mathematics classroom, which can be found at www.interactive-maths.com. But as much as I love to use technology, I am also a very firm believer that although it can enhance the learning that takes place, it is not the be all and end all in a classroom. And in this vein, I also try to develop other activities for use in my classroom.

This is where this book fits in. Often when I sit down to plan a lesson, I sit and think about what kind of activity I could use in the lesson to help the pupils meet the learning objective. Something that incorporates some form of formative assessment, whilst also ensuring students are making progress. It should also be engaging. I have a selection of ideas that I regularly fall back on, and some that I use on the odd occasion. But in a bid to make myself try more new things, and also make use of the great activities I have tried once and then forgotten about, I decided to write them all down. And then I thought most of these ideas are applicable in any classroom, in any school, with any class. Why should I keep all these great ideas to myself? So I decided that I would extend that list of activities into a brief description of each activity as well, so I could share it with others. This project continued to grow, and now stands as this book.

For each activity in this book I have given an overview of how to run the activity, along with ideas for differentiation, what preparation is needed before the lesson, some alternative approaches to the activity as well as an idea as to when these activities work best (based on my experiences).

This is in no way a complete list of all the best activities to use in the classroom, simply a list of those I use and have found to be effective. As a maths teacher, many of the ideas are things that I have designed or come across for the purpose of learning mathematics. However, I feel that the vast majority of the activities are actually broadly applicable to almost all subjects, across all ability ranges. I have tried to come up with examples from various subjects, and not just my own to illustrate this, but it really is left to the reader to take these ideas and use them to their full potential in their subject areas.

I hope you enjoy this book, and find the contents useful for your future teaching.

Dan Rodriguez-Clark

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11. COLLECT A JOKE

Aim of the Activity

This activity is a slightly different way to get pupils engaged in answering questions with short or factual answers, and also provides them with a self-checking mechanism whilst doing it.

Brief Description

Each pupil has a sheet with questions on, which, as they find the answers, reveals a joke or other message.

How to Run the Activity

This activity starts with you handing out a worksheet with several questions on it (between 10 and 20 works well). Explain to the students that for each question on the sheet, there is a corresponding card on the wall with the correct answer on it, and also on this card there is a word or phrase (see Figure 6 which shows the worksheet on the left, and the cards on the right).

As the students answer the questions, they will get up and wander around the classroom to find the card which has the answer they are looking for, and also write down the word or phrase next to that question. They will soon realise (hopefully) that the words combine in order to make a sentence. As they answer more and more of the questions, they get more of the words in the sentence.

Question	Answer	Word
$2x^2 - 10x + 12 = 0$		
$2x^2 + 14x + 20 = 0$		
$3x^2 + 12x - 15 = 0$		
$3x^2 + 8x + 4 = 0$		
$5x^2 - 27x + 10 = 0$		
$3x^2 - 5x - 2 = 0$		
$2x^2 + 7x - 15 = 0$		
$4x^2 + 3x - 1 = 0$		
$6x^2 - 5x + 1 = 0$		
$10x^2 - 23x + 12 = 0$		

$x = 3$ $x = 2$ Why	$x = -2$ $x = -5$ was
$x = 1$ $x = -5$ 6	$x = -2$ $x = -\frac{2}{3}$ afraid
$x = 5$ $x = \frac{2}{5}$ of	$x = 2$ $x = -\frac{1}{3}$ 7?
$x = -5$ $x = \frac{3}{2}$ Because	$x = -1$ $x = \frac{1}{4}$ 7
$x = \frac{1}{2}$ $x = \frac{1}{3}$ 8	$x = \frac{4}{5}$ $x = \frac{3}{2}$ 9!

Figure 6: Quadratics Collect a Joke

Differentiation Ideas

This activity can be easily differentiated by changing the wording of the questions for different pupils (but with the same answers). You can then give each student a worksheet appropriate to their ability.

As an extension task to this, you could ask students to either write their own set of question and answer cards, or ask them to write a new set of questions, with the same answers.

Preparation Needed

Before the lesson you need to prepare a set of questions in worksheet format, and a set of cards with the answers on. Try to make the answers unique for simplicity, though if you want an extra challenge, you can add multiple answers that are the same. On each card, you need to add a word or phrase that forms part of your joke/comment. These should be split up in order through the questions.

You will also need to stick the cards up around the room before the class arrives. You can decide what size you want to make them, and how visible they should be (do you want them to have to search or not).

Plenary Ideas

Depending on the sentence you decided to put into the activity, the plenary could be related to this (if you have chosen a piece of advice). Otherwise, a discussion of which words were hardest to place (or which questions were hardest to answer) is a good starting point.

Alternate Approaches to the Activity

If the idea of your class getting out of their seats is not something you think they would cope well with, then you can give each individual or pair a set of the answer cards to check through themselves.

When to Use the Activity

Collect a Joke is a good way to get students doing lots of questions without them realising it, as they are engaging in the collecting the joke part of the activity. It works well at any point in a sequence of lessons, either as a starter to a lesson after studying a topic, or the plenary. It can also be used as the main activity of a lesson if you create a suitable set.

Why Use this Activity

Collect a Joke activities are a more engaging way to get pupils to answer lots of questions on a particular topic. The idea of finding a joke gets the pupils more interested, and also acts as a self-marking tool. In this way, rather than spending time checking every answer, you can spend more time working with the students who need it, as well as identify them quickly.

36. TRUE/FALSE

Aim of the Activity

To get students thinking about the validity of statements.

Brief Description

You read out a selection of “facts”, and students must identify whether each is true or false.

How to Run the Activity

This activity is great to use regularly, and works best when students are used to it, and ready to start at any point.

Get students into the habit of taking a True/False card when they come into your classroom. At a random point in the lesson make a statement to the class. They have to identify whether this statement is true or false, and use their cards to identify their thought.

At first, students might need reminding to use their cards, and to not just query what you have said. You may even have to start by telling students that they are going to use their True/False cards. As they get used to using them though, you will be able to drop statements into the lesson, and pupils will realise what they need to do.

Ideally you should have 2 or 3 statements for each lesson.

Differentiation Ideas

This activity gets all students to think about what has been said, and they will automatically think about the statements at a level appropriate to their ability. You should try to use questions which will challenge the whole class.

Preparation Needed

You need a set of True/False cards in your classroom. Ideally these are about A5 in size, with a large “T” on one side, and an “F” on the other side. They will also need to be laminated, and ideally should be in colour.

You also need to think of statements that will get students to think. These must include some which are true. This sounds silly, but it is easy to get carried away saying things that are false to see if students will spot it. Although this is a part of the activity, you should also make sure they can identify things that are true, not just things that are not true.



Figure 32: True/False card, to be folded over so double sided

Plenary Ideas

If there is a statement which a significant proportion of the class identify incorrectly, then you can take this and address the misconception underlying their error. This instant feedback will give students confidence that their questions will be answered. You can also use this opportunity to get one of the students who got it correct to explain why it was true or false.

Alternate Approaches to the Activity

Use this activity as a regular plenary to assess students' progress against the learning objective. By planning 5 to 10 killer statements to end your lessons with, you will very quickly ascertain how well each individual has coped with the lesson, and what progress they have made towards the learning objectives.

An alternative to the quick-fire questions with the show me cards, True/False activities also make excellent worksheets to promote deep thinking and a good understanding.

When to Use the Activity

Ideally this activity is used regularly, and possibly even in every lesson. It makes an excellent plenary, but is also effective if used at "random" points during the lesson to keep students on their toes.

Why Use this Activity

This activity gets students to think about what you tell them, and teaches them not to take everything they are told at face value. It can also identify areas of misconceptions that need to be addressed, either with individuals or groups. The quick-fire nature of the activity also makes it easy to drop into any lesson.