



## Build Essential Skills through Games

*Emotional Intelligence, Negotiation, Problem Solving, Coordinating with Others, Judgement and Decision Making*

Grades K-3

### Training Learning Skills

Would you like to have a fun way to train your students in learning skills such as collaboration, initiation, self-regulation and taking responsibility? This is the lesson for you! And, once students have some mastery over these learning skills, they are set up to enjoy powerful learning in all areas. The most engaging teaching tools I have found to result in deep learning is through educational drama strategies (see Ontario Arts Document) <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/arts18b09curr.pdf>

### Why Play Games?

Learning through games is a fun way to teach children to listen and respond to rules while they keep each other accountable. As well, games teach the basics of skill development in focus, cooperation, collaboration, decision-making, creativity and other 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Character education and citizenship skills are also developed through these learning games.



**Standing in Neutral:** (Standing in neutral is a good place to return to throughout a drama lesson but also when doing active work. Students learn to stand still and in drama, what it is to have "no character".) Standing in a circle, everyone has their hands in a natural position at their sides, feet are slightly apart, body is alert and looking straight ahead or at the person speaking.

**Walk About:** (Students learn to walk without character while cooperating with the use of space. Self-regulation is developed through this type of activity.)

Walking in neutral, arms swinging slightly and naturally with no added movements.

Walking in the space, students look for the empty spaces and avoid each other, turning when needed. "Walk Abouts" are done in silence.

Scaffold with the following:

- walk in silence
- look for the spaces in the room
- turn sharply when I ask
- freeze (vocal), form hands as a T (body language), echo clap



- teacher uses his/her body to create a wall and students are led into an increasingly smaller space but must still walk about without touching anyone.
- **Do This, Do That** (This game helps students focus on particular words and react quickly to a command. I don't play with elimination, just feedback.) Like Simon Says, students do the action when "Do This" is said but not when "Do That" is said. They may only call themselves out. Highlight honesty. No one can call anyone else out.
- **Fire on the Mountain:** (Students must lay down quickly and listen intently to the sounds of initial consonants or final constants, etc. This is good ear training.) Students lay on the floor in scatter formation. Students quickly stand when the teacher calls out, "Fire on the Mountain." Teacher calls out, "Fire on the...street," "Fire on the...monkey," "Fire on the...Mountain." The first person standing gets to call out the next round. The idea is to listen for initial consonants and react quickly.
- **Silent Shapes:** (This game engages the kinesthetic intelligence and makes learning letter shapes an embodied learning experience. An extension is to only say the letter sounds and have the students make the letter shapes.) Standing or laying on the floor in scatter formation and without talking make the following shapes that the teacher calls out. For example: C, A, T; S, A, T; M, A, T etc. Create a sentence using these words, e.g. The cat sat on the mat.
- **Do What I Do:** Mirror the leader; others take turns in a circle. Create words using body shapes or hold up fingers on one hand then on the other working on addition, subtraction, multiplication or division facts. This is a great activity when waiting in line and can also be done with a partner.
- **Echo Clap:** (Ear training while finding an interesting way to capture attention. Meets music expectations as well.) Sound out a rhythmic pattern of 4-8 beats by clapping, stomping, snapping, etc, and the class echoes back the pattern in unison.
- **What's In The Eye?** (A fun way to train being observant which is a skill needed for visual arts, reading body language, etc.) Describe what you see in someone's pupil. This activity is also good for standing in line or waiting for technology to work.

- **Listen for the Key:** (This game teaches acute listening skills and works best in a large area.) Students sit in a wide circle. One student is blindfolded and sits on a chair with a set up keys under it. When the teacher points to a student in the circle, they creep quietly up to the keys and take them back to their spot in the circle. If they succeed, they are the next blindfolded person on the chair. If they are pointed at by the person on the chair, they are not successful.
- **Change Your Appearance:** (Another training for observing and detecting differences...useful also in Science.) Standing in front of a partner, observe them for 30 seconds. Turn away from your partner and change one item on your person e.g. undo one button, turn your necklace around, roll up your sleeves. Then face your partner and guess what they have changed.



**Atom:** (This game reinforces that everyone is of equal importance and we work with anyone in the class, not just our friends. It also works on class problem solving and distinguishing inclusion and exclusion. I would play this game from grade 1 and older.

- Call out any number of combinations, "Atom Two!" Or "Atom Four!" The group assembles themselves by sitting cross-legged in a circle creating the associated number.
- If you are not in a group, you are either out (exclusion) or you can be "hidden" by another group (inclusion). Challenge students to see how many different classmates they can include by the end of the game?

**One Teapot:** (This game works on focus, cooperation, spatial and kinesthetic memory.

- Like Atom, start with a walk about. Call "one." Students freeze. Then call "teapot." Encourage students to creatively make the shape of a teapot using different levels (high, middle, low).
- Walk about, call "two." Students quickly form groups of two. "CN Tower" Two students form the CN Tower. (one CN Tower with two people)
- "Three, Christmas tree"
- "Four, car"
- "Five, snake"
- Repeat these in sequence, then backwards, then in random order.

(This is my favorite game to use as a Minds On activity for any subject e.g. introducing a story such as "Rapunzel." E.g. One witch, two castle, three long hair...)





**Wax Museum:** (This cross-curricular game is great to reinforce self-regulation, cooperating with students near them and being creative with the statues they form. A variety of levels can be reinforced and once they are comfortable with the game, they can quickly form groups for their statues. Then students are ready to work on the elements of a good tableau in drama.)

- Brainstorm rooms related to the theme e.g. First Nations and Early Settlers e.g. First Nations building a canoe, hunting for game, skinning animals and cooking, fishing, gathering berries and plants, farming; Early Settlers working together to cook, hunt, build or e.g. fairytale room, school room, playground... (Simplify and scaffold complexity for students.)
- Teacher in role as the night watchman carries a flashlight. He/she walks through the entire museum after closing hours to see if the wax statues are in good repair.
- Meanwhile, the students are the wax statues. The night watchman turns his/her back to students while talking out loud to himself, "Now the next room...the fairytale room." After a minute, night watchman turns around slowly and all the students are frozen as wax statues in the fairytale room. Shine the flashlight on particular statues as you inspect them. They should not move.
- Then the night watchman moves to the next room.
- Once students know the game, you can add another layer of difficulty. Shine the flashlight on particular statues and allow others to turn their heads and look where the light is shining. (This allows students to learn from each other.)
- You can also have students slowly follow you when your back is turned. But they must freeze quickly when you turn toward them and must never touch you. (Students love this version.)
- Later, students can take turns being the night watchman.



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