

BRAIN TEASERS

These activities and more feature in Scholastic's Daily Brainteasers series.*



Fire up minds with these dip-in activities taken from the popular Scholastic books

AGES 7–9

1. MATCH CITY

THINKING SKILLS: reasoning, creative thinking

SUBJECT LINK: geography

LEARNING LINKS: auditory, visual

ORGANISATION: pairs

RESOURCES: ten matchsticks and five counters for each pair.



WHAT TO DO

- Counters are cities and matches are roads. You are going to connect your cities together.
- Take it in turns to place a city or a road (counter or match).
- There are two rules: each move must make a connection (except for the first go for each player) and any two cities can only be joined by one road.
- When all the counters and matches have been played, work out a route to visit every city with the least number of moves. One move is one road (match).

NOW TRY THIS

Alter the numbers of matches and counters used to set up the network.

AGES 9–11

1. ODDS AND EVENS NOUGHTS AND CROSSES

THINKING SKILL: information processing

SUBJECT LINK: mathematics

ORGANISATION: any number of children divided into two teams

RESOURCES: pen and paper for pairs or small groups; class board if playing with the whole class split into two teams.



WHAT TO DO

- Draw a noughts and crosses grid.
- One team has the even numbers 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and writes in red.
- The other team has the odd numbers 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and writes in blue.
- Each team takes it in turn to write one of their numbers in a space on the grid (numbers can be used more than once).
- The aim is to complete a line with the numbers adding up to 15.
- Winning lines can be vertical, horizontal or diagonal.
- The winning team is the one to get the most winning lines.

AGES 7–9

2. SYNONYM GAME

THINKING SKILL: evaluation

SUBJECT LINK: literacy

ORGANISATION: whole class

RESOURCES: whiteboards and pens; a list of adjectives, for example, fat, thin, scary, tiny, pretty, hairy; thesauruses.



WHAT TO DO

- What is a synonym? It's a word that has a similar meaning.
- Here are some examples: sad – miserable, unhappy; quiet – peaceful, still.
- Copy down the adjectives from the board. Think of a synonym for each word. Find as many as you can in three minutes.
- When you have a good list of synonyms, think about how near they are in meaning to the original word. Arrange them in order, writing the ones with the closest meaning nearer to the original word.
- Discuss your findings. Compare results with a partner.

AGES 9–11

2. SILLY SENTENCES

THINKING SKILL: creative

SUBJECT LINK: literacy

LEARNING LINK: visual

ORGANISATION: groups of four

RESOURCES: small squares of paper for each team; pens; whiteboards.



WHAT TO DO

- Each child needs a pen and a supply of small squares of paper. Each child in the group is allocated a number – one, two, three or four.
- Call out, one noun, two verb, three adjective and four adverb. All the children who are number one write a noun on their piece of paper, the number two's all write a verb and so on. The group then has 30 seconds to create a sentence using the four words they have come up with. Share these sentences with the whole class.
- For the next round, call out a different sentence part for each number.

AGES 7–9

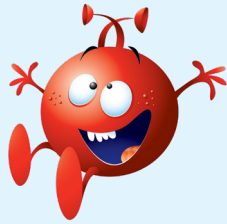
1. TIMELINE

THINKING SKILL: reasoning

SUBJECT LINK: history

ORGANISATION: individual

RESOURCES: paper and pencil; timeline template for each child or timeline on the board; pictures of different periods in history relating to children's previous learning; labels with the period names jumbled up on the board, such as Iron Age, Egyptians, Tudors, Romans, Victorians.



WHAT TO DO

- Point to the jumbled pictures and labels on the board. Tell the children that history has been muddled up. You need them to help you unravel it by placing the pictures and labels correctly on a timeline.
- Draw a timeline on the board. Mark off five short lines where each period will be written.
- Ask them to copy the timeline onto a piece of paper.
- Ask: If the Romans are placed on the third mark, where are the other periods placed?
- After the children have written the periods of history onto their own timeline, work together to order the pictures and captions on the timeline on the board.

NOW TRY THIS

Discuss the results and promote 'What if?' questions such as: If the Romans had not invaded Britain, what might be different now? If the Egyptians had buried their dead kings at sea, what might be different now?

AGES 9–11

1. TAKE YOUR PLACES!

THINKING SKILL: creative

SUBJECT LINK: literacy

ORGANISATION: whole class

RESOURCES: the register (this activity is particularly useful when you have a visitor to the class).

WHAT TO DO

- As a class, think of as many prepositions as you can and display them on a board. Elicit phrases such as adjacent to; directly behind; to the immediate left of and so on.
- The first person in the register begins with: Good morning, my name is Jenny Aardvark [child's name] and perched on his chair three



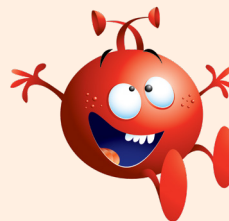
places to my left is

Ryan Brown. The

second person continues with a greeting and proceeds to gesticulate and describe the name and location of the next person in the register. This continues until the register is complete. If someone is absent, the child will note this and continue with the next child in the register. The last person in the register finishes with a greeting such as:

Good morning everybody and welcome to our class.

- Descriptions of how individuals are sitting or what they are doing may also be incorporated in the introductory greeting – as long as they are complimentary!



AGES 7–9

2. TARGET TREE

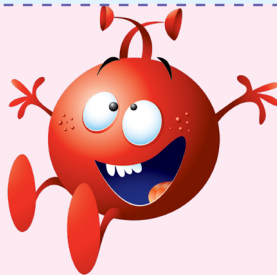
THINKING SKILL: information processing

SUBJECT LINK: art

LEARNING LINKS: visual, tactile

ORGANISATION: individuals, pairs

RESOURCES: for each child: two sheets of paper or card; felt-tipped pens or coloured crayons; scissors; glue sticks.



WHAT TO DO

- Think about what you would like to do before you are old.
- Where do you see yourself? Are you surfing on a beach in Tahiti?
- Have you been to university?
- Are you working? What kind of job are you doing?
- On one sheet of paper, draw five leaves and cut them out.
- On the other sheet, draw a tree with branches. On each leaf write or draw something you would like to do in the future.
- Stick your leaves on your tree and colour it all in.
- Show a partner your ideas.
- Mime all the things you want to do before you grow old, like swimming with dolphins. Can your partner guess them? Remember, no talking!

AGES 9–11

2. WHAT I LEARNED TODAY!

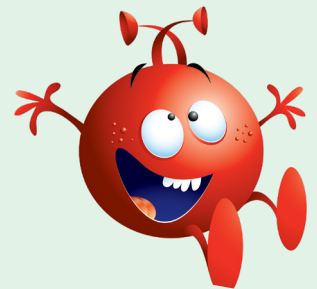
THINKING SKILLS: information processing, evaluation

SUBJECT LINK: all

LEARNING LINK: auditory

ORGANISATION: individual

RESOURCES: board; strips of paper and pens



WHAT TO DO

- At the end of every day, make time to carry out this activity, which will encourage the children to reflect on their learning and help to consolidate what has been learned.
- Write up the question 'What have we learned today?' in a big thought bubble on the board.
- Everybody writes something they have personally learned on a strip of paper and comes up, reads it out and sticks it around the speech bubble. Encourage the children to pay attention and to listen to each other.
- Vote on which learning objective was the most relevant/interesting/challenging. When everyone has contributed and shared their thoughts it is time to go home and relate what they have learned to their parents or carers.