

Suggestions of activities to use with Nursery/Primary 1 pupils in 'Free Activity' periods

You may want to introduce an activity and vocabulary to the whole class first, before using it as a group activity in 'Free Activity' lessons. Some activities will be suitable for PE or when teaching a topic in other lessons. Look for suggestions in your teachers' curriculum book.

Water Play

You need - large bowl half filled with water

1. Have an assortment of objects and let the children **play and explore** what they can do with them and what happens when they are put in water.
2. **Early capacity work** – pouring and filling, emptying
Have an assortment of containers of different sizes - plastic bottles, funnels (cutting off top of a plastic bottle gives a funnel and beaker) cups, bowls, spoons etc. Look out for empty containers which you might throw away which are suitable. Put out a selection and let the children play and investigate how they can use the different objects. After several occasions of free play, you could direct their investigations with a question such as, 'How could you find out which holds the most?' Or 'What happens if?'
3. **Floating and sinking**
Have a selection of objects to investigate – What happens when you put them in water? Sort into which float and which sink.

Ball skills

You need bought or made balls

Use to practise throwing, catching, rolling, bouncing from one child to another before introducing simple games.

Imaginative and Role Play

1. **Building and imaginative play** using materials in the school environment – sticks, stones, grass etc
2. **Banana fibre dolls**
3. **Banana fibre domestic/wild animals** – they don't have to be an exact likeness to a particular animal – children often have good imaginations!

4. Have a **class shop** – use empty packets, bottles, other suitable items. Bottle tops can be used for money. Nursery children can simply play exchanging goods for ‘money’. This activity could be developed further up the school. With older pupils different tops could be given different values, progressing to ‘notes’ made from cut up paper with values matching real money values. Prices of goods and ‘money’ used according to pupils’ mathematical ability and the activity used to reinforce teaching on various buying, selling and change giving activities.
5. **Plaited skipping ropes**

Games which can also promote maths skills

1. **Quoits** – rings like the ones made to protect the head when carrying something. These can be used for throwing and catching to one another and for throwing over a target(s) e.g. a stick stuck into the ground or a stone. When introducing the activity, let the children simply practise the skill of getting the quoits over the target, counting the number of successes. As they become more successful, have several targets, giving a different value to each according to mathematical ability. It is a good way of practising addition – e.g. who is first to reach 10/20/50 etc or subtraction e.g. who is first to reach zero from 10/20/50 etc.
2. **Skittles** Use a ball to knock down empty plastic bottle skittles. You will need flat ground to stand the skittles on! If there is nowhere suitable outside, a clear area in the classroom could be used. Initially you could have children in a circle with the skittles in the centre. Pupils take turns to roll the ball to knock them down. Later have pupils roll the ball the same distance from the skittles – e.g. with their feet behind a stick. As with the targets in the game of quoits, bottles can be given values (use a permanent marker or nail varnish) to give the game a challenge (individual or in teams) at the same time as developing mathematical skills.
3. **‘Make a Number’** Children walk round in a designated area singing (or chanting)

*What number shall we make, shall we make, shall we make?
What number shall we make?
We’ll make number _____.*

Teacher calls out or holds up a number and the children get themselves into groups of that number.
4. **Counting on games with dice and counters**

It is strongly recommended that these are demonstrated first

 - a) **Track games** – These can be made by drawing a track on card or with permanent ink felt tip pens on woven plastic sacks such as used for large quantities of rice etc. If cut the raw edges will need to be hemmed, bound with tape or treated another way to prevent fraying. Bottle tops can be used

for counters. Themes for tracks include (i) matoke tree with the track incorporated into the trunk. The aim is to reach the matoke first. (ii) A race track with cars or people drawn on the bottle tops.

To play start at the starting point e.g. bottom of the matoke tree, start of the race track etc. In turn, each player or team rolls the die and beginning at the start point moves their counter the number shown on the die. On their next turn, the counter is moved on from that position. The winner is the first person or team to reach the finish.

With a short track use a die with numbers 1 & 2 only (substitute 3 – 6 with 1 or 2). For a longer track use numbers 1 – 6. A step on from this is to use two dice and add the numbers.

b) Use a number line as the track.

To play – As for track games but starting at 0 (zero).

If used with P2 up, these can be used by a group of children or a whole class if each section works as a team.

5. Dominoes

To make set of large dominoes, make large rectangles on card (we used card from a cardboard box, rectangles measured 13 x 6.5 cm. A line was drawn on each rectangle giving two squares. Mark dominoes as shown on the accompanying diagrams. This can be done using stickers or drawing dots with a felt tip pen.

To play you need a flat surface e.g. floor or table top. Share the dominoes. If few players give four each and put the remainder in a pile face down. Starting with a double 6, the aim is to lay a domino with a number the same as the one at either end of the line of dominoes. With a large group where children have one or two dominoes each, just get a child who has a matching number lay their domino.

With a smaller group, players take it in turn to lay a domino. If they are unable to do so they pick up one from the top of the pile. When all of the dominoes in the pile have been taken, if a player is unable to go, the next player has a turn. The winner is the person who uses all their dominoes first. If no one is able to get rid of all their dominoes, each person adds the dots on their remaining domino(es). Then the winner is the person with the lowest score.

Other activities

1. Pairs games

You need: - Pairs of cards with different things written/drawn on each. This can be picture – picture e.g. animal – food, picture – word(s) (for older children word – definition. These can be linked with curriculum topic e.g. picture of body part with word in English or local language. Different sets of cards can be used as a revision

tool with older pupils – and once made is a reusable resource. Numbers and sums with the answer can also be paired.

How to play: - Cards are mixed and placed face down on the table. Players take it in turns to turn over two cards at a time. If a pair, player takes the cards. If not a pair, cards turned back. Game continues until all cards have been paired. Winner is player with most pairs.

For a quicker/easier game, once cards have been turned over they are left face up. Younger children may need to simply match pairs with cards face up first time a set of cards is introduced.

For whole class activity cards can be pegged on a rope or string across the classroom. To start the reverse of the cards should be facing the pupils. In turn they choose a card and turn it so it faces the children. When a card makes a pair with another, they are placed together. This can be played with teams competing against one another, points being awarded for pairs made.

6. Jigsaw Puzzles

You can make your own using card from a sturdy box. Stick a picture (drawn or printed) onto the card, trim card to fit the picture and cut into three or more pieces. Store each puzzle in its own envelope or container marked clearly with the contents. It can be useful to give each puzzle a number and to mark that number on each piece of the puzzle and its container. It is then easier to reunite a piece that is found with its puzzle and to quickly separate two or more puzzles which have become mixed.

Books and stories

Just a few suggestions. You may think of many more.

What you do will depend on resources you have in school. A larger book with pictures can be shared with the whole class provided the teacher has the children sitting close to the teacher or the teacher is moving across the front of the classroom if the pupils are sitting at their desks.

Allow a few careful children to look at/read a book. Maybe have a special place for them to do this.

Use your traditional stories.

Maybe draw a few simple pictures and use them when telling a story. Allow the children to use these pictures to retell the story themselves.

Provide a few simple props which will help the children to act out/play when retelling the story.