Let's do some Activites!

Number Game

In this game, there is a number associated with each action. For example, the first action can be 'jump', the second can be 'run', etc. The teacher would need to explain the action clearly to the students and ensure that all the children have understood.

Illustration by Shivendra Pandya

Easy level: Use two to three numbers/ actions. For example, jumping, running in circles, clapping, etc.

To start the game, the teacher calls out a number, such as 'one'. The action associated with it is 'jump', so all the children jump.

As the children become familiar with the game, the teacher can increase the speed of the game by changing the numbers quickly.

Children have to be attentive to listen to the actions and perform them. Also, they have to focus on remembering the actions associated with each number.

The teacher should keep motivating them by saying, 'Your memory is sharp'; 'You all are playing very well'; etc.

Difficult level: Teachers can add more numbers and actions to make the activity more complex. They can also add activities, like form a circle, sit down, put their hands up, etc.

When teachers see a child making a mistake, instead of just drawing attention to them, the teacher can have the whole class say, 'Pay attention, pay attention!'

This activity is suggested by Asha Singh, who is a visiting faculty member with the School of Education at Azim Premji University. Her abiding interest is in using the arts in teaching-learning as a pedagogical tool for teachers and in developing curriculum.

Devising and following instructions

A fun activity for students of classes II to V teaches students how to think, decide, give and follow instructions. This is an activity played with two pairs of students at a time. All students get the chance to play.

Material required: Various fruits and vegetables, like onion, tomato, potato, banana, radish, carrot, etc., kept in a basket and covered with a cloth so children cannot see them. (*Teachers can use any other items available, as those in the school kitchen*.)

All the students form pairs. Two pairs come to the front to play.

One pair selects a vegetable from the basket and keeps it somewhere in the space in front of the class, where everyone can see it.

In the other pair, one student is blindfolded, and this student has to reach the vegetable. This student's partner has to give the instructions so the student can reach the vegetable. The other pair can mislead the blindfolded student by giving contradictory instructions.

If the blindfolded student reaches the vegetable, they have to pick it up and guess what it is through touch, feel and smell - without opening the blindfold.

Moderate level

Firstly, the items in the basket can be changed to objects like a duster, a mobile cover, small toys, etc. The partner of the blindfolded student is allowed to give only three instructions to the student to find the object. For example: Go five steps forward, turn left, move three steps forward and bend to pick.

Illustration by Shivendra Pandya

Difficult level

Keep things like a keychain, chalk, pebbles, and coins in a box, and the blindfolded student has to shake the box and guess what is inside. At this level, too, only three instructions can be given to the blindfolded student by their partner.

Through this activity, children learn to listen to instructions and decide which ones to follow. They also learn how to give correct instructions, adhering to a given limit. They learn to identify objects by using their senses.

Draw and see!

A drawing activity that teaches students how to break down and order tasks, and to think, give and follow instructions. This is an individual activity that can be done with all the students in the class/group in classes II to V.

There can be variations in the levels of cognitive complexity.

Materials required: Notebook, pencil, eraser, and a paper with a drawing.

Ask one student to volunteer as an instructor. Give this student a drawing of a simple animal/item/creature, ensuring that it is not seen by the rest of the class. The rest of the class has to follow this student's instructions.

Easy level

The instructor has to stand before the class and give instructions to the class to draw the picture that only the instructor can see, without disclosing what the followers have to draw. To do this, the instructor needs to break down the steps for drawing and the order in which it can be done. For example, in the cat picture shown here, the instructor can give the following instructions:

1. Make a round face

2. Add two ears
3. Draw a long tail
4. Add two legs
5. Make whiskers on the face

Ensure that the instructor gives instructions to the entire class and not to individual students.

After the task, ask the children to look at each other's drawings. Encourage them to discuss the following:

1. In what ways do the drawings vary? For example, someone has drawn a longer tail, and someone has missed the eyes.
2. Do you observe any variations in terms of shape, size or position? If yes, why? For example, someone has drawn the ears on the face.
3. If you were the instructor, what changes would you make to the instructions?

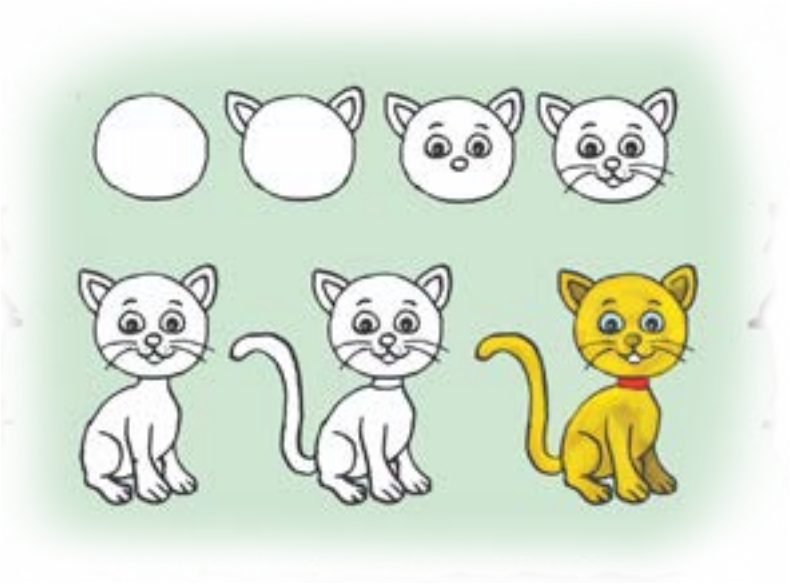

Illustration by Shivendra Pandya

Moderate level

The activity may also be given in the form of jumbled instructions to the children who can read and ask them to sequence the instructions. After they form the sequence, the teacher can ask questions to make them think about the sequencing, for example: Do you think the tail can be drawn first? Why not?

Complex level

The level of complexity can be increased by giving a kolam/rangoli pattern. This activity can also be done by students in pairs, with one being the instructor and the other a follower. But the condition is that the instructor should not see what the follower is drawing. Here, the follower can be allowed to ask questions to the instructor.

Through this activity, children learn to listen, observe things, connect to spatial sense (shapes, size, position), sequence, break down complex problems, give clear instructions and follow instructions, and, when in doubt, get clarifications by asking questions.

These two activities have been suggested by Krithika, a member of the Communications team at Azim Premji University, Bengaluru. Krithika has a deep interest in computational thinking and has worked with Tamil Nadu SCERT on state textbooks.