100 IDEAS

FOR Primary Teachers

Differentiation

Rachel Orr

100 Ideas for Primary Teachers:

Differentiation

Rachel Orr

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

Differentiation can often be quite a contentious issue. There are those who believe it is key to meeting the varying learning needs of pupils, and others who feel too much differentiation can limit learning. For me, it's all about making the learning engaging, empowering, investigative, explorative and open ended. In order to meet the needs of all pupils, differentiation should be driven by carefully-planned and well-matched learning opportunities that invite, include and involve students in learning. In the primary school, many new skills are being taught prior to children being asked to use and apply them to different contexts and subjects. Differentiation at primary level needs to focus on individual needs. It needs to be completely at the heart of teaching and learning. It needs to be based on the fact that one size does not fit all. Different learners progress at different rates. Differentiation is about the teacher knowing the children well.

Differentiation is not solely about planning varying activities. It's about a differing approach to learning. This book is both a compilation of the many ways to organise and differentiate, as well as a collection of useful tips on how to scaffold, how to structure learning, and how to use outcomes to make further improvements across the whole primary age range. Ideas within each chapter have been curated and collated from primary specialists across the country.

How to use this book

This book includes quick, easy and practical ideas for you to dip in and out of, to help organise learning for differentiation.

Each idea includes:

- a catchy title, easy to refer to and share with your colleagues
- a quote from a practitioner, parent or child describing their experience that has led to the idea
- a summary of the idea in bold, making it easy to flick through the book and identify an idea you want to use at a glance
- a step-by-step guide to implementing the idea.

Each idea also includes one or more of the following:

Teaching Tip

Some extra advice on how or how not to undertake differentiation or put the strategy into practice.

Taking it Further

Ideas and advice on how to extend the idea or develop it further.

Bonus Idea ★

There are 31 bonus ideas in this book that are extra exciting and extra original.

#hashtags

To prompt further exploration and discussion of the ideas online.

To group or not to group?

Part 1

Inclusively whole

'The sum of the parts is greater than the whole.'

Planning learning to meet the needs of a whole class not only enables everyone to access it, but allows them to be able to put their own slant on it.

#learning4all

Whole-class teaching is practical and inclusive. Everyone is involved all the time, irrespective of their skills and abilities. Here are some key points to bear in mind when organising whole-class teaching:

- When teaching the same objective, prepare carefully to ensure that the material is accessible to all the pupils
- Target pupils with differentiated questions, for example, using the five Ws of who, what, when, where and why. Ask more able children to provide answers using all five and, if any of them are struggling to answer 'why' questions with a clear explanation, target key pupils with two or three of the other Ws.
- Prime able pupils to make contributions which will extend the learning experience of all pupils.
- Pitch at the middle level initially, and be prepared to extend and support.
- Model examples and answers to build the confidence of able pupils, so that they can lead some of the teaching.
- Direct questions to specific children to check for understanding in order to redirect the learning.

Jigsaw

"I can remember the teacher asking two people to pick teams and always feeling uncomfortable for those children left until the end to be picked."

Asking children to get into groups or teams often results in them choosing their own friends and someone feeling left out. This is often where friction or passive learning can occur, because children rely on others too much.

Jigsaw is a great tool for grouping (www.jigsaw.org). It boosts confidence by creating randomly-generated 'expert' teams, who get together to share their ideas before pupils report back to their 'home' groups (where they normally sit).

- Within each home group, give each child a number, e.g. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 etc. Ask all the matching numbers to meet up together: these are the 'expert' groups. Assign each expert group a different topic or question to research, related to the wider subject area being studied.
- Ask children to share ideas within their expert groups. You may like to provide guidance, depending on the number of staff in the classroom.
- After this research phase has been completed, the expert groups dissolve; the children return to their home groups and report back their findings. Each home group now has an expert on each of the six different topics. Support them in presenting their findings.
- In this way, each child's contribution is crucial to the overall understanding of the subject area, and every pupil's ideas are valued.

Teaching tip

Change the number of children in a group, so that they don't become reliant on working with the same number of people each time.

Taking it further

Get pupils to conduct their initial research while still in their home groups, so that when they are then separated into their expert groups they will already be armed with independently-researched knowledge to share.

Bonus idea ★

Instead of using a number to sort the children into groups, you could use a colour, name, key word, mathematical term or anything linked to the subject area in question.

Mixed bag

'Getting the mix right adds extra flavour to the learning.'

Working in groups can empower the leaders within the team and, equally, increase the confidence of those children who would find working alone a challenge.

However, teaching a 'set' ability group is not always appropriate, especially in the case of lower ability groups. Children will gain most through the following approach:

- Set up the classroom so that groups of four can work together.
- Choose the four pupils carefully, so that there is one strong lead and three other abilities.
- Seat the pupils in that group in such a way that they can always offer help to the person on their right. This ensures they always receive support, while being able to offer support to another pupil.
- Create tasks specific to mixed-ability groups.
- Use mixed ability pairings for peer editing and marking activities.
- Have group targets, rather than individual ones, to promote and nurture teamwork.
- Group work enables the pupils to talk to each other and share their understanding of a topic.
- Have table teamwork points.

You've got a friend in me

'Do you remember a time when you had to work with a partner hoping you'd be paired up with a friend? Are two heads better than one?'

Partner and paired work is highly effective in developing skills of collaboration and cooperation. Good partner work occurs when pupils draw upon each other's skills.

Pair work allows children to discuss a task or questions. This helps them to develop their understanding. They can share out the workload and take turns in contributing to the task recording.

Consider first what kind of makeup of partners is required. Options:

- Children choose their own partners.
- You choose a higher ability and lower ability child for each pair.
- You give each child in each half of the class a number, i.e. 1-15 in a typical class of 30, and children have to match up like for like.
- You choose pairs of similar skill levels.

The pair could work collaboratively where the work is shared, with the planning and designing of the task being left to the pair to determine. Alternatively, the pair could work cooperatively where the task is specified by you.

Teach 'pair skills': organisation, time management, turn-taking, compromise, tolerance, negotiation, communication, giving and responding to criticism.

Taking it further

Develop regular talk partners so that they can come together for any task or subject.

Bonus idea ★

Partner swap – one child from each pair swaps with the other and shares what they have learned in that lesson or task.

#talkingpartners

Think, pair, share

'From little acorns, mighty oaks are born.'

Everyone always has something to contribute. No-one can know everything, but everyone can know something. Think, pair, share is a simple way of cascading what children already know.

This is a useful exercise to undertake at the beginning of a new concept or topic, whatever the subject, to assess prior knowledge and to learn rapidly from one other.

- When introducing a new topic to children, give them two minutes to think about and collate all the things they already know on a sticky note.
- After two minutes, everyone pairs up and shares what they have. Inevitably some children will hear what they already know, while others will encounter new information.
- Then, two minutes later, two pairs get together and share again what they have. Where there is new information, each pair will need to be able to clarify and explain it to the other pair.
- Once the final sharing occurs each group can appoint a team leader. Team leaders can share what they learned, starting from their original post-its and then including what they have gained from others.
- All of the comments can be collated with post-its on large sheets of paper.
- The teacher can then use this to formulate their lesson planning so that prior knowledge is taken into account.

Like for like

'Logic, emotion, and research often clash in the long-standing debate over the advantages and disadvantages of ability grouping.'

When covering skills and concepts of the same difficulty and challenge, teaching to one ability level helps the teacher target the teaching and learning with a sharper focus.

Whether you call it streaming, banding, setting or grouping by ability, being able to deliver learning to one ability group is often effective, especially if you have more than one adult working in the setting. However, think carefully about grouping the pupils according to their ability and consider the following:

- Does the teaching and learning focus meet the needs of a specific group of learners alone? This needs to be considered so that children don't end up in groups for grouping's sake.
- Children should never be left in the same group, as their learning needs will change frequently.
- Don't always give TAs the lower ability group.
- Children can very quickly determine the ability level of their group by the children included. It is important that groupings match the learning intended.
- The skills and concepts in maths are so varied that it is unlikely that a pupil will be equally competent in all of them; it is therefore inappropriate for a child to remain in the same maths group for each different topic.

Teaching tip

Make sure children don't become fixated on being in a particular group and the idea of staying in that group. The groupings need to be fluid.

Taking it further

If you have additional adults in the classroom, you can take the ability grouping even further and secure skills and concepts quite finitely. For this it is vital to ensure the adults working with the groups understand clearly how to assess whether a concept is secure, and equally be secure in their own knowledge and understanding of how to move the learning on for the pupils.

Buzz groups

'The sound of a productive buzz in the classroom is far more energising than a lone voice speaking in a room of 30.'

Buzz groups are very useful to get discussion going, especially when stemming from a question posed.

Buzz groups are a great way of recapping on the previous day's lesson.

Children take ownership of what they know, can explain and share with their buzz group.

- A buzz group is simply a small group of 2 or 3 children.
- Impromptu group formation works well.
- Some children will develop more confidence in being able to speak in front of a larger group once they have spoken in a buzz group.
- Set the buzz group task by asking the children to reflect on the previous day's lesson.
- Give the group 2-5 minutes to buzz together before asking that day's group leader to feed back from their buzz team.
- Once each group has had a turn, allow them to buzz again to consolidate new information generated by the other buzz groups.
- This enables previous learning to be embedded before moving the lesson on.

Carousel

'Carousel is not simply moving children from table to table.'

The carousel method is very handy when asking pupils to build layers of learning for any subject.

Pupils moving from table to table in carousel fashion enables them to build on ideas presented by the previous group and is an effective way of ascertaining prior knowledge.

- Each table is mixed ability: between 4-6 tables with 4-6 children in each group works well.
- Place a large sheet of paper in the centre of each table.
- Determine the focus of the topic, ideally at the end of the unit of work – for example, Samuel Pepys.
- Each group has a different assessment question to answer about the topic.
- Each group also has a coloured marker pen; this should be a different colour for each group, as they will move to the other groups using the same colour to record their responses.
- Allow each group 3-5 minutes to log their responses to the question given.
- The groups then move on to the next table – make sure they have enough time to read the new question and the responses already recorded by the first group.
- The second group can add to the list or ask questions of the first group to seek greater clarification. This process continues until the children are back at their original table.
- Once back at their table, each group has two tasks to complete. The first is to answer any questions raised, and the second is to collate the information and present shared responses to the original question before feeding back to their peers.

Teaching tip

Appoint a scribe. This gives the children the opportunity to really listen to each other and take turns properly.

Taking it further

Generate answers to open questions.

Bonus idea ★

Following the shared information session, ask questions to move the learning on to new information.

Pass it on

'Nothing like pass the parcel when you want to either keep it or get rid of it. This is all about sharing what you know and receiving more: give and take.'

One group learns a new skill and passes on to another group. As each new skill is passed on, each learner will add a little more to it so that the level of understanding is upskilled even more.

Taking it further

Ask the groups to demonstrate the skill they have learned from the teaching group through their buzz group.

When there are several new skills to be developed quickly, 'pass it on' enables more skills to be learned and shared effectively, as the children become the teachers.

- Determine a set of new skills or content to be learned.
- Divide class into 4-6 groups.
- Give each group their task.
- The group must then buzz their thoughts and undertake any research necessary to learn the new skill or knowledge content.
- Give the groups time to practise the new skill that they have learned in order to be able to present to the other groups.
- After practising their new skill, each group teaches the other groups what they have learned.

Once any new skill is secure, it is crucial to then provide the learners with numerous opportunities to apply the skills they have developed. It is important that they are able to embed these new skills in every day thinking and learning.

Team challenge

'Teamwork and receiving points for collaborating and cooperating encourages good relationships.'

Each half term, allocate teams and assign them a particular focus as a group, so they know how they can improve as a group.

All children love a challenge that gives them a reward, but not all rewards have to be based on academic achievement. Attitudes, behaviour and habits for learning are equally important. If children know what it is you are looking for, they are more likely to demonstrate it.

- First decide the purpose of the team grouping. This could be an academic challenge or a more pastoral challenge.
- When choosing a pastoral/non-academic focus, pick the children for each team carefully.
- Ensure there is at least one good role model already demonstrating these attitudes/behaviours.
- Consider the children who need to develop or improve these skills further and place them strategically amongst the teams.
- Ensure the teams know that during lessons you will be awarding team points when the 'team' (not an individual) displays specific skills or behaviours.
- Not all children need to have certain behaviours monitored if they simply display them automatically. They can be given more of a challenge with some higher order, leadership-type skills.
- You may ask the team to decide what it is they feel they need to focus upon.

Teaching tip

Encourage pupils to ask the experts in their team when they are unsure how to proceed.

Taking it further

Vary the ability groupings or gender balance of each group, according to the purpose of the task.

Bonus idea ★

Provide the team with a tool for recording the team points. This could be a simple laminated chart with their names on and the behaviours expected.

#teamwork

11

Let it go!
Discover and
explore

Part 2

Envoys and KUDos

'Envoy: messenger or representative, especially one on a diplomatic mission. Mission possible!'

This is an effective tool when children are embarking on research and can be applied to any curriculum subject.

Give them clear KUDos expectations: *Know, Understand* and *Do.*

Know relates to facts, definitions and dates – the sort of key information that is generally memorised. *Understand* relates to the concepts, principles or general 'big ideas' learned by the pupils. *Do* encompasses skills and processes and how pupils independently apply their knowledge and understanding in follow-up activities, or in other contexts outside the lesson.

Whenever pupils are asked to research something, they need to have a clear focus; they should be discouraged from copying and pasting chunks of text that they don't understand. Being a research envoy allows each child to show their understanding through teaching others what they have learned.

- Put the class into groups – mixed ability is ideal.
- The number of pupils in each group and the number of groups will vary, depending on class size, but try to keep groups to four children.
- Give each group a topic to research.
- Give the pupils a variety of media to use, e.g.: whiteboards, sticky notes and flipchart paper.
- Give them access to a variety of research tools, such as relevant books, search engines and websites.
- Encourage them to record what they find out in their own words, as this will serve to deepen their understanding and help them explain their findings clearly to their peers.
- Once each group has researched their topic, one person from each team moves off to the next table and teaches their topic to a new group.
- This continues until all the envoys have visited each group.
- The envoy returns to their group and learns about the other groups' topics from their team.

Taking it further

Rather than one envoy visiting all the groups to teach, have one envoy team split and visit each group. This works if you had six groups of five. One envoy team is teaching while the others are learning. This continues until each envoy team has done the teaching.

Bubble

'You don't have to live in your own little bubble. Groups of children can work on a task, then share their learning with other groups.'

This method works well when the task is textual analysis, irrespective of the subject.

Each group works in isolation on just part of the whole task.

Each group's findings are shared during the session with the other groups. This method encourages children to be clear in their thinking when sharing information with others.

- The teacher determines which text type will be used (e.g. literary, scientific or historical, etc.).
- Divide the text into four sections and the class into four groups.
- Each group works for 10-15 minutes in isolation (a 'group bubble') to summarise just one part of the text (don't indicate which order the text goes in).
- Once each group has worked on their first piece of text, give them a different part of the text to work on.
- Repeat until all four groups have worked on all four pieces of the text, then split the summary notes amongst each group so they have four pieces: their own and one from each of the other three groups. Remove the original text so they only have their notes to work from.
- Using skills of analysis, each group collates the information to make sense of it and put it into the correct order. Make sure they don't confer between groups.
- Once each group has finished, reveal the correct order of the original text.
- Groups then have time to check if they were correct.

Teaching tip

Use mixed-ability groups, so that there is an opportunity for leading, as well as learning.

Taking it further

Each group could pass comment upon the clarity of the summary notes of each part of the text.

In your own time

'There is no advantage to hurrying through a task if the only goal is to complete it.'

Pupils do not always need to have lessons that fit into time-restricted compartments. Allowing them to work at their own pace and without a time limit enables pupils to think and learn without the anxiety that comes from rushing.

Teaching tip

Ask the pupils to take their time to think carefully before ordering the tasks for themselves.

Taking it further

Pupils could create their own 'to do' list based on aspects of a topic or subject they would like to learn.

Bonus idea ★

Some of the tasks could involve having to team up with a partner.

We often talk of 'collapsed curriculum days', where children have a variety of tasks over the course of the day and can choose what to do and when. We can also set up lessons or segments of lessons in which pupils can work at their own pace.

- Pupils enjoy being independent when given choices about what, when and how they undertake learning.
- Create a 'to do' list for the pupil.
- The list can contain a series of tasks: some that must be completed; some they should try to do; some to be done if they want an independent challenge.
- The list could be based on one or more subjects, or could be completely cross curricular.
- The pupils plan the order in which they carry out the tasks.
- Ensure tasks are varied – a mixture of paper and pencil, hands-on practical and technology-based activities.
- Those pupils who are more independent and highly motivated will organise themselves so they can attempt some of the challenge tasks.

Let's discover!

'Giving children the opportunity simply to go explore and make new discoveries.'

Pupils are given a task for which they have to plan the method of undertaking and recording.

Choosing to involve the pupils in your class when planning a new unit of work for the term ahead helps them learn about learning. Pupils will have far more interest and ownership of their learning if they have been involved in the planning.

- In order for this to work, planning meetings with the children need to take place with sufficient time before the topic or unit of work gets going.
- This idea can be extended into children developing mini schemes for topics, with questions forming the basis of the new learning.
- Present the children with an overview of the unit and the overarching, essential objectives. Once children understand they can determine *how* they can learn, so each objective is met, they will embrace the opportunity.
- Firstly, the children have to share their prior knowledge so that they really own the learning and not simply repeat what they have already learned and know.
- Once they fully understand that they can choose how they will learn and that the method for recording the learning is up to them, they will be very creative and motivated in a way that might even surprise you.

Teaching tip

There are several ideas in part one of this book on how to ascertain prior knowledge – see pages 7–9.

Taking it further

Give pupils the opportunity to determine how they will know if the learning objectives have been met as a result of the way in which the pupils themselves planned what was to be learned, and how.

Snowballing

'Where one person's version of what we think something means is completely different from ours.'

This idea is simply to explore how others define something we all think we know everything about. We all have our views but do our views always match with reality?

This idea explores individual and group understanding of a theme or concept.

Through group work, pupils will be able to redefine their understanding of their original idea.

- Use pens, post-its, a flipchart and marker pens.
- Firstly, establish the concept you want the children to explore, define, understand.
- The first stage begins with each child writing their own thoughts/definition/understanding of the concept on a post-it note. (3 mins)
- Children then pair up and share their definitions. (5 mins)
- Two pairs then join together and compare their definitions, so they can refine them.
- Each group then writes their definition on a flip chart. (10 mins)
- Once each group has finished, the teacher can bring together all the ideas and lead a discussion.

DIY

'This is your mission. Do you choose to accept your mission? If so, carry on!'

Children love a challenge. Where they are given autonomy, they find the challenge even more exciting, and gain ownership of their learning.

A project to work on gives children the opportunity to develop their knowledge and practise their skills over an extended period of time.

DIY gives children the opportunity to design a whole unit of work, to incorporate transferable skills and to make it as cross-curricular as they wish.

- First determine the focus of the DIY project.
- For example, where a topic is planets, a story about space can be the stimulus. Children start working in small teams of four to plan what they would like to get from the book and how they can extend their learning across different subjects.
- Children can create their own spidergrams with the story at the centre and all the curriculum subjects around it.
- The children can decide whether they will share out the subjects within their team, split off into pairs or work altogether.
- Children need to have access to other resources, such as tablets, the Internet and reference books.
- Their mission is to tease out genuine learning opportunities. Encourage them to plan their learning around questions, rather than tasks.
- For example, they can pose scientific questions about the atmosphere on the planets. From a geographical/mathematical point of view, they can look at distances, shapes and sizes.

Teaching tip

Model how this can work before the children have a go. Idea 14 may help you with this.

Taking it further

Once the initial team has planned the unit of work, allow a second team to evaluate it and provide some feedback.

Help envelopes

'Help comes to those who seek it.'

Help envelopes contain top tips and information on a range of topics in the form of key vocabulary, definitions, and examples in context.

This is great for peer-to-peer support, as well as creating 'little experts'. 'Little experts' are those children who demonstrate a clear understanding of key learning content – so much so they can be used to support peer-to-peer learning. We all know that when you teach someone else what you have learned, you clearly demonstrate how well it is embedded in your own mind.

- Decide where in the classroom you are going to display your help envelope area and determine how you are going to organise it.
- Idea 1: use cereal boxes, the kind you get in individual variety packs. Cover the box in coloured, sticky-backed plastic, but leave the top open. Make a label for the front, e.g. 'Punctuation' for a collection of punctuation marks, their meanings and examples of uses. The boxes can be nailed to a strip of wood, to be attached to a display board.
- Idea 2: use one of those hanging toiletry holders with see-through plastic windows to house the help envelopes.
- Idea 3: use an index card file divider box to store the help envelopes.
- At the start of a new topic, discuss with the pupils information they feel would be useful to have in help envelopes. Brainstorm a list of key areas and allocate them to different groups, so they can begin to put their help envelopes together. Writing new help envelopes can be an ongoing task for the pupils throughout the term.

Top Trumps

'Pupils love finding out new facts and trying to outdo each other with the best fact.'

This is a great activity for end-of-unit assessment, as well as for consolidation of on-going learning. Pupils find the process of making their own learning materials highly enjoyable, and they take pride in the fact that the end result can be used again as a resource for others.

There are very many topics for Top Trump cards, e.g. countries; planets; characters in a book; plants; photos taken by the children (of a piece of work, a model, a picture etc.).

- First, decide on the focus of the Top Trumps. This example will focus on dinosaurs; children can either choose a dinosaur themselves, or you can allocate them one.
- Agree the information to be collected and presented. Categories for 'dinosaurs' can include: size; years on earth; habitat; food; carnivore/herbivore, etc.
- Make a variety of resources available, such as tablets with internet access and research books matching the topic focus.
- Pupils work at their own pace to design their Top Trump card. Once a set has been made, make multiple copies of the cards, and give one complete set to each group.
- Assign each group one category. It is their job to rank the category from one to however many cards there are in the set. They should discuss these rankings in groups.
- Once each dinosaur has been ranked, that number goes on their card. A master set can then be made and the pupils are then ready to play Top Trumps.
- This is a good way of securing facts and is a huge amount of fun.

Teaching tip

Create a writing frame template that children can use and tweak for a variety of purposes. For example, if the category is linked to dinosaurs, the writing frame would have text boxes for 'size', 'eating habits', 'habitat' etc, so that pupils can add the detail to each section.

Taking it further

Pupils can design a set of cards to match a topic/unit of work for younger children to use.

#toptrumps

Spies

'Children love a race to the finish when working in teams.'

Spies is a variation on Envoys (Idea 11): in this idea, different groups only have key parts of information and are aiming to build the full picture through questioning.

Group tasks are always great for developing skills of cooperation, trust, compromise, listening, valuing, respecting, leadership, turn-taking, and so on. Spies can be used for any subject or topic.

- Set pupils a group task. Ideal size grouping is four to six.
- Put the clues and questions on the topic in envelopes, then distribute. The key is only to give a certain amount of information to each group. None of the group should have the same information.
- At key times during the session, allow each group to open an envelope. You may wish to number the envelopes to control the information given.
- Within each group, appoint roles of team leader, spies, and a scribe – play to the strengths of the children.
- Once roles have been established, pupils review the information they have and pose questions to find out more. You could keep it simple with 'yes/no' questions, or limit the number of questions a group can ask.
- The spies take these questions to one of the other teams. Give them a time limit within which to return to their own team and relay the information.
- Once the information has been shared, pupils will be able to build a bigger picture and then pose further questions. Each group will now have an idea of some things the other groups

Teaching tip

Distribute the information carefully and strategically, based on children's reading and writing ability.

do or do not know, based on the first set of questions.

- Now the teams can start to tailor the questions and direct them at one team only, with separate questions for the other teams.
- This continues until a team feels they have all the information to solve the clues.
- Once they feel they have solved the clues, let them check the answer in a 'solution' envelope.

What money will buy

'When they only have a limited amount of buying power, pupils have to be strategic in the choices they make.'

Group or individual task where children are given buying power with 'money' to get more information/resources to solve their task.

Either buy some fake money (the kind you find in a party shop) or design some yourself in a program such as Publisher™. You could make it relevant to the school/class.

- Decide the focus of the topic and challenge.
- For example, you might be studying the Greeks. In advance, prepare as much information and resources about the Greeks as you can.
- Give each piece of information or resource a 'monetary value', as pupils will be buying these in order to move through the challenge.
- Categorise the information and resources to make it easier for children to choose. For example: Greek people; Greek gods; country, etc.
- Set the pupils a series of challenges to solve. These can be a series of questions, some more challenging than others.
- Some pupils will know several answers based on their prior knowledge and will not need to buy information.
- Those who need help with a question will need to choose to buy some information, or a resource.
- At the end of a challenge, pupils can choose how they wish to present their findings.

Bonus idea ★

Pupils can be strategic and help each other by sharing information with each other and selling on what they have bought second hand at a reduced rate.

Que sera sera: Differentiation by outcome

Part 3

Beach ball

'Such an engaging way to make multiplication tables fun while supporting hand-eye coordination!'

Using a multi-coloured beach ball with 12 segments numbered 1-12 is great for including everyone in learning a multiplication table that they find challenging. A simple game of throw and catch supports children with different learning styles – it's the hook.

However much rote learning and recitation takes place, there will always be a multiplication fact that poses difficulty for a child. Beach ball allows a child to associate a number fact with an activity and make learning memorable.

- You will need a large beach ball, or balls, depending on the number of children, groupings and adults available in the classroom.
- Using a whiteboard pen, write the numbers 1-12 on each of the segments on the beach ball. If the ball doesn't have sufficient segments on it, use the pen to split the existing ones in order to have 12.
- Have small groups of four, with one multiplication table as the focus. The teacher takes the lead and throws the ball to a pupil who catches it. Agree at the start what the tables facts are going to be. Whichever segment/number the child's right hand is touching has to be multiplied by the focus table.
- Therefore, if a table's focus is 7, and the number on the ball is 6, the pupil has to work out 6 x 7 and then throw the ball back.
- If a pupil in the group continues to struggle with one particular fact, keep repeating it, and revisit it with the same pupils when it's their turn again to catch the beach ball.

Dice – let 'em roll!

'A dice is very reliable. You can count on it.'

A simple dice made from a cardboard net opens up all sorts of possibilities across a range of subjects.

Making your dice gives you six different sides to put on whatever you want. Each side could contain a question, an instruction, etc. You could make cardboard dice from cube nets, but if you can afford them, you can buy foam dice which have plastic inserts on each face where you can slide in a post-it.

- **Storytelling dice:** You will need to make three cubes: either cardboard nets or foam dice with inserts.
- Dice one is for the **characters**. Design six very different characters and place one on each face of the dice. Think of a gender balance: good vs. bad; age vs. youth, etc.
- Dice two is for the **settings**. Design six different settings, such as country, town, beach, space, ocean, city, desert, etc.
- Dice three is for an **object**.
- Throw each of the dice so that you have a character, a setting and an object. Talk with the children about each, and if there is a TA available, get them to write on three large pieces of flipchart paper all the ideas for the character, setting and object. These can then be used to tell a story.
- Using the same three dice, pupils can work in pairs with their talking partner to come up with a simple story plot, which they can share with another pair.
- Telling a story out loud is very important, as it helps the pupils to internalise the story pattern. Once they have this secure, they will be able to write stories well and with confidence.

Extend the number of dice to include problems, objects and additional characters. Children can design the images or words for their own dice. Throw in some additional dice with powerful adjectives or connectives and encourage children to use them appropriately in their storytelling/ writing.

Bonus ideas ★

Punctuation marks: Write a different punctuation mark on each face. Roll the dice and write a sentence using whatever punctuation mark the dice has landed on. **Question words:** Write a question word on each face. Roll the dice and then ask someone a question about a new topic using the word that the dice has landed on. **Six tricky spellings:** Roll the dice, read the word and then spell it on a dry wipe board. **Six technical words:** Write six technical words from a topic on the dice. Roll the dice and ask the child to explain the term.

RAG balls in a bag

'The pupils enjoy the thrill of surprise and the challenge.'

Having a set of red, amber and green (RAG)-rated questions or puzzles is great for assessing strengths and identifying areas to develop.

This resource is very versatile and can be used across all subject areas.

- You will need a set of pool-type balls. They need to be fairly light and not too hard, as you will be cutting a slit in them.
- Whatever subject, topic or specific focus you decide upon, prepare sets of questions which are rated according to RAG.

  - Red: questions with real challenge and requiring lots of detail in their answers.
  - Amber: slightly challenging, with perhaps two parts of information required.
  - Green: only need simple, straightforward answers.

- Once the questions have been determined, print in large-print font and cut them into strips. Fold them up and place in the relevant coloured pool ball – red, amber, green.
- These are then placed in a bag or a box.
- Option 1: invite a child to dip their hand in to choose a ball and try and answer the question.
- Option 2: you choose the ball and throw it into the class. Based on its colour, children can choose whether or not to catch it.

Brain ticklers

'What does silence smell like?'

Posing questions that do not have any obvious answer is a great way to get your students' imagination working.

Where does imagination come from? How do we encourage our pupils to think in the abstract? Brain ticklers are simply questions to make us think; there are no right or wrong ways to answer the questions.

- There are lots of books and online resources with a whole myriad of questions to make us think. Ian Gilbert author of *Independent Thinking* also has a book all about 'Thunks' – questions to make you think.
- It is highly important to give children plenty of thinking time. Let them ponder with their friends or talk partner. Try to step back from being a teacher – listen to, and accept what you hear.
- Be prepared to play devil's advocate and throw in challenges by presenting an opposing view – a "but what if......" type of question to encourage further discussion.
- Give pupils the opportunity to present their thoughts to others and try to convince them to come round to their point of view.

Teaching tip

Brain ticklers are often a good start to the afternoon to settle children and refocus them following lunchtime play.

Taking it further

Pupils can devise their own brain ticklers to share. Create a Google doc for the children to access and add their own brain ticklers.

Bonus idea ★

Some good questions to start you off...

How do you measure how heavy the wind is? What colour is Sunday? Can you buy friendship? If you eat a sweet from pic 'n' mix in a shop, is it stealing?

#brainticklers

Reading list

'No two people ever read the same book.'

An accessible list of reading materials supports pupils with their research on new topics.

Posing questions at the start of a new topic encourages pupils to research to find answers. A reading list, whether it be through a series of books or web links gives pupils tools with which they can carry out their research.

- Determine the focus of the topic, eg. The Great Fire of London.
- Pose a series of questions to engage the pupils, so they can be detectives and solve the clues.
- Questions can be very fact-based, challenging the children to make up their own mind and justify their reasoning. For example: 'Was the baker to blame for the fire?'
- Depending on the abilities of the groupings, you can tailor the questions in the way they are written.
- Some questions could take the form of a picture/photograph where children have to identify a place, a person, etc.
- Use question words, such as 'who, when, why, where, what and how'.
- Provide good-quality text books that are up to date for children to study and research.
- Make a list of websites and web links that children can access through a tablet for further research.
- Reading lists provide children with a stepping stone to the research process, which in turn will make further research work much easier.
- It also offers children the challenge of having to make proper use of search tools, such as library catalogues.

Visualisation

'Let imagery become the words.'

Drawing a visual map of your thoughts and ideas is a great way of collating information.

Visualisation enables pupils to put down all the knowledge and facts based on their current understanding of a topic. It could be done at the start of a topic or, equally, used as an assessment tool at the end of a unit of work.

- Visualisation can be used across a range of subjects, for example a science topic on plants/growth.
- Pupils have to create a visual map of everything they know about plants and how they grow.
- There isn't a set rule as to how the visualisation should look, and the beauty of this differentiation is that children are free to choose how they want to set out their thoughts. They are for them, only, and having ownership of the layout will support them in their understanding.
- The visualisation can contain some key words if it supports a child in pulling together their thoughts.

Teaching tip

Some pupils may need a starting point to help them begin their visualization, and it may help to model how you could start a drawing.

Taking it further

Pupils could be challenged to draw a visualisation without any language to represent a scientific process. They share it with other pupils who have to try and guess from the drawing what it means.

#visualisation

Help on the back

'Never be afraid to ask for help.'

Giving children the option of asking for help reassures them that to do so is not a sign of failure.

Some pupils find a task with a series of open-ended questions very challenging. 'Help on the back' is a set of clues to help a child get started, or a hint as to where to look for information.

- This idea works across a range of subjects, e.g. art (looking at paintings).
- When examining a painting and giving children a series of open-ended questions, support them with some key prompts on the reverse of the painting ('help on the back').
- For each question posed, provide a clue in the 'help on the back'. Children can make a choice as to whether they want to use the help on the back or not.
- The clues may point them to a website, text, article, or indeed, another painting.

Open activities

'Open activities encourage children to plan their own learning processes.'

Open activities are those where the teacher sets the task and guidelines, but then allows the children to decide how they are going to go about completing them.

Open activities cater for all abilities, as the children work at their own level and pace and have the opportunity to use their knowledge and skills, and show their understanding.

- When setting the guidelines for the task, decide whether it will be in the form of a question, a discussion/debate (such as pros and cons) or a research project.
- Example 1: Say to the children: 'Here is a list of tasks for you to complete. The order in which you complete them and the methods you use to complete them is for you to decide. The only rule is that you must be able to demonstrate your work to me.'
- Example 2: Pose a question that relies on children forming their own opinion (e.g. Should Daleks be allowed to inhabit Earth?) There aren't any right or wrong aspects to this task, as it all centres on the children deciding what they think and being able to justify their reasons.
- Example 3: Provide a task and explain to the children where they need to be in relation to the task by the end of the lesson. Their challenge is to be able to plan how they will arrive at that point by the end of the lesson.

Teaching tip

Using a lesson/task the children have completed previously with clear teacher input and direction, model the processes and organisation used to achieve the objective they've been set.

Taking it further

Children could work in pairs or small teams in order to plan the tasks and then share the workload.

Bonus idea ★

Children can create their own questions for the challenge tables (Idea 35) or challenge cards (Idea 33).

#openended

Stepped up

'If your brain doesn't hurt, it's because you're not learning something new.'

Stepped up activities get progressively more challenging as the pupils works their way through each step.

Pupils can move through the steps as quickly as they wish to, or can move off in a sideways direction if they want to reinforce or consolidate more.

- 'Stepped up' can be used for any subject and for all abilities.
- Decide the focus of the learning, e.g. problem solving using all four operations and multi-step problems.
- Begin mapping out the stepped ladder using single-step problems with only one operation, e.g. a simple problem involving adding two numbers together. How many digits the number contains will depend on the pupil's ability.
- All four operations can be introduced in the first step, again inserting the ability challenge using size of number.
- Once a child feels confident in manipulating simple one-step operations, challenge the pupil further with two-step problems. Initially these may simply focus on addition and subtraction, e.g. Rachel has £10 to spend. She buys three apps costing £0.49, £2.99 and £0.79 respectively. How much change will Rachel have left?
- Raise the game by adding the number of steps, the value of digits and the number of operations.

Options

'Children like to be given choice, as it enables them to play to their strengths.'

When children are directed to complete a task in a particular way with a set of success criteria, they sometimes focus on the detail of the success criteria, which can impede their creativity and personal learning style.

Options is all about giving the pupils various vehicles, methods and tools through which they can access a task. The focus of the task is directed by the teacher, but the presentation of it is determined by the pupil.

- Options can be applied to any subject or topic.
- It is great if you set a question that is very open ended, as this allows children to express their own thoughts when presenting it. (e.g. Was Goldilocks a burglar?)
- Pupils are then given a list of options as to how they can present their argument for whether Goldilocks was a burglar or not. These options could be:
  - Write it as a police report.
  - Create a cartoon strip.
  - Make a 'wanted' poster demonstrating the reasons why she is a burglar.
  - Write your response in the form of a poem.
  - Devise a short drama with three other friends.
  - Draft a speech for the jury in court to state your point of view.

Teaching tip

Encourage children to think carefully about their choice of presentation. If this is a tool used regularly, ensure children don't always focus on one method of presenting their learning.

Bonus idea ★

Children can be given various concepts to present through a variety of methods. For example, you could give all pupils the same main concept or idea, such as 'Was the baker to blame for the Great Fire of London?', and ask them to represent their views through each of the options listed above. Pupils can then share their views and discuss which option enabled them to explain their understanding the best.

Self-help centre: Differentiated support that children access independently

Part 4

Phone a friend

'You've got a friend in me.'

Being able to ask another pupil for clarification or their input into a task is very powerful.

Pupils work out very quickly whom they would ask for help. They are very intuitive in knowing who in their class is able to help with answers based on different subject content.

- This works well when using small whiteboards for a lesson where everyone is able to solve problems or demonstrate their understanding all at once, rather than it simply being one person with their hand up.
- The teacher poses the question and invites all the pupils to answer it on their whiteboards.
- The pupils do not show their answers straightaway.
- The teacher can then target key pupils based on their formative assessment in order to ascertain how well they are able to show their thinking.
- The teacher then invites a pupil to share their answer. The teacher asks if they are sure. Should a pupil feel uncertain, they can 'phone a friend' by choosing someone else in the class to share their answer too.
- The rest of the class is then able to share their answers, and the teacher can see at a glance if any pupil has struggled.
- Pupils who have struggled can then become the next pupil invited to share and phone a friend.

#phoneafriend

C3B4Me

'People aren't always going to be there for you; that's why you have to learn to handle things on your own.'

Pupils should always be working harder than the teacher is. When they meet a stumbling block, C3B4Me (see three before me) gives them tools to help themselves, leaving the teacher as the last resort for help.

The C3B4Me strategy encourages pupils to ask three other people for help with a problem before approaching the teacher. This strategy is all about building learning power and independence and becoming self-directed learners.

- When a pupil hits a stumbling block, first of all encourage them to try again and not simply give up at the first hurdle. If they are still not clear, the next step is to ask a friend. If the friend is not able to help, then the pupil can consult with another classmate.
- If a pupil does not get the answer they need, then they speak to the teacher. It may well be that, at that point, the problem posed needs to be addressed with a larger group, or even the whole class.
- Through this method, pupils build both communication and community skills. They tend to be very good at picking out who is good at what – this is often seen when picking teams for sports.
- Pupils use problem-solving skills when collating the information they have received from other sources. They have to consider which information is plausible to use, and become more evaluative.
- If a culture of supporting and helping each other is embedded in a classroom, pupils will learn that everyone can't know everything, but everyone can know something.

Bonus idea ★

Use C3B4Me in conjunction with Idea 48: Expert corner, and have pupils who are 'class experts' on certain topics. Create a wall display of the experts alongside their areas of expertise.

#C3B4Me

Challenge cards

'We all love a challenge, especially when there isn't a right or wrong answer.'

Differentiation is not always about giving children an extension of what they have already been doing. Challenges that focus on keeping a variety of skills sharp are also important.

Provide an area in the classroom that children can visit when they have completed the set work and where they can access challenge cards. These focus on keeping fundamental skills sharp. Too often we can feel that children have understood a concept or developed a new skill, to find that only a few weeks later they have forgotten how to apply it. Is this because it wasn't really secure in the first place?

- Challenge cards can suit any subject or topic and don't always have to relate back to the lesson.
- Many ideas for the content of the challenge cards can be found online. Lots of teachers upload PowerPoint™ presentations with questions linked to subjects/topics or they simply generate a random selection of open-ended questions.
- Small plastic boxes can be used to house the questions and could be labelled where there is a particular focus for the challenge cards.
- Alternatively, the cards can be stored in an over-the-door show tidy or a cosmetics tidy holder.

The five Bs

'FAIL = first attempt in learning.'

Very closely linked to C3B4Me, the 'five Bs' strategy brings in non-human resources to widen the field of choice and independence.

When building learning power and developing a growth mindset through a can-do culture, pupils need to know it is safe to make mistakes, and that asking questions is good for moving on their thinking and learning.

When planning to embed this method into all lessons, you also need to ensure that a variety of resources is available in the classroom. Each of the Bs refers to a different resource.

- **B – brain:** Pupils are encouraged to try for themselves and take time to think it through before seeking another resource.
- **B – book:** Make sure there is a selection of readily-available, relevant books for pupils to use in the lesson (e.g. a display on the Greeks with artefacts and books to hand).
- **B – buddy:** Pupils are able to ask friends/ experts for help. To develop this further, pupils can share what they learned from others and how helpful and clear they were in the information they provided.
- **B – board:** Classroom displays only serve a purpose if they are used to support the learning. These need to be well thought out.
- **B – boss:** Ideally, there should be very few occasions where the teacher is involved, thus enabling the teacher to interact with the pupils, pose questions to ascertain understanding, or work with specific groups of pupils.

Teaching tip

Always ensure, when employing this strategy, that the books and boards in the classroom have the relevant information to support the learning. This is where interactive working wall displays work well.

Challenge tables

'Children love to be given a challenge, but they also like to set a challenge for others, including the teacher!'

Challenge tables are for mixed-ability teams which set challenges for other groups of children to undertake.

Challenge tables is great at the end of a unit of work, to assess collectively what children have understood and how well they can apply it.

- Divide the class into mixed-ability groups.
- Divide the topic so that each table is working on one aspect.
- Each team is then set the task of creating challenge cards for the area of the topic they have been given.
- For example: A history unit on the Anglo Saxons. The focus areas could be on living; inventions; food and drink; key people.
- Each group poses the challenge questions for another team.
- The groups can choose how they would like to solve the challenges and then present them.

Key word display

'What's in a word? We all love learning new words and their meanings.'

It can be frustrating trying to teach a subject and topic if the key vocabulary isn't understood, or if pupils are having trouble spelling it correctly. Key word displays overcome this problem right at the start of a topic.

With any new topic, it is important that the key vocabulary, especially if it is technical vocabulary, can be spelled correctly and the meanings of the words clearly understood at the outset.

- Key word displays suit any subject or topic and are ideally placed as part of a working wall.
- Once you know the topic you are teaching, work out which words you want the pupils to be able to spell and understand. You should not spend time during the topic teaching pupils how to spell key vocabulary, as this detracts from the focus of the lesson.
- Create a display of key words and use images where possible (e.g. for a science focus on plants, you could include: pollination, stamen, stem, roots, etc.).
- Set a homework challenge for pupils to learn the correct spelling of these words. Set the expectation that these words should be spelled correctly in scientific written work.
- Devise key word mats, as well as working wall displays, so the pupils are immersed in the key language.

Teaching tip

Always deliver the new key vocabulary in advance of a topic. You could set a homework challenge to find the *meanings* of a set of key words before a lesson.

Taking it further

Children can use idea 17: Help envelopes to make their own help cards to understand the meaning of the words.

Bonus idea ★

Language is integral to learning. Key words are those words that are central to the topic you are teaching. Provide pupils with a glossary of key words on bookmarks, or key fobs. Provide sentences showing how the words are used correctly.

#keyvocab

Dictionary corner

'Dictionary corner – reminds me of countdown.'

There are many words we want pupils to be able to spell correctly across the whole range of subjects, and yet they still make common errors in basic vocabulary.

Devote an area of the classroom to dictionary corner for the words you expect pupils to spell correctly across all subjects and topics.

You can develop a layered approach to dictionary corner. If you align it to Idea 29, Stepped up, you can set different levels of expectation. Children are competitive and will want to make sure they are performing at a certain step, especially if you tell them this is where you expect them to be.

First, identify all the words you need to meet the range of abilities in your classroom. Create a display in the form of a ladder, and identify the step that is at the expected standard for the age range. For each step of the ladder, put the key words on display. You could group them according to alphabetical order to reinforce that aspect of learning, or indeed, according to the number of letters in each word. This should be repeated for each step of the ladder.

Encourage the pupils to use the steps and to understand where they are in relation to their own targets and progress.

#dictionarycorner

WAGOLL

'Everyone likes to have some idea of what they are aiming for, and what a good example looks like.'

WAGOLLs can be adult generated, as well as pupil generated, and provide pupils with a general idea of What A Good One Looks Like.

A WAGOLL is not about a *fait accompli* because every pupil's work should be individual and unique. However, having good-quality examples of specific learning aims can assist a pupil in knowing where they are aiming.

What A Good One Looks Like is not intended for pupil to copy, but as examples of high-quality work highlighting main features.

- WAGOLLs are good for a specific writing task, whether it be directly linked to English or writing across the curriculum.
- When developing a bank of writing ideas for specific genres, collate high-quality examples.
- These can be examples sourced online through websites such as www.pobble.com, where you can find real, free examples of children's writing from all over the world.
- You can also use examples from publications, or indeed, write your own.
- Be clear about what you want the pupils to understand about a WAGOLL.
- Go through the examples of WAGOLLs and get pupils to notice and comment upon why they are good examples, as though they were marking them.
- Collate phrases and key words from the WAGOLLs and display these on flipchart paper, or on a washing line.

Teaching tip

Model the features of a WAGOLL, so pupils know what they should be looking for.

Taking it further

One I did earlier – produce partially-finished examples based on funny subjects. Children should be able to use the format to develop and improve their own work.

#WAGOLL

Check sheets

'We all like to have some clue that we are on the right track.'

A check sheet is similar to success or process criteria, but not designed to be the only influence on a finished piece of work.

Pupils are often faced with success criteria and can end up simply working to that level of detail, which can limit their creativity.

Success and process criteria are two very different things. Process criteria help pupils to work through steps in a specific order, such as in long division. A check sheet needs to be more of an *aide mémoire* than a list where pupils tick off what they have included in their work. It needs to give prompts as to how key vocabulary can be used and also give ideas as to how information can be presented.

Depending on the subject or topic, you may have certain essential things that you want pupils to include, e.g. sentence structure (see also Idea 85, High 5) which should be thoroughly embedded, no matter what the topic. A check sheet prompts children to remember the 'non-negotiables'.

#checksheets

Scrap paper

'J. K. Rowling doodled on a napkin, and look where that got her!'

Scrap paper is a thinking tool. It's a place for children to empty their brains and park ideas until they are needed.

Scrap paper is a tool used as an extension of our memories. It enables pupils to free up their short-term memory for other things.

Have a drawer/tray/shelf in the classroom where you can house different-sized pieces of scrap paper. The paper can be plain, lined, squared or coloured – recycle whatever you can. Encourage the pupils to jot down ideas as they come across them. These ideas may be from what they hear other pupils say; from their own thoughts, or indeed, from other resources, such as books and web pages.

Scrap paper is very useful when putting together writing that doesn't require any chronology to it, e.g. a non-chronological report on mammals, or an advertisement sign for a holiday resort. Pupils can 'brainstorm' their ideas for a holiday resort on scrap paper. They may wish to group their thoughts together in categories, such as hotels, food, amenities, etc. They can move the scrap paper around in order to piece together the advertisement to get an overview of their work, before starting formal writing.

Teaching tip

Use flipchart paper on washing lines to demonstrate to pupils how you collect ideas for use on a later occasion. Model how to jot down ideas in note form.

Taking it further

Collect all the scrap paper in after the lesson, and begin to collate it into similar themes. Invite pupils to do some of the sorting and to build a help sheet resource for a future group of pupils who may visit the topic.

Bonus idea ★

Provide a space in the classroom where children can pin their scrap paper, so that other children can 'magpie' the ideas.

#scrappaper

Let's ask! Questioning skills

Part 5

Questioning

'It is often the asking of questions that leads to deeper thinking.'

Having a range of questions or question starters to probe children's understanding that little bit further enables effective formative assessment to take place. Always better to have as many open-ended as closed questions.

Questioning is about having a bank of different question types. Questions can be: individual, serial, assertive, and blooming.

Individual: Spending time on individual pupils is differentiating. Individual questioning should take into account what the pupil should already know, where they are at and your knowledge and understanding of them. It is important to aim to create opportunities within the lesson, so you can work with individuals. Tailor the questions to move their learning on, and to deepen their thinking and understanding.

Serial: The purpose of serial questioning is to create a structure where the questions get more and more challenging, take pupils on a journey around different parts of reasoning and thinking, and guide their learning in certain directions.

Assertive: If we wait for pupils to put their hands up to answer a question, we generally have the same pupils doing so every time. Decide who needs to be heard, and direct the questions at those pupils. Be assertive. The whole point of asking these questions is to move learning on, sort out any misconceptions quickly, encourage a culture of reasoning and explaining, and an understanding from the children class that they will always be supported and guided through the thinking.

Blooming: Use Bloom's Taxonomy to inform questioning during lessons. Display key words

linked to each of the six areas and use the language through questioning.

- Knowledge: describe, recognise, recall, define
- Comprehension: discuss, identify, explain
- Application: demonstrate, suggest, solve
- Analysis: compare, investigate, experiment
- Synthesis: plan, compose, devise
- Evaluation: justify, rank, critique.

#questioning

BOG3F

'Everyone likes something when it is free.'

Buy one, get three free! This simple idea is useful for securing number bonds and facts across all the four mathematical operations.

There are many connections and patterns within the four operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division), and this simple tool enables children to use and apply what is already known to work out what is unknown.

Addition and subtraction example:

$1 + 9 = 10$

Cut some triangles out of card. Write the numbers 1, 9 and 10 in a triangle, so that 10 is in the top corner and 1 and 9 in the bottom two corners. At the base of the triangle, between 1 and 9, write an addition symbol. On the other two sides of the triangle, between 1 and 10, and 9 and 10, write a subtraction symbol.

$1 + 9 = 10$ is a known fact, and equally $9 + 1 = 10$. Show this by covering up the 10 on the triangle with your hand, leaving $1 + 9$ exposed. Now cover up the 9 and ask the children to say what they see. $10 − 1 = ?$ The answer is the number covered by your hand. Cover up the 9 and repeat. They can now work out the other three facts:

- $9 + 1 = 10$
- $10 − 1 = 9$
- $10 − 9 = 1$

Repeat the format for multiplication to show the relationship to division, e.g. $2 \times 5 = 10$. Place 10 at the top of the triangle with 2 and 5 in the bottom corners, separated by the multiplication symbol.

#BOG3F

Odd one out

'There is never a right or a wrong answer, as long as you can explain your thinking.'

Thinking and reasoning skills are vital for pupils to be able to justify and explain the what, why, when and how in problem solving. Providing a forum where all answers are valued based on how the children justify them develops confident thinkers.

Odd one out can be used for any subject and has countless options. Assessing understanding is more effective when a child has to explain their thought processes or talk through their reasoning behind a problem.

- Give children three 'things/items', whether they be practical objects, pictures, numbers on a card, facts or words.
- Discuss what they know about each thing and ask if any of the things have something in common.
- Start to make links and connections. Encourage 'anything goes', so pupils come up with a whole variety of things.
- Next, start to suggest which would be the odd one out and why. Children have to be quite clear about their choice, but encourage others in the group to challenge it.

Example: Present children with Little Red Riding Hood, the wolf and Grandma. They may come up with suggestions such as: 'The wolf is the odd one out as he is nasty.'; 'The wolf is the odd one out because he is an animal.'; 'Grandma is the odd one out because she doesn't have her own teeth.' When using it with number work, children of all abilities can participate. Example: Present children with 10, 25 and 50. Some will say 25 is the odd one out because it is not an even number. This then opens up the floodgates to explore odd and even numbers and deepen the learning.

Teaching tip

Encourage good listening skills and allow children time to articulate their response.

Taking it further

Use more than three items to enable further challenge where children have to make more connections.

Bonus idea ★

Have some triangular post-its, so children can design their own challenges, depending on the subject matter.

#oddoneout

Bronze, silver and gold questions

'Good learning starts with questions, not answers.'

Differentiating your questions according to simple, more difficult, and complex enables the pupil to demonstrate understanding and application.

Questioning shares a range of question types (see Idea 41). For assessment purposes, prepare questions in advance to ascertain different levels of knowledge or understanding.

- **Bronze questions:**
These are closed questions. They may have a yes or no answer. They may be linked to direct retrieval. They give you *facts*. They are *easy* to answer. They are *quick* to answer. They keep control of the conversation with the *questioner*. E.g: "Which chair did Goldilocks damage?"

- **Silver questions:**
Silver questions are much more open-ended and designed to receive a much longer answer. They ask the pupil to *think* and *reflect*. They elicit *opinions* and *feelings*. They hand over control of the conversation to the pupil. E.g: "How do you think Baby Bear felt when his chair was damaged? How would *you* feel?"

- **Gold questions:**
Gold questions are far more complex, often cryptic and have several parts. These questions are often based on *reasoning* and *logic* and require *prediction* and *analytical thinking*, where there is most definitely not one correct way of responding. E.g: "*Goldilocks and the Three Bears* is a fairytale... however, was Goldilocks actually a burglar? Whether you choose to answer yes or no to this question, please justify your thinking."

Hot-seating

'This simple idea can be used right across the whole range of subjects.'

Hot-seating enables you to assess, through observation, children's ability to think, analyse, question and deduce from what they have heard. It is a type of differentiation which works well following on from expert groups. The hot-seating theme can be cross curricular, subject specific, teacher led or child led.

Hot-seating is often used in English lessons when quizzing characters to find out who they are, what they do, etc. Hot-seating can also be used across the curriculum to check understanding of key vocabulary and terminology and help with the assessment of questioning, inference and deduction skills.

- Invite a pupil to volunteer for the hot-seat (a fun, specially-shaped or fabric-covered chair) where they will be quizzed on a specific topic (decided in advance) by as many pupils as possible, who will all try to deduce the information.
- The pupils questions could be bronze, silver or gold questions, referring to level of difficulty (see Idea 44).
- The pace can be varied by insisting all the questions are bronze.
- You can limit the number of questions asked or the type of questions asked.
- You can limit the number of times the answer can be guessed.
- Whoever guesses the answer can then be next in the hot-seat.

Teaching tip

It's a good idea to model this first, so that the pace flows and ensures all children are actively engaged.

Taking it further

The hot-seat questions could be prepared in advance. Children can be invited to devise sets of questions that match the bronze, silver and gold style. Some children may only be able to manage bronze questions, while others will be challenged by the gold questioning.

Bonus idea   ★

Using Idea 2: Jigsaw, small expert groups could set a task, devise the content, and share together as much as they know about a subject.
Once set, they can return to their home groups and hot-seat there, quizzing an expert in the hot-seat. This can carousel for a short while.

#hotseating

Conscience alley

'What's on your conscience? Leadership is about persuasion power and not position power.'

Conscience alley often lets those with critical thinking skills shine verbally.

Conscience alley is all about debating the pros and cons in an argument, and being able to convince a key player you are right. It develops confidence, as well as leadership skills.

- Divide the class into two teams and line them up in two rows.
- Present the children with a statement – one that enables them to weigh up the pros and cons of an argument. For example: should school uniform be banned?
- Tell each of the two teams which side of the argument they are debating – one for and one against it.
- Chose or ask a child to volunteer to be the person to be persuaded by the two teams.
- Ask the two teams to line up two rows. It is then up to each team, one by one, to present their case. As the volunteer makes their way down the 'alley', the two teams take it in turn to share a statement of persuasion, one at a time.
- By the time the volunteer reaches the end of the alley, they should be able to state which argument they will side with.

#consciencealley

Solve a mystery

'All children like to be detectives. This is your mission. Are you up for the challenge?'

A CSI or FBI type task that involves all abilities, as everyone can have a role within the investigation. Leadership skills are developed, as well as questioning and reasoning skills.

Present the children class with a mystery, e.g. a classroom crime. Everyone has a role, and because the children are generating their own questions, they end up scaffolding their own learning.

- Set up a crime scene in the classroom where something has been stolen. Ideally it should be something special to the class, to motivate them to solve the crime. Explain to the pupils that whoever the culprit is has left their swag bag behind – perhaps the contents will enable them to solve the mystery.
- The swag bag needs to be prepared in advance, and you will need to decide who the culprit is going to be. It could include clues that link to another member of staff (warn them first!), a famous person or someone linked to the topic.
- Plan for the mystery to last a week, and only reveal a certain number of items from the bag each day. Plant other clues around the classroom, such as fingerprints and hidden notes.
- Give pupils the opportunity to create a flowchart wall, like those seen in detective programmes, where they can piece together all the clues and evidence, and make connections between the information they collect.

Teaching tip

Divide the class into small teams. They can give themselves a name, should they wish and also decide amongst themselves who is going to be the senior detective, photographer, etc.

Taking it further

Use Idea 11: Envoys alongside this idea, to share information across the teams.

Bonus idea ★

Children can use tablet technology to photograph the crime scene and record the clues and evidence using the Padlet app, for example.

#CSI

Expert corner

'Everyone can't be good at everything, but everyone can be good at something.'

Pupils like to share what they know well, and other pupils are often very good at identifying those in the class that they would go to for help. Expert corner is a place where children can ask a 'mini-expert' from the class the answer to questions.

Teaching tip

Using the mini-expert is a great way of assessing understanding. It could even be linked to Idea 45, Hot-seating, where the whole class or a group could pose questions.

Taking it further

If there is more than one expert in the class for a particular topic, they could either sit as a group or set up different stations around the classroom.

#expertcorner

Create an area in the classroom with a special seat for the mini-expert to sit upon. You may wish to have a dress-up item or props, such as a white coat if the topic has a scientific focus, for example. Set up a small table with two chairs: one for the mini-expert and one for the pupil who is coming for help.

- Whatever the topic, there will always be someone in the class whose interest is fired up about it and who will know more than others. Invite the pupils to think about what they feel they have an expertise in. Also ask pupils to suggest who may be an expert in a particular topic.
- The class is then set a task. Inform them that, should they have any questions or concerns, they can go to the helpdesk in 'Expert Corner' with the mini-expert.

Choices

'Decisions, decisions, decisions.'

Giving pupils an element of choice will always ensure they have some ownership of their learning.

Give children a range of questions and ask them to place the questions in order of difficulty before deciding whereabouts in the list they are going to choose to start.

- The questions can range from simply being closed to more complex questions. Allow the children five minutes to make some initial notes on each question.
- Provide a range of resources for the pupils to choose from. These resources should be varied, but enable the pupils to inspire and fuel their discussion. Artefacts and tablet tech are great for hands-on learning.
- Once the pupils have had time to make notes, they can then make a choice as to where they would like to start.

Teaching tip

Remind the pupils that it isn't all about *completing* every question; what matters is the quality of their answers and the in-depth knowledge they display.

Taking it further

Pair the pupils up to share the order in which they placed the questions; ask them to discuss their reasoning behind their choice of order.

Wonderwall

'It's not just another brick in the wall.'

Wonderwall is a place in the classroom where pupils can post questions during the lesson that will be reviewed at the end of the session.

Ideally you need to have a display board in the classroom at an appropriate height so the pupils can reach it easily.

Using black sugar paper, create brick-shaped pieces of paper and provide chalk for pupils to write with. They will love the idea of a bit of graffiti writing on the 'wall'.

- Encourage the pupils to write down questions during a lesson. This works particularly well at the start of a new topic or unit of work, especially if there is a bit of a research project initially. There are ideas in Part 2 of this book that could be used in conjunction with Wonderwall. Pupils pick up a 'brick', write their question and stick it on the Wonderwall.
- Pupils can be anonymous if they wish. It can often be the case that there will be many others who want to ask that question too.
- Before the end of the lesson, go to the wall and share the questions that have been posed. It is not for the teacher to answer the questions, but to get other pupils in the class to offer suggestions and answers.

#wonderwall

Building challenges and structures: Scaffolding and writing frames

Part 6

All eyes, ears, nose, mouth and hands

'Give pupils real experiences through exploring their senses.'

Using the senses to gather as much information as possible through real-life experiences enables pupils to immerse themselves in the task.

Taking it further

If going to the beach isn't possible because of location, set up some sensory tables. On each table have large shallow trays with a selection of items, e.g. pebbles; sand; shells.

Bonus idea ★

For those pupils who may find it difficult to write down their thoughts, use talking tin lids. (These can be purchased from suppliers of sensory resources.) Children record their ideas by speaking into the tin can lid. These ideas can be played back and a scribe can note them down.

#5senses

This activity works well with descriptive writing, especially when linked to settings. How many times have children been asked to describe the seaside, when some of them have never been to a beach? Looking at a picture or photograph of a setting and being asked to describe it can be a challenge for children who haven't experienced such a place.

- Where possible, try to use a real-life experience, so that children are able to use their senses explicitly. For example: the woods. Create an opportunity for children to visit a local woodland area. Depending on the age of the children, perhaps use blindfolds and earmuffs, so that each sense can be focused upon individually, without being influenced by another.
- Create a senses grid with the five senses across the top in five columns. Laminate the grid so that it can be used in a dry wipe fashion.
- Pupils can either draw or write key words and phrases at their own level.
- These can be transferred to flipchart paper on washing lines around the classroom to provide working examples for pupils to use in their descriptive writing.

Scaffolding – writing frame

'Frame your work and see it in its best light.'

Writing frames give children the building blocks upon which to structure their writing.

We cannot expect pupils to write in a particular style if we have not given them the scaffolding with which to carry out the task. Providing a writing frame enables pupils to 'hug' the original text and imitate it before being able to make their own changes, and then create their finally own version.

- A fiction writing frame can follow a simple structure, e.g. beginning (with setting; introduction of character and plot); middle (where a problem arises and the plot develops); conclusion (where the problem is resolved).
- Provide pupils with a writing frame that allows them to pop in notes about the first paragraph setting the scene.
- The second paragraph allows them to introduce the characters and initially what is happening.
- After that there may be one, two or three more paragraphs that allow the plot to develop, and the problem to be introduced.
- The final part of the writing frame consists of the conclusion.
- Encourage children to use a word bank of time connectives, as well as sentence openers.
- A non-fiction writing frame will follow the pattern of the genre, whether it be a chronological report, diary, persuasive argument, etc.
- The writing frame needs to reflect the features of the genre so that, for example, any persuasive piece of writing will fit the frame.

Teaching tip

Model how to use a writing frame to organise ideas first, before writing them in complete sentences.

Taking it further

Get pupils to create a writing frame for particular types of writing.

Bonus idea ★

Invite the children to use Idea 39, Check sheets, and create the check sheets for each genre as an *aide mémoire*.

#scaffolding

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SODA

'It's great to start the day with a warm up of transferable skills.'

SODA (start of day activities) are great for consolidation of previous day's learning, or a warm-up to get the brain cells thinking.

Whether it be the start of the day or simply the start of the lesson, some quick and easy warm-up activities help get pupils settled and focused, ready for the main part of the session to begin. SODA can be random activities, or they can be tailored to meet the needs of the lesson focus.

When warming up for a maths lesson, pose five activities focusing on key concepts that often require constant practice. These could be linked to the four operations, times tables, time, fractions, etc. If pupils have a specific tables focus, just give an initial number and ask them to work out the tables facts and corresponding division facts based on the multiplication table they are working on. Idea 42: BOG3F can help support this too.

Other ideas for SODA can be very random, where children are given a set of puzzles or reasoning/logic problems and can work on them either independently or with a partner.

#SODA

Modelling talk-write

'The art of conversation must not be lost.'

If we want pupils to write in a creative but informed and well-constructed manner, they must be able to articulate themselves clearly and precisely.

Modelling talk-write supports pupils in being able to explain clearly, demonstrate understanding and also 'hear' how their writing will sound.

- If you're lucky enough to have a TA, then this is an ideal way of introducing modelling talk-write. The teacher and TA prepare a topic and model the talk-write. For example, writing up an argument about whether mobile phones should be allowed in primary classrooms.
- The first time round, model a talk-write where one of the adults does not explain themselves clearly, resulting in the other adult being confused. Unnecessary words, lengthy pauses and 'erms', etc., can invade the talk.
- Ask pupils to identify what was easy to understand and convert into writing, and what wasn't. Repeat the talk-write, this time modelling accurate language and encouraging the pupils to listen carefully. Mistakes made in speech are easier to learn from and quicker to rectify than mistakes made in writing. They are also less damaging to the ego.
- Invite a pupil to replace the TA and repeat the process in the same manner; then pair the pupils up.
- Once modelled, the teacher or TA scribes to show the transference of speech to paper.

Teaching tip

When a pupil uses language incorrectly such as 'I seen' or 'I done', the teacher can repeat the sentence they were speaking, but with the correct language pattern, in order for this to embed in the pupil's mind.

Bonus idea ★

Use tablets to record the talk-write. Listen to the recording, analyse and evaluate it.

#talkwrite

Boxing it up

'Flattening a box for recycling in one piece makes it easier to reassemble.'

We all like being able to take something apart and put it back together again. Boxing it up is all about taking something you know well, disassembling it, and being able to piece it together afterwards.

In order to structure a piece of writing, pupils must first visit excellent examples of writing, deconstruct them and put them back together again.

Take a well-known story and model how to take it apart and deconstruct it. Begin by separating out the setting, the characters and the plot. You could use highlighter pens on a blown-up version of the original text.

Make a grid that has two columns. The number of rows is determined by the complexity of the text. Start simply, so that pupils can understand the process of boxing it up. The left-hand column is where the basic sequence goes – the setting, characters, plot, problem, etc. The right-hand column is the detail in bullet-point form.

If a Talk for Writing approach has been taken by using Pie Corbett's thinking, students will know the story internally and will be able to organise the parts. Map out the sequence of the story in the left-hand column, and then, with the pupil's help, add the bullet points to the right-hand column. Once your pupils can deconstruct a well-known story, they begin to understand the components required for good storytelling and writing.

#boxingitup

Must, should, could

'Shoulda, coulda, woulda!'

Sometimes we need to know what we must do, what we may be able to do, and, if we really push ourselves, what we could do.

Some pupils need to have an idea of the expectations and can't simply rely on differentiation by outcome. If they have an idea of what you expect as the baseline but are encouraged to achieve more, they will rise to the challenge.

- Must, should and could is a simple success criteria tool which shows pupils what to expect.
- It should not be used to differentiate class groups – by this I mean we shouldn't be telling groups you're the 'must'; section, you're the 'should', section and you're the 'could' section. The minute we do this, we limit the learning.
- When devising the criteria, the MUST is what you expect of all pupils, and this will include all the non-negotiables you have previously agreed.
- The SHOULD will be the next layer of challenge, and all pupils should be encouraged to do their best. Some pupils will already start the task at this level.
- The COULD is the higher level of challenge. Some pupils will already operate here and need to be encouraged to remove the ceiling limit and extend their own learning.

Teaching tip

Make sure pupils know you always expect the best, and don't label pupils using these terms, otherwise they will likely simply do enough just to get by.

#mustshouldcould

RUCSAC (problem-solving scaffolds)

'Success comes in cans and not in cannots – processes matter.'

The end result is not always as important as the process taken by the child to make that journey through a task. RUCSAC provides a structure for working through problem-solving tasks.

Pupils may make many errors in mathematical word problems or reading comprehension simply because a clear thought process has not been applied. Steps are missed out; therefore full comprehension of what is required to work through a task isn't secure.

RUCSAC stands for: Read; Understand; Choose; Solve; Answer; Check. You can implement RUCSAC in the classroom to make sure pupils always follow the necessary steps.

Instructions for RUCSAC in mathematical problem-solving:

- R = Read the word problem carefully, at least twice.
- U = Underline the key information, looking for words that reflect mathematical concepts such as: how many, total, fewer, greater, difference, etc., as well as numerical values.
- C = Choose the correct operations based on the number of steps identified in the problem.
- S = Solve the problem by...
- A =...Answering the problem step-by-step and asking yourself the question: 'What is it I am trying to find out?'
- C = Check the answer. Does my answer match the problem?

#RUCSAC

For reading comprehension, the acronym follows a similar patter to that of mathematical problem solving, with the following amendments:

R = Read the question carefully and identify where in the text you will find the answer.

U = Understand what type of question is being asked, and underline the key information. Identify whether the question is who, what, where, when, why, or how.

- C = Choose words from the text to support the answer.
- S = Solve the problem by...
- A =...Answering the question. If the question is asking why, then the answer must begin with 'because'.
- C = Check the answer. Does my answer match the question?

Getting paragraphs early

'Why do we make paragraphing seem so difficult by telling children how many they need to include?'

What is a paragraph, and how do we explain it to the class? Sometimes we confuse pupils by not making this clear.

Getting paragraphs early is all about making sure pupils know what a paragraph is, as opposed to how many paragraphs their piece of work should include. They need to know when they have a paragraph and how to construct it.

If you use Idea 55: Boxing it up, you can help pupils to understand what a paragraph is. For me it is simply a group of sentences all about the same subject, aspect, issue, matter. We cannot tell pupils how many sentences a paragraph should have because we cannot put a ceiling limit on what they do.

For example: when planning a story, pupils need to map out the setting, characters, plot, problem and conclusion in a series of bullet points.

Once they have mapped-out each section with key words and bullet points, the next step is to slot them into each section of the story. These bullet points are then turned into complete sentences that, in turn, form the paragraph for that part.

Story mapping

'No one has to be a great artist to be able to draw a story map.'

A story map, with a clear beginning, middle and end, helps pupils focus on the plot and flow of the story.

Pie Corbett's Talk 4 Writing champions the story map as a way of internalising a well-known story before creating a new version. Pupils draw the story of your own using the key points and can also include key words.

- Being able to retell a story is key to being able to write a good story of your own and avoid the 'and then, and then' style of writing.
- In order to support pupils in being able to retell a well-known story, you need to help them develop a mechanism to sequence the plot and characters.
- Pick a well-known story and model how to draft a map to sequence the events of the story.
- Explain that the drawings do not need to be artistic and need to be drawn quickly. (Stick people are absolutely fine!)
- Key words, such as time connectives, can be inserted to direct the flow of the story map. This is particularly useful if connectives are a focus of the learning. This also stops the 'and then, and then' happening.
- Once you have modelled this yourself, pick another well-known story and invite pupils to map it out themselves.
- Pupils then rehearse the story using their map and then share it with a friend.

Teaching tip

Always ensure the pupils know the story really well. Make sure good quality texts of around 300 words are used.

Taking it further

Ask pupils to work with a partner to draw a story map and then rehearse it, line by line, taking it in turns to follow the story.

#storymapping

Physical writing frames

'I talk with my hands all the time. Who doesn't? Have you tried sitting on your hands whilst talking?'

When you tell someone about what you've been doing, even if it is just recounting your day, have you ever thought about how much you use your hands?

Teaching tip

Ensure the actions are used in a consistent way – if you use Pie Corbett's T4W actions, you can't go wrong.

Taking it further

If you link this idea with Idea 52: Scaffolding, pupils can visualise as well as act out their writing before they even put pen to paper.

#talkforwriting

A physical writing frame is a mechanism for rehearsing the organisation of a piece of writing through movement and drama, to embed the key points. It becomes something pupils can revisit and use for a variety of writing tasks.

Firstly, determine the type of writing, as this will provide the process criteria, success criteria, and the features required for the text type. For example: take the statement, 'Should Darth Vader be able to live on earth?' As the subject for a discussion text that encompasses pros and cons. Discuss the language of pros and cons – make a list on the washing line. Collect ideas from the pupils linked to the features of a discussion text; key words and stock phrases they have already 'magpied' from good examples of discussion texts.

Use a good text example to demonstrate how to create a physical writing frame. Develop actions to match the connectives and key features encountered throughout the text. Begin to retell the model text and insert the key actions. These are crucial to creating a physical writing frame that can be used for any discussion text, and not simply the one about Darth Vader (although that is a fun one).

Upwards plenaries: How to use the end of the lesson to find out what pupils know, across a range of abilities

Part 7

Write and wipe

'Pupils seem to love to rub their work out. Mini dry wipe boards make drafting and editing less messy.'

Using mini dry wipe boards to draft sentences following on from working with a talk partner enables pupils to play around with the words and language before committing it to paper.

Rubbers often get in the way of good ideas because pupils can be fixated with having perfect handwriting.

With this idea, once children have worked with their talk partner and rehearsed the sentence(s) they want to write, they write it on a mini dry wipe board. Now they can focus on the spelling, correcting any errors before writing in their books.

Pupils can take it in turns to write the sentences with their partner, or simply work alone. Working with a talk partner allows pupils to hear how their writing will sound. Once one partner has written on the mini white board, their partner can review it and support them with additional comments.

Teaching tip

Use mixed ability pairings so that there is a bit of spark to ignite the writing. Equally a lower-ability pupil may have the verbal ideas, but struggle to write them down; working with a talk partner of the opposite ability can enable both to be successful.

Taking it further

Using a tablet as a visualiser is a great way of sharing good ideas very quickly. Using cables or software that allows the tablet to appear on a large screen or interactive whiteboard makes viewing, commenting upon, and editing another pupil's writing possible for the whole class.

Bonus idea

If you want to retain pupils' writing from the whiteboards, especially if it isn't going into their books, use a tablet to take a photograph of the writing.

#writeandwipe

Three things

'Groups of three are always very satisfying, as well as visually appealing.'

Getting pupils to recall what they have learned at the end of a day doesn't have to be a huge assessment task. Groups of three pupils can share their learning with each other, as a way of consolidating it.

- As well as listing three things they have learned in the day, ask pupils to choose which they feel are the most important things they have secured.
- Pupils can share with a partner and spend time justifying or ranking their choices.
- Expect pupils to offer explanation, not just presentation.
- At the start of a lesson, get pupils to write down three questions on post-its and then reflect on them at the end of the lesson.
- It is also good to get the pupils to look at three questions each and add comments to them based on their understanding to show what they have learned.

Teaching tip

This idea can be used at the end of a school day, week, lesson or unit of work.

Taking it further

Group together pupils who came up with the same aspects and ask them to put together a short presentation for the class based on what they have learned.

Bonus idea ★

Pupils can use post-its to write down what they have learned and place them on flipcharts. Alternatively, pupils can ask a question for something they feel they need to know more about.

#threethings

Mind mapping

'Take your mind on a learning journey to see where you end up.'

Mind maps are a way of ordering your thoughts with like for like. Pupils can empty their brains in quite a visual manner. This type of task takes place at the end of a unit of work.

Teaching tip

Model how to put a mind map together and show how connections are made between ideas.

Taking it further

Make a map of all the things you want to find out about a topic before the learning starts.

Bonus idea ★

Pupils don't have to work on their own map alone. They can work with a partner, or they can even move from one map to another, adding what they know.

#mindmaps

- This works well for topic work such as history/geography where there are lots of cross-curricular links.
- Begin with the 'title' or 'focus' of the mind map. For example, 'All about France'. Pupils place this in the centre of a large piece of paper.
- Pupils then decide on the mini-headings which go around the title. For example, these may be food, landmarks, people, cities, etc.
- Once the mini-headings have been decided, pupils begin to add what they have learned. They can use arrows to link things together and show connections.

Ask the teacher

'Pupils love asking the teacher questions, especially if they are really tricky ones.'

Using the idea of flipped learning, pupils are set a homework task to prepare a question or questions based on some future learning. They bring these into school, pop them on post-its and stick them on a flipchart.

- This can be a great task if you are studying a period of time in history and, in particular, a famous person. Set pupils the task of preparing a question in advance about the person or period you are focussing on.
- In class, assume the role of the famous person in question, and let the pupils pose their questions. Aim to answer the questions in character.
- This idea could also be turned on its head, so that the pupils ask questions about an as yet unidentified character, to which you can only answer 'yes' or 'no'. For example, they could ask: "Are you female?" "Are you British?" "Are you still living?".
- In small groups, pupils then prepare a limited number of further questions. Once the first group has asked you their questions, allow a few minutes for the other groups to take stock of their own so they can add new ones or tweak existing ones based on what has already been asked. Repeat this process until all the groups have asked their questions.
- By now all the groups will have accrued a lot of information! Each group writes their predicted answer on a piece of paper and pops it in an envelope. The fun is in opening the envelopes and finding out who was right! Move the learning on by asking groups to explain their findings.

Teaching tip

Students need to know that the teacher doesn't always have all the answers. Model how to use search engines to find and refine answers.

Taking it further

All children love being the teacher. Invite a pupil to be the teacher and answer questions posed by the rest of the class.

#asktheteacher

What does it mean?

'All children love learning new words, especially if they are long and quite a mouthful.'

This works well for scientific, geographical, mathematical, and grammatical terms. Pupils writing their own definitions for words they have learned shows understanding and application.

We should never be frightened of giving pupils new and very complicated words. They absolutely love them. Indeed, preparation for the SPaG test shows that some pupils enjoy mastering correct terminology and spotting examples in a text. Getting pupils to put terminology in their own words and then give examples of it will make it easier for them to understand and apply their knowledge.

Give pupils a list of words from the lesson, whether they be a grammatical term or perhaps scientific vocabulary. pupils have to write their own definition to show their understanding of the term and then give an example of it or use it in a sentence.

In order to ascertain whether pupils have given a really good definition, play a game where they share the definition without giving away the word. The rest of the class has to say what the word is. If the definition and example are strong, it should be easy for the class to get.

#definitions

Anonymise it! 3 for 2

'Sharing your work with the whole class can sometimes be a little daunting. When it is anonymous it's much easier to talk about it.'

Using a tablet as a visualiser, either with the camera or an app, is a powerful tool to share examples of work as a whole class or in pairs.

This activity works really well if you have a class set of tablets, so pupils can work in pairs with one between two.

In advance of the lesson take photos/ screenshots of different pieces of work. Ensure each tablet has a selection on it. All examples of work must be anonymous.

In pairs the pupils scrutinise the work sample and identify three strengths and two areas that can be improved upon.

Pupils can annotate on the tablet or write their three for two on a post-it and put it on the tablet face.

Pupils then swap tablets so they have different pieces of work. Their task, this time, is to look at the two areas that will make the work better and act upon it.

Teaching tip

Share an example of anonymous work on a large screen or interactive whiteboard. Model with the pupils how to identify three strengths and then two areas to make it better. Then model how to act upon the improvement pointers.

Bonus idea ★

Pupils can swap again, so that they can assess how well the improvement pointers have been acted upon.

#3for2

What will happen next?

'Everyone loves that moment when the teacher is reading the class novel and they stop at the cliff hanger.'

Prediction is a good skill for pupils to have. It is not simply a guessing game, but one where they justify their reasons.

Taking it further

If possible, and with the appropriate risk assessment, allow pupils to carry out some of the investigations.

Bonus idea ★

Invite pupils to pose scenarios for others to try out.

#prediction

Posing a series of scenarios to pupils and asking them to make suggestions as to the outcome supports them in being able to explain reasoning. This is a great activity to use for science, especially when teaching about materials and their properties, or heating foods.

You need to prepare in advance and put together scenarios where pupils have to make a prediction and give a reason for their choice, e.g.:

- What will happen when water and chocolate are heated together?
- Will a hard-boiled egg float better than an uncooked egg?
- What will happen when an uncooked egg is microwaved in its shell?
- Can you separate a mixture of salt and sugar?

The differentiation then lies in the pupil's ability to explain convincingly their reasons for their suggested answer.

True or false?

'The art of persuasion is quite a skill.'

Children love facts, especially unusual ones. True or false is a game of persuasion where pupils have to convince others that they are right.

This is a great game to play in teams. Pupils are given a topic to research; they then write a series of statements about the facts they have extracted, e.g. King Henry VIII and his six wives. Pupils prepare three statements for each round of the game. Within the three statements, only one is true and the other two are false.

The differentiation lies in the creativity and cunning of the false statements. Equally, the most unusual facts need to be researched so that the true statements aren't obvious. The two teams then take it in turns to share their statements and guess which is true.

Timeline

'Timelines help to sequence learning.'

Sometimes it is vital that certain learning processes happen in a particular order. A timeline can aid a pupil in sequencing their understanding of that order, and can also be used for instructional writing.

This idea is especially good for maths problem solving and for learning the four operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division). It draws on what I like to call 'process criteria', as opposed to 'success criteria'.

Success criteria can often get in the way of differentiation, as it ends up giving everyone the bare minimum of what needs to be achieved rather than ensuring real deep learning takes place. Process criteria is all about each pupil securing their understanding of a process and its application, and subsequently the ability to apply it. It also offers them the opportunity to embed their understanding by sharing it with others.

Take a maths computation, such as long multiplication, and ask pupils to log it as you teach it. This will help them understand the order in which to undertake such a calculation in future. Once they fully understand the mathematical concept and process, tell pupils they have to imagine you (the teacher) do not understand a certain part of the process, such as how to add using the column method when carrying figures over in long multiplication.

Using simple language and a flipchart, model how to set out a timeline of process criteria. Once modelled, they can begin to create their own timelines.

By writing a timeline of process criteria step by step and in their own words, pupils will develop and demonstrate clear understanding of a process and the order in which it needs to be carried out.

Information detectives

'Teamwork only happens when everyone works together in a focused way with a shared purpose. It's about inviting, including and involving everyone.'

Within a group or a whole class, give everyone different roles or different information. This means those who would normally rush ahead cannot do that without first sharing their information and receiving information from others.

This idea is all about working as a team to gradually discover information about the topic being studied.

Each pupil in each group has a role, but be strategic about which role you allocate to which pupil. Roles can be distributed to those who have a natural aptitude and skill, or they can be allocated in a way that enables pupils to develop skills in areas that they find more difficult. Roles can include: team captain, scribe, tablet researcher, illustrator, timekeeper, etc.

On pieces of card, write down key questions and related pieces of information in the form of clues, then number them. Each clue needs to feed into the next one: it needs to answer a question already posed, then provide steps to finding the solution to the next one.

You could carry the activity out as a table top exercise, using a series of envelopes, or you may find it is more fun outdoors! If using the outdoor space, place clues and answers around the school grounds. Direct pupils to clue number one as a starting point for their detective trail. Remind them that each pupil must stick to his or her role in order to work together as a team.

Teaching tip

Demonstrate to the children, using the image of a jigsaw puzzle, that they will not be able to solve their task without including and involving everyone on their team.

Bonus idea ★

Using this approach for a class council develops leadership skills, as children need to listen, value and support each other.

Take-away homework: Differentiated homework – high impact with low maintenance

Part 8

À la carte

'An à la carte menu is always a crowd pleaser because you have what you want.'

Homework should be something that is enjoyed and that enhances learning. It should not generate excessive amounts of marking for teachers.

How do you set homework? Is it a 'death by worksheet' approach, or investigative; and does it require a huge amount of marking once completed? Is it valued and meaningful?

For me, homework needs to have value, purpose, be meaningful, have high impact, but equally be low maintenance to plan, prepare and mark. À la carte is all about pupils making some choice about their homework. It can be about how much, when, and how to do it, as well as what to do.

An à la carte homework menu should run for the length of time a topic takes, and should be topic-specific. It should also include any of the non-negotiables you wish pupils to revisit daily.

The number of tasks should be determined by how long the unit of work is and by how many activities you would like the pupils to complete weekly. I'm a great believer in homework that is manageable and that does not infringe on family time. We do need to be mindful of that.

I would suggest a mixed variety of tasks that are quite hands on and practical, so that adults do not have to be involved; Equally, the homework should be for the child and not require adult input. On the basis that a half term has six weeks, it is advisable to map out ten tasks; then there will always be at least one task that pupils don't have to choose.

#alacarte

Theme park

'Life is a rollercoaster.'

Making homework interesting, purposeful and valuable isn't always easy, and you often need a hook to get the pupils interested in owning their own learning.

The excitement of a theme park, where prizes can be won, extends to real rewards being awarded, depending on the level of challenge a pupil chooses to take.

- On an A4 sheet of paper, design a theme park with a series of rides. Use a real theme park map as a prompt, if necessary.
- The names of the rides can reflect the school's name and other things pertinent to your school.
- Determine the number of homework tasks you would like over a period of time.
- Differentiate the level of challenge relative to the 'danger/excitement' of the theme park ride, eg. rollercoaster that goes upside down would have more level of challenge than a water slide.
- Additional points can be won, dependent on the number of tasks and the varied ways in which they are carried out.

Teaching tip

Model for the pupils how they may plan a route through the theme park – one week perhaps choosing something with a high level of interaction, compared to the next week.

Bonus idea ★

Pupils design their own theme park for another class to use.

Hot chilli peppers

'Time to spice up your learning.'

Using the idea of a take-away menu to differentiate homework allows pupils to make choices about the level of difficulty. Sometimes they can be steered towards one particular level.

You can set one homework menu but cater for all abilities with this idea. It follows a similar theme to that of 'must, should and could'. 'Must' is generally what all children are able to do, 'should' caters for more than half, and 'could' is that extra challenge for the more able. However, all levels are there for pupils to aim towards.

Hot chilli peppers is a simple way of determining the difficulty of a task. One chilli pepper is quite straightforward and can be tackled by all pupils. Two chilli peppers steps up the challenge, and three chilli peppers requires pupils to go into a lot more detail when completing the homework. You can set a variety of tasks, either based on the topic for the half term or subject based, if more appropriate to the needs of the class.

It is for you to decide whether pupils make their own choices as to which tasks they tackle or whether different groups of pupils are told which number of chillies to work on. You can then change this for a pupil if the level of difficulty isn't high enough, or if it is too high as a starting point.

Foldables

'As children, we always loved making these folding games at school. We did them for maths, colours and lots of other topics, too.'

Children will always love a very practical homework task, especially when they have ownership of the topic.

- Begin this activity with some ready-prepared foldables: there are many templates available online. This will help pupils understand how to construct a foldable and how it works. It will also get them hooked from the outset!
- In essence, this activity starts with the ability to fold a square of paper to make *that* folding game you used your thumbs and forefingers to play when you (or your children!) were at school.
- Make sure pupils know how to fold the paper and manipulate it to reveal the flaps; search online for the instructions (they are often referred to as 'paper fortune tellers').
- It is a good idea to create the foldables in class first, with a specific remit, rather than setting them as a homework task. For example, they could be used to demonstrate a particular multiplication table that a pupil needs to work on, or a specific set of spelling patterns.
- Using foldables to assess pupils' ability to recall number facts, spelling facts, key dates etc. can be a completely open-ended task, in which they can choose any topic or concept that is relevant and current.
- As soon as pupils have mastered how to create a foldable and manipulate it, they can begin to take ownership over the content.
- Ask pupils to share their creations with their friends: they will love trying to make their foldable as tricky as possible once they know they can challenge their peers with the content!

Teaching tip

Model how to fold and make the flaps: this is key. Practice making the foldables in class first, before setting the task as homework. If necessary, have some ready-prepared foldables for children who are struggling.

Bonus idea ★

Give children some choices of topics they can use, as well as providing a remit for the age range they will be suitable for – especially if the foldables are to be made and then shared with a different age group.

#foldables

Be the presenter

'Allowing a child to choose the way in which they want to set out their homework supports them in choosing their preferred method of recording.'

Sometimes being told the way in which a task has to be laid out can be quite constricting. When pupils can choose between a list, letter, drawing, mind map, etc., they will produce a much better result.

Teaching tip

Explain the different ways to set out homework, and take further examples from pupils as homework comes into school.

Taking it further

Pupils who chose to do the same homework task can be grouped together to feed back to each other how they chose to present the task.

#homework

Ensure the homework tasks have been agreed and explained to the pupils. It is good to talk about the different ways in which you can present homework. Make a list of these, but make sure pupils know it is not exhaustive, and that they can use one, more than one, or none of the suggested ways when putting their homework together.

Ideas include:

- Putting it on the blog
- A vlog
- PowerPoint
- Mind map
- Drawing
- Story map
- List
- Report
- Letter.

Pic 'n' mix

'I remember as a child being able to get a 2p 'mix-up' and having at least 6 sweets in the bag!'

Pic 'n' mix is all about extending learning. The initial homework task is fairly straight forward; the addition of another variable from the pic 'n' mix menu develops the challenge.

This is another great idea for all pupils to tackle. It works really well with maths computation.

The simple tasks are penny sweets – these are simple maths calculations in a single step. Pupils can simply choose to do the simple penny sweet tasks.

If they are up for more of a challenge or have been directed to such a challenge, they choose from the 5p and 10p section of the pic 'n' mix sweets.

This requires them to take the answer from the penny sweet calculation and use that in the next calculation. This calculation may involve more than one operation in a two-step problem.

It is important, when planning the calculation, that every penny sweet answer will work with a 5p and 10p part of the pic 'n' mix menu.

Teaching tip

Model how to use the menu and set out the calculations to ensure school methods are being followed, used and applied correctly.

Taking it further

Share with parents that this type of activity supports the arithmetic part of the maths curriculum.

Bonus idea ★

Challenge the children to spend 25p on their pic 'n' mix.

Learning logs

'Who doesn't love their own stationery?'

Pupils love to think their book is truly theirs. A learning log enables them to organise their homework however they want and design their own book cover.

Bonus idea ★

Pupils sharing their learning logs with peers is a great way to encourage those you know could do better.

#learninglogs

- Learning logs are an oversized book (slightly larger than A4) which allows A4 paper to be stuck in and larger pieces of folded-up paper to fit inside.
- The homework rationale from the school is stuck inside the front cover, and the first set of 'take away homework' stuck on the first page.
- Pupils can design a front cover for their own learning log. Ideally it should show the term 'learning log' and their name. The design is entirely theirs.
- Any sort of stationery can appear inside a learning log: Post-its, extra paper, photos, pictures, drawings, as well as extended pieces of paper.
- An extended piece of paper is where the original piece hasn't been enough and extensions have been added. The piece can be any shape; it is all about the pupil having autonomy over how they present their learning.

Speed dating

'Pupils need to know their homework serves a purpose and is going to be valued.'

When homework is set, pupils and their parents want to see that it has been acknowledged. However, from a teacher's point of view, that isn't always practicable. Speed dating allows pupils to share their homework and demonstrate their understanding through explanation.

For speed dating, have your classroom set up with tables catering for two pupils. Each pupil has a seat with their homework. One pupil stays put whilst the other moves round. Start off by giving the pupils 2/3 minutes each to share their homework. Both pupils have to share their homework before one of them moves on.

Alternatively, the teacher can identify a different group of pupils each week to share their homework in front of the whole class. This needs to be planned so that all pupils over the half term have had the opportunity to share their work.

A third method is to invite pupils to share what they learned following hearing another pupil share their homework. This encourages listening skills and memory recall.

Teaching tip

Plan ahead for speed dating; do not treat it simply as a 'show and tell' session at the start or end of the day.

Taking it further

If pupils are undertaking 'take-away' homework and are choosing the order in which to do the activities given, group those who have chosen the same one for that week together. They can compare how they went about the task and share their ideas.

Flipping the learning

'We are not filling empty vessels.'

Our pupils already know, understand, use and apply more than we can possibly know. Any homework task should be there to extend their learning. Equally, any classroom work should test their understanding and not always be about consolidation.

We always want to make sure we address prior learning and use that as a starting point for future learning. By setting the class a homework task ahead of a future lesson, we can move learning on much faster. There is a lot online about flipped learning and plenty of blog posts on the subject.

A classroom that has been flipped has homework in reverse. Pupils are asked to watch a video clip. This may have been created by the class teacher to be highly personalised. They are then set a task related to this in order to save time in the classroom.

This culture has to be fostered and developed, as there will be pupils who do not always have access to the required technology at home.

#flippedlearning

Teamwork: Google docs

'Many heads are better than one.'

I love working in a team. We always know who has the best ideas; children often do so too. They will know instinctively those with whom they would like to work, and it isn't always their friends. Google docs provides a forum for mass participation.

School learning platforms are more prolific than ever. Setting up Google accounts with instant access is quite straightforward.

Google docs can be in several formats, depending on the task in hand. Pupils adapt easily to working on a task at the same time as their friends/peers, as they are used to this with gaming apps. Tasks can be set within Google docs for pairs, small groups or a whole class.

Once in school, reviewing the information collated as a whole class is great. It allows the teacher to see who has contributed. Those who haven't been able to, for whatever reason, can have that extra attention from the teacher.

Teaching tip

Have a whole lesson where pupils work with a partner to populate a Google doc.

Bonus idea ★

If possible, set up tasks across schools.

#Googledocs

Resources

Part 9

Keys to learning

'No matter what the subject, this handy pocket-sized resource unlocks the doors to learning for any age range.'

Children love having something that is personal to them to support them in their learning. This handy little resource enables pupils to take ownership of the key facts that they know are a challenge.

Teaching tip

Encourage children to be honest with the facts they don't know. It's all about children knowing what they need to work on to improve, and not about having the same prompts as everyone else.

Bonus idea ★

Take a photo of each child for their key fob – easily recognised and easily returned if misplaced.

It is not always possible to have a learning prompt on display to meet every pupil's needs, or to have key facts on display if you are aiming to assess pupils' use and application of such skills. Keys to learning offer a personalised resource without making pupils feel different.

- Identify the key facts that seem to be causing some challenge across the class. These could be tables, days, maths vocabulary, word banks, etc.
- Prepare a simple template in the shape of a key – preferably small enough to pop in your pocket but large enough to type on the facts. An A4 sheet of paper would generally accommodate four keys.
- Type the facts on the key vertically down the length of the key (as opposed to across it width-ways).
- Once one key is made, copy and paste so you have four identical keys on the page.
- Repeat this for each set of facts/learning prompts. Tables work well with one times table per key.
- Laminate the keys and cut out.
- Provide the pupils with key fobs. They can either write their name on the plastic tag provided or create their own, which will make it easier for them to remember which is theirs.
- The keys can be added to as new challenges arise, or when introducing new skills/facts, etc.

#learningprompts

SPaG mats

'Synonym (noun): a word used in place of the one you can't spell.'

With predictive text, spellcheckers and grammar checkers, is technology making kids lazy? Do they rely on it too much, so that they never truly see how a word looks or reads? Having a help mat with the common errors on it can help with this problem.

There are plenty of teacher-generated help mats available on education forum websites. It's wise not to try and reinvent the wheel when such resources are available in abundance. However, one size doesn't necessarily fit all, and it's a good idea to tweak what you find so that it suits your purpose.

- Create a template in a program such as Word™, or Publisher™ – one that allows you to manipulate text and graphics.
- Depending on the age and ability of the pupils, you can make it as simple or as detailed as you like.
- One idea would be to make a mat matching each year group, so that all the writing skills are in one place.
- A second idea would be to take one area of SPaG and create a mat detailing the progression in one area. For example, progression in connectives would show children how they could improve their writing through using more challenging vocabulary.

Teaching tip

Pie Corbett has a wonderful resource on the Talk for Writing website which is completely free to download. It contains a progression for writing skills, including the technical vocabulary required for each year group, as well as progression for punctuation and grammar.

Taking it further

Have colour-coded help mats, so the teacher can advise pupils to use a particular mat. These could be coloured either according to level of ability or subject areas.

Bonus idea ★

Invite pupils to make their own SPaG help mat using a prepared frame for spelling, punctuation and grammar.
Children can add to it continually, or remove items once they feel they have mastered them. It could be turned into a laminated dry wipe mat.

#SPaG

Top tips

'Keep your daily skills in tip-top condition.'

Effective learning is not about finding the easiest way or a short cut, but having some top tips can act as a prompt to keep pupils heading in the right direction.

Top tips suits any subject or topic. You can create top tips laminated cards with a series of learning prompts that support a particular topic. For example, putting together an electronic presentation. The top tip card can be divided into sections such as:

- Programmes and apps available – a suggested list of what the school has access to.
- Layout – a variety of suggestions for the layout.
- Tools – fonts, icons, size.
- Content and detail – a bulleted list of how to keep the language punchy and snappy.
- Eye catchers – use of colour, animation, etc.

#toptips

Magpie books

'All that glitters is not gold.'

We all love to get something for nothing and be able to use it. Pupils need to know that using something that another person has created isn't wrong. We can be a magpie and flatter someone by borrowing their ideas, but then tweaking them to make them our own.

A magpie book is for collecting ideas, words, phrases – anything that interests and excites you, that you think you might use at a future date.

You can organise your magpie book however you like; 'Magpieing' ideas is all about shaping your own work by taking in what you have read and using it in your own work. It's a book that you take to every lesson and draw upon whenever you need.

Demonstrate to the pupils what it means to be a magpie. Show your own magpie book – how, for instance, you jotted down a simple phrase that caught your ear. Show how the writing doesn't have to be perfect. Younger children may benefit from a magpie book that has already been divided into sections.

Bonus idea ★

Make time for pupils to share their magpie ideas with their friends.

#magpiebook

High 5

'A very simple handy tool for getting sentences right.'

How often do we remind pupils to use capital letters, finger spaces and full-stops in their writing, and yet year upon year, teachers say some pupils still do not understand what it takes to make a simple sentence.

Taking it further

This can be extended for those children who are already writing simple sentences by changing the labelling as follows:
I have used a range of punctuation in my sentences.
My handwriting is legible and correctly formed.
I have used a range of connectives to join my sentences.
I have used a variety of sentence types, both short and more complex.
I have spelled most words accurately.

Bonus idea ★

Introduce the sentence maker's hat – a large top hat with the high five hand on the front. When peer assessing the sentence-writing work, one pupil wears the hat and listens to others read their sentences out. The sentence maker gives the pupil a high five if their sentences meet all five criteria.

Using a hand template, with five 'handy' tips for making a good sentence, is a great aid for young children who are developing simple sentences.

- Draw round your hand to make a template, or simply use a template off the internet.
- Extend the middle finger so it is slightly longer than the rest.
- Label from the thumb to the little finger with the following:
  - I have started my sentence with a capital letter.
  - I have used a full stop at the end of my sentence.
  - I have used finger spaces.
  - My handwriting is correctly formed.
  - My sentence makes sense when I read it aloud.
- This becomes the child's checklist when writing. The teacher can ask if they have used their 'High 5' when writing. The extended middle finger should be the width of a finger space so that pupils who really struggle to remember to use a space between words can hold it in place after each word in their writing.
- Pupils love receiving a high five from the teacher if all the criteria are met.

#high5

Key word spotter

'Once you spot a new word, isn't it strange how it seems to appear even more, from then onwards.'

New words or key words that you need pupils to focus upon need to be embedded into all subjects. Pupils need to be immersed in them, and your classroom should be dripping in displays that share these words.

- For each year group in the English curriculum, there is a particular set of words pupils must be able to spell.
- The only way to facilitate this is to make sure pupils are faced with these words daily.
- Create a word wall using paper bricks. Display in alphabetical order and refer to them frequently.
- Appoint several key word spotters, so that when the key words appear in a text or are heard spoken, they draw attention to them on the word wall.

Teaching tip

Encourage pupils to use the key words in their writing and to make effective use of the word wall.

Bonus idea ★

Choose three words each day and draw pupils' attention to them at the start of the day. Set a challenge of having to include the words of the day in their writing.

#keywords

Activity stations

'It's always important to have the right resources for the job in hand.'

Activity stations are areas of the classroom where particular resources are used for each task. Pupils are encouraged to make the most of a resource when it is most suited to a particular activity.

#activitystations

- Set up your classroom with several activity stations.
- Each station should have a different task and resource assigned to it.
- Ensure the tasks are varied and the resources are appropriate.
- For example, resources may include a laptop, tablet, CD audio, DVD visual, newspaper article, textbook, cue cards, dictionaries, songs, computer games, slide, hand-outs, etc.
- Pupils rotate around the stations until they have completed all the tasks.
- At the end, take feedback from the pupils, regarding the resources they found the most useful.

Bookmarks

'No two people ever read the same book.'

How often do we expect children to retain and readily call upon a series of facts or concepts? It's not always easy… even teachers have to revise material when teaching a topic they haven't taught for a while.

These bookmarks can be generated by the teacher or pupils for any subject across the curriculum. When starting a new topic, prior learning is taken into account, and the teacher will often elicit from the pupils what they already know and understand.

If we are expecting pupils to write up a science experiment, a geographical report or an account of a historical event, we need to equip them not only with the tools of a good writer, but also subject-specific tools, such as technical vocabulary with meanings and key phrases that model good examples of how to structure writing across the curriculum (e.g. science: biological terms; RE: artefacts in a church).

- First, determine the subject matter for the bookmark.
- Elicit the unit-related technical vocabulary and its meanings.
- For each technical word on the bookmark, add the meaning, along with an example of it being used in context.
- Bookmarks can be laminated to last longer.
- If pupils have been involved in the planning of a unit they can also be involved in creating the bookmarks. Pupils are far more likely to take a greater interest in using and applying the information from their bookmark if they have had direct input into making it.

Taking it further

Refer to Idea 13: In your own time. Incorporate this into the planning stage.

#bookmarks

What's in your toolkit?

'Everyone has a toolkit to hand. This is simply the stuff you need to get through each day.'

Toolkits are great to have to hand. I have loved putting together a small zipper wallet with a set of 'tools' for a pupil to use.

Teaching tip

Invite children to own their toolkits and add to them themselves.

Bonus idea ★

Children can take their toolkit to the next class with them.

#toolkits

- What you need in a toolkit will vary from pupil to pupil.
- Supply each child with a small zipper wallet.
- The toolkit will be determined by the needs of each child and will evolve over time.
- You may start off with a lot of the same things in each pupil's toolkit eg. rulers, pencils, learning keys, etc.
- After a while, things will be removed and other things added, to address the needs of each pupil.
- There may be key spellings, multiplication tables facts, days of the week, and so on, depending on their needs.

Crashing car phonics

'Cars can travel at the speed of sounds.'

It can be difficult to engage a reluctant or struggling reader if phonics is still a barrier.

The crashing car is designed to support all age ranges in a fun but interactive way, to support pupils putting sounds together and blending phonemes.

- Print a picture of a car onto A4-sized, laminated card, making sure it has two doors on the side. The sounds (phonemes) will be placed on these doors.
- Pull out the consonants (where applicable) from the phonemes.
- Make a door-sized card for each consonant out of one colour and do the same for the other phonemes with a different colour.
- When working with a pupil, place a particular sound on one of the doors, depending on whether the car is travelling forwards or reversing.
- Travelling forwards supports blending initial sounds with the next sound. Reversing the car is all about being able to hear endings. One card is stationary and the other 'crashes' into it, thus blending the sounds together.

Teaching tip

A TA can check which sounds are not secure, and build those in more regularly to reinforce them.

Taking it further

More able pupils can also work, one to one, with younger students.

Bonus idea ★

Think of different ideas for displaying the sounds – cars may appeal to some children more than others.

#phonics

Marking and feedback

Part 10

RAG marking

'Do you prioritise which books you will mark first?'

Using RAG (red, amber, green) boxes will alleviate some marking time when you need to assess and plan next steps for learning.

Keeping on top of marking is never easy. There will always be a set of books where, once you embark on marking them, you realise immediately that more teacher input is required to secure a concept, and it is not always possible to have every book marked for the following day. In order to assess quickly whether you can move onto next step, or need to provide more input, focusing on the books in the red box first will allow more planning time.

- Get yourself three plastic boxes – one red, one orange, and one green.
- Rather than collecting in books, table by table, at the end of a lesson, ask pupils to place their book in the appropriate box.
- Pupils need to know why they are choosing a particular box. Explain it as follows:
    Green box – I am confident in the quality/ accuracy of my work.
    Orange – I know there are some things I need to check.
    Red – I would like you to look closely at what I have done, as I am not sure I have fully understood.
- Pupils will need to be honest in their choice, and it will take time for them to be confident in practising this.

Bonus idea ★

Give pupils a coloured bookmark to insert in their book, where the work is to save time flicking through to find the current page.

#marking

RAG learning

'Pupils love to let you know how well they are doing, especially if they are making judgements about their own work.'

Using a simple RAG code (red, amber, green) lights, pupils can very quickly let you know how well they feel they have grasped a concept when learning independently.

Keeping on top of marking and giving feedback with a class of 30 is never easy, and trying to get a balance between marking and effective planning for next steps can be assisted with the use of traffic lights by each pupil.

- At the start of the lesson ensure the pupils understand the focus of the learning; you could even have a title or indeed a learning objective/intention as a heading for a piece of work.
- It doesn't matter if learning intentions are not the same for each group of students as the RAG/traffic light system is applicable to all and any subject.
- At the end of a lesson, before handing books in, pupils are given time to go through their work, check it, and then re-read the learning focus. They need to consider how well they have been able to carry out the task.
- They then add a small coloured dot next to the learning objective/intention/title to indicate the following:
- Red: I found this a real challenge and need more input.
- Amber: I could do with some more help and practice.
- Green: I understood what I had to do and feel confident.

Teaching tip

Remember to get the pupils to think honestly when they make a judgement about their own confidence. Initially, they may all want to please you and may indicate that they have understood more than they have.

Taking it further

Talk partners can discuss and judge each other's work.

Pair checking

'We often need a fresh pair of eyes to look over something to spot any mistakes.'

When we re-read our own work, we often read what we think we have written, rather than what we have actually written.

#pairchecking

- The teacher can either choose an appropriate partner for a pupil or allow them to choose someone for themselves.
- Give the pupils a brief for pair checking:
  - First step is checking that it makes sense.
  - Second step is checking punctuation.
  - Third step is checking spelling.
  - Fourth step is looking at the focus criteria – for example, if the task was to write a chronological report, the pair checker should be looking for the writing to be written in the past tense; use of time connectives, etc.
- The pupils could use a checklist (see Idea 39: Check sheets).

Peer feedback

'Feedback is important if we want to improve.'

Marking books can take hours of time, and sometimes the feedback given when books are 'distance marked' is too late to have the impact required.

- Peer feedback needs to reflect the learning that has taken place.
- In order to have a greater impact and ensure all of the children have the opportunity to take part, peer feedback works best in small groups of four to six.
- Each pupil gets a turn to present what they have learned to their peers. This can take the form of simply talking to the group or using visual aids.
- The focus must be on what has been learned (not on what has been done).
- The other children in the group feed back to the child by telling them what they have understood from their presentation.

Teaching tip

Model how to give feedback, and keep it focused on what has been learned (not what a child did).

Taking it further

Children can use common strategies, such as two stars and a wish; plus and minus; what's next?; or warm and cold. When positive feedback is given, it is said to be warm. Cold feedback is where children give hints on how to 'raise the temperature'.

Bonus idea ★

If children don't understand what the presenter is talking about, encourage them to ask questions to seek further clarification.

#peerfeedback

Three-stage writing

'It's all about imitating, innovating, and then inventing.'

Three-stage writing is all about the process and not a finished result. Children are able to contribute to the writing, mark it, set improvement pointers, and then mark it again.

- Children need to be in three groups, but they are still all writing individually. Teachers need to organise these groups carefully, so that children are able to access the task.
- Stage 1 is simply where everyone writes.
- Stage 2 is where each group takes another group's writing and improves it. They are able to magpie ideas whilst reading and improving another child's writing.
- Stage 3 is where the writing is taken by another group to be marked before being handed back to the original writer.

#markingandfeedback

What's confusing?

'To be or not to be? What is the answer?'

Pupils often think success is getting the end solution right, rather than the process and journey they take to get to that point. This is often the case in mathematical problem solving, where processes are not adhered to carefully enough and mistakes are made en route.

If you liken this idea to reversing a car and moving backwards through the steps taken to the point where confusion started, the pupil can then begin to talk about the point where they got confused and put the car back into first gear again.

Drawing a timeline backwards and actually talking through a multi-step problem as though it were a story is another useful method for analysing where the error took place. It also supports pupils using the inverse operation as a self-checking exercise.

Teaching tip

Physically walk and talk through a problem where an error has been made. Identify when the error happened, then move on.

Taking it further

Give pupils sets of problems that have been completed, but with a mistake part-way through. The pupils' challenge is to find out where the mistake occurred and correct it.

Bonus idea ★

Use Idea 69: Timeline to support ordering the problem to be solved.

#markingandfeedback

Keep focused

'When pupils own their learning, they are more likely to improve at fast pace.'

Gone are the days where a piece of work is marked entirely in red pen.

#marking

Quality marking is not always about checking that absolutely everything is right or included. For some pupils their work may just need to be marked against one or a very small number of criteria.

- Choice of marking focus is up to the pupil to decide. This can happen within any subject.
- If teaching, learning and assessment are effective, then pupils will know exactly what their targets are and what they need to do in order to improve.
- Keeping focused is about the pupil really targeting an area of their work they find a challenge and need support in getting it right.
- For example, a pupil who struggles to make sure sentences make sense and are punctuated correctly. This becomes the only marking focus for the pupil so they can see the successes. They may need to be encouraged to choose this as their focus and not simply go for a marking focus they can already achieve.

Exit assessment

'Marking any work or taking quick feedback from pupils becomes the next day's planning for that lesson.'

With a class of 30, marking can end up taking so much time that it actually prevents the teacher getting to grips with the main focus of the next steps in learning. Exit assessment is quick and can ensure the teacher has a good steer on the next lesson or the next day's planning.

Asking every single child to tell you what they have understood or not understood at the end of the lesson takes a lot of time.

Use postcards for pupils to send you their responses – you could have a post box in the classroom.

- Provide a space for them to put their name on the front. On the back, divide the postcard into two parts.
- One half of the postcard is for the pupil to express how well they feel they learned. This could be in the form of a sentence, a green traffic light spot, a tick, or a thumbs-up.
- The other half is for the pupil to be honest about any parts that they found a challenge or that they would like more help with.
- This then enables the teacher to sort the exit cards quickly and group like for like, to be able to plan for those pupils who are struggling without having to mark every single book overnight.

Teaching tip

At first, pupils will want the teacher to think they have understood everything; they will need to be encouraged to share where they want more support, and this may take time.

Taking it further

Once the teacher has grouped the exit cards, they can scrutinise the books of those who have asked for more support.

Bonus idea ★

Provide each pupil with three coloured cards and paper clips matching the traffic light colours. They can paperclip the appropriate colour to the front of their book.

#exitassessment

Put a pin in it

'If you like it then you should have put a pin in it.'

Children pose questions either related to what they are learning, or simply because they are interesting.

This is similar to Idea 53: SODA with start-of-the-day activities, but is not necessarily teacher driven.

- Create a dedicated 'interesting questions' display in the classroom where pupils are able to write down their question on a piece of paper and pin it to the board.
- Whenever a pupil asks a question but there isn't time to answer it, or it would interrupt the flow too much if answered there and then, pin it to the board.
- Other pupils can have the opportunity to answer it during another session, and perhaps house points/prizes can be awarded for the best answers.
- Divide the board into sections, if appropriate, to show different types of questions, e.g. those that refer to the lesson; those that relate to another topic for the week; those that pupils have brought to school out of interest and curiosity.

Bus stop

'You wait for one bus and then three come along at once.'

Bus stop is a fun game to play and is fast paced, against the clock. It assesses general knowledge as well as speediness. The teacher can choose a letter of the alphabet when determining the focus of the game.

- Children have a mini dry wipe board and divide it into eight columns.
- They label the headings of the columns with, e.g. boy's name, girl's name, colour, food, drink, country, animal, city/town, etc.
- You pick a letter, and then it's all eyes down to find something for every heading beginning with that letter.
- Whoever finishes first and completes every heading shouts 'bus stop!', and everyone has to stop.
- They read out their answers and everyone agrees whether they are allowed.
- The winner chooses the next letter.

Teaching tip

Crowd source ideas for the headings before playing the game. It's a good one for checking the difference between a country and a city/town.

Taking it further

This can be used to assess a topic focus – for example, history. If you have been studying the Tudors, children can find a word to match each heading linked to the Tudors, rather than using a letter of the alphabet.

#busstop