

Short Group Activities

Science experiments and challenge activities can require waiting time for results to develop, reactions to occur, and for testing and scoring to be undertaken. To support participant engagement during short waiting periods that may arise during session delivery, a list of short group activities has been compiled. These can be used at any time – not just during periods with wait times! Group activities are an engaging way for students to get to know their peers, as well as build communication skills.

The activities listed below require no extra materials, and are considered low risk, however, coordinators should assess session locations for potential risks prior to hosting any activities, and carefully monitor the activities to ensure participants remain safe at all times.

Observation Activities

1. Sit down if...

All participants begin this game standing, if possible in a circle facing each other. To start the game, one person calls out “**sit down if...**” followed by a statement e.g. “you had toast for breakfast, you caught the bus to school, your family has a red car, your age is 10” etc.

Participants sit down if the statement is true about them. Students can take turns calling out the “**sit down if...**” statement.

The game can continue until all students are seated, and then switch to “stand up if...” rotating for as long as needed.

For older groups: Try to call out statements not immediately observable about the participants (such as the example statements noted above).

For younger groups: Start with statements that are observable, such as “you are wearing shoes with laces, you are wearing white socks etc”.

2. Spot the difference

Note: Ensure students who leave the room are within eyesight and ear shot of the coordinator.

One person leaves the room briefly, and changes one aspect of their appearance, without other group members observing the change. Upon returning, the group must guess what was changed. The correct guesser is the next person to leave the room and make a change, and so on.

3. Mannequins / statues

Note: Ensure students who leave the room are within eyesight and ear shot of the coordinator.

Choose 3 students to be mannequins, and 1 to 2 students to be investigators. The activity begins with all 3 “mannequins” striking a pose and freezing like statues. The “investigators” must observe and try to remember the poses, then leave the room. Once they have left the room, the remainder of the group helps change the mannequin’s poses. When the investigators are invited to return (approx. 30 seconds to a minute later), they must try and identify the changes that were made. Continue to choose different students to be mannequins and investigators, to extend the game.

4. Add to it

The group sits in a circle facing each other. A lead person starts the game by performing an action the other students can imitate, e.g. patting their head twice, clapping once, or blinking 3 times. The person immediately to the left of the lead person repeats the first action, and also adds one of their own. The next person to the left repeats the lead and second actions, and adds one of their own, and so on around the circle in the same direction. When someone forgets an action in the sequence, the game stops, and a new sequence begins from that position in the circle.

5. Guess the leader

Note: Ensure students who leave the room are within eyesight and ear shot of the coordinator.

One person is nominated as the “guesser”, and leaves the room. Whilst they is out of the room, a “leader” is nominated. When the guesser returns, the leader begins leading the group by starting an action which the group immediately imitate e.g. patting their head, tapping their nose. The group must copy any action the leader makes, the action can continue to change until the leader is identified. It is the guesser’s role to try and guess the leader. If the leader is unable to be spotted within 1, 2 minutes, invite the leader to stand up and identify themselves, then they become the guesser, and a new leader is nominated, and so on.

Measurement Activities

6. Walk the room (Variation 1 – time & distance)

Note: Ensure students will not run into obstacles during this activity.

Participants start at one end of the room, and attempt to walk to the other end in exactly 1 minute (no running). Students attempt to complete the walk without being able to see a clock. A coordinator announces a start time, and calls out stop at the end of 60 seconds. For younger children, the coordinator may call out 15 seconds, 30 seconds (half way), and 45 seconds as indicators. Or, students may be encouraged to time themselves using a room clock or their watch.

7. Walk the room (Variation 2 – space & distance)

Note: Ensure students will not run into obstacles during this activity.

Participants estimate how many heel-to-toe steps they will need to take to cross the room, then step across the room placing their feet together heel-to-toe, to see how close they are to their own estimates.

Arts Activities

8. Make them laugh

Split students into two teams. Both teams stand opposite each other, facing together in two lines. Team 1 first attempts to make team 2 laugh any way they like (within reason, facilitator must observe for anything unsafe) for 1 - 2 minutes, or until someone from team 2 laughs. Then the roles swap. The winning team is the team that made the other laugh in the shortest amount of time.

9. Nursery rhyme mime

Students form into three groups. Each group decides on a nursery rhyme to mime, and which members of their group will mime it out (1 to 3). Each group then takes it in turn to mimes their chosen nursery rhyme for the other groups, and the others try to guess which one it is.

10. Barnyard Symphony

Choose a conductor and ask students to stand in a line facing the conductor. Give students 3 – 6 different animals to “play”. Whenever the conductor points to a student, they must make the sound of their animal! The conductor can to point to different animals at the same time (two hands), and adjust the sound: move their palm up high to mean louder...move their palm down to mean softer etc.