



TEN ACTIVITY GAMES TO RAISE THE CONCENTRATION OF CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT

In the modern educational methodic there is no doubt in the efficiency and significance of activity games. They are the reliable means of education process.

The aim of the article is to introduce activity games to raise the concentration of children. There are described 10 activity games and the results of their influence on the developing of different aged children.

KEYWORDS

Introduction

The activity games are for both kindergarten children and secondary school children. It is advised to use them not only during rest-times, but also during the learning periods.

(a) *Who can guess faster?* (cf. www.gesund-macht-schule.de)

Aim of the game: Concentration, causal thinking and revision of mathematical skills, foreign language vocabulary and colors.

Number of children: 8-10

Age: 6-7

Place: yard

Tool: plastic stick or a toy

Method: All children are divided into two groups with one half of a puzzle or color cards. The teams stay facing each other at a distance of 6-8 meters. Each group member is given a certain number, five children from the first team and five children from the second team are each given five different numbers, so that two children of the opposite teams always hold the same number. At the centre, the teacher places a plastic stick or some smallish toy. The teacher calls out any of the five chosen numbers. From each team, the child holding the called out number runs to the center. Whoever reaches the stick first scores? The game continues in this manner until all numbers have been called out.

Alternative 1: It is possible to play this game with children of different ages. If the topic of the lesson is animals, it is possible to hand out pictures of animals instead of numbers. In this case the teacher calls out the name of an animal and the two children holding pictures of that animal run to retrieve the toy placed in the middle.

Alternative 2: In a group that is starting to learn a foreign language, this game can be used for revising language vocabulary. After teaching for instance domestic animals, numbers or colors, they are called out in a foreign language (English, German, Russian). The children are supposed to recognize the word and then run to the centre again.

(b) Defining the topic of the lesson (cf. Clancy 2006: 43)

Purpose of the game: broaden the spectrum of thinking, critical thinking.

Number of children: 10-12

Age: 6-7

Material: Objects of a topic to be introduced as well as other objects are mixed and placed onto a table (e.g. picture, leaflet, ball, small tree, teddy bear, book, bird, scissors, flower and others). All children circle around the table, accompanied by peaceful music for approximately 3 to 5 minutes, listening to the instructions of the teacher and performing physical movements. When the musical piece comes to an end, the teacher attracts the attention to the table by asking “Can you guess what the topic of today’s lesson might be?” Each child gives his/her guesses, for example “Will we play ball today?” or “Will we draw a picture?” One child might have several guesses. If possible the teacher should note each child’s guesses. At the end of the lesson, the teacher is supposed to compare the topic of the lesson with the guesses of the children and to officially announce who guessed correctly.

(c) The game mental agility

Aim of the game: thinking, concentration and acting on this basis

Number of children: 10-12

Age: 5-7

All children are sitting in a circle. The teacher explains the rules of the game: He/she will call out objects. If the object is an edible item, for example an “apple”, children are supposed to clap, if the word is associated with air or the sky (like “sun” or “airplane”), the children are to stand up and lift their hands and if it is a toy (for example “ball” or “doll”), they have to stand up and jump.

Alternative: The game is also good for words in foreign languages

(d) Pantomime expressing emotions (cf. Clancy 2006: 52)

Aim of the game: Creative thinking and role playing

Number of children: 10-12

Age: 5-7

All children are sitting in a circle. The teacher asks a question, for example: “If you are angry how will your face change?” The children then depict the appearance of a person who is angry. In keeping with their individual creative ability, children stand up and depict the “appearance” of the emotion. In the very beginning, the teacher should perform an emotion as an example.

Alternative: It is also possible to indulge children in acting out “verbs” in the form of pantomime as a group work project at beginner’s level of foreign language learning.

(e) Passing a ball (cf. Hielscher 2001: 22)

Aim of the game: Learning how to get acquainted, asking a question and answering by means of active exercise

Number of children: 8-10

Age: 3-7

Tool: a ball

All children are sitting in a circle with 20 centimeters distance between them. The instructor sits among them holding a ball with his/her legs saying “My name is Sabina, what is your name?” and passes the ball to the child sitting next to her. After catching the ball with his/her legs, the child answers the question, and in this manner again passes the ball to his/her peer with the same question. When everybody have introduced him or herself, the ball circles again – with another topic. For example,

“What is the shape of an apple?” or “How many days are there in a week?” The child first to answers the question correctly may ask a question him/herself. In order to increase attention and awareness, the children pass the ball to each other using their legs.

Alternative: It can be done in a foreign language.

(f) *Happy Cubes* (cf. Clancy 2006: 55)

Aim of the game: Linking visual ability with physical activities and broadening the spectrum of thinking

Number of children: 8-10

Age: 5-7

Tools: 2 dices with numbers on each side, 6 cards with numbers that have pictures stuck on the opposite side

The instructor splits the children into two groups, and each group is seated around their own table in a circle. The first group rolls the dice, looks at the number and then finds the picture associated with that particular number. If the picture “to jump” is taken up, the children act it out as a group. The instructor asks: “Who or what can jump?” After some thinking, the children answer and accurate answers are constantly recorded. Then the second group rolls the dice and acts out the activity which is depicted beneath the number shown on the dice. For example, if the action shows “to swim”, the instructor again asks this group: “Who or what can swim?” The second group also names the objects and species that can swim. In this manner the game continues turn by turn until the six numbers and respective depictions linked to them have all been acted out. At the end the group which has managed to give the most logical answers is the winner and they are rewarded.

Alternative: It can be done in a foreign language.

(g) *Colorful mental maps* (cf. Hielscher 2001: 18)

Aim of the game: Broadening the spectrum of thinking and enhancing observing ability

Age: 5-7

Number of children: 10-12

Children go for a nature walk lasting approximately 10 minutes; it can be a flower garden, an orchard, the yard of a kindergarten or a school. Prior to the trip, the instructor asks the children to pay attention to the objects which are shown during the walk. At the end of the trip, the instructor asks everybody one-by-one to tell the others what it was they saw and its color. The instructor takes notes of the responses and the one who can name the most objects and remembers the color most accurately is applauded or gets awarded.

Alternative: It can be done in a foreign language.

(h) *What do I have in my hand?* (cf. Hielscher 2001: 24)

Aim of the game: motivating broad thinking, developing speech

Number of children: 10-12

Age: 6-7

Tools: A box or a small sack or a case with small objects inside

Children are seated in a circle. The instructor places the box or sack filled with small objects in the middle of the room. First, he or she picks something from the box him/herself, hides it in his/her hand and asks the children: “I have forgotten the name of this round object which I am holding in my hand, will you help me to name it?” The children guess. If there is no correct answer amongst the suggestions, he/she again continues to describe the object “That object is very important, it can have

different colors”, children again make guesses, “especially in winter if we don’t have it, we are cold”, children continue to make the suggestions. “If it gets torn off, our mothers will sew it on for us”. As soon as the correct answer (button) is given, the child who gave the proper answer picks an object out of the box and continues like the teacher did.

Alternative: It can be done in a foreign language.

(i) *Thinking with the help of shapes* (cf. Wierz 2003: 54)

Aim of the game: Broadening the spectrum of thinking through drawing and acting

Age: 5-7

Tools: Each child is given a sheet of paper filled with dots and a pencil, a magnet and a board for drawing.

After children have been given information about shapes, they are handed a sheet filled with dots and a pencil and asked to “draw a shape by connecting the dots”. The aim is to try and join the dots drawing triangles, rectangles or other shapes until they can successfully join the dots. Then each child sticks the sheet on the board at random. After all children have stuck the pictures to the board, they show their pictures and explain what they have been drawing, what kind of an object it is and which further things might take on this form.

(j) *Skilful sewers* (cf. Mielenhausen 2007: 45)

Aim of the game: Enhancing creativity and broad thinking, counting exercise.

Age: 4-7

Tools: Scissors for each child to cut paper, glue, newspaper

Each child is handed a scissor and an old newspaper. The task is explained: “Who can cut more newspaper on one side without reaching the end?” The children cut the newspaper without reaching the end, whether even or straight. At the end, everyone counts the amount of pieces cut and they are asked “What can be made with these cut pieces using the glue?” Children think creatively and describe what can be made.

Alternative: It can be done in a foreign language.

In this article we have focused that activity games can positively trigger the learning process. Ten games were given as a recommendation. These games have been played with kindergarten and school children alike and have proven to be successful. It is well known that activity games help broaden a child’s thinking ability. Children are motivated and their concentration increases. We have used these games with a group of pre-school children aged 6-7 years, learning a foreign language. It has shown to be very productive. We vote for an implementation of such games into foreign language teaching on a regularly basis. They have a positive effect on the neuronal conditions of the brain, and help to connect further synapses. The input can be stored in the long term memory much more easily.

In addition, our small scale research conducted in the kindergarten supports these findings. School children who have started learning a foreign language with activity games showed noticeably better results in an interview with a psychologist than those children who neither participated in foreign language lessons nor played any activity games. Psychologists have convincingly shown that children’s ability to concentrate and think freely is much higher after activities.

Thus, we are convinced that an early start of playing such activity games, not only from the age of 6-7, but from earlier ages, has a positive influence on the development of thinking, analyzing, and learning and helps differentiate information. Especially at the time when attention to the learning of foreign languages from a young age is granted on state level in the education system of Uzbekistan,

learning a language using educational games, activity games like those illustrated above, role plays, speech games, memory games and other educational games is reflection of both, the demand of the times and the aim of learning.

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