



TEACHING IDEAS

GAMES TO PLAY WITH

VERY YOUNG LEARNERS

Mirror! If you have a large mirror on one of the classroom walls, sit the children on the floor facing the mirror. Sit at the back of the group with one or two flashcards or puppets. Make the flashcards or puppets appear in different places in the mirror in turn. Children call out *Hello ...!* as soon as they see each flashcard and *Bye-bye ...!* when it disappears. If you don't have a mirror, follow the same procedure, making the flashcards appear from behind your back or under the teacher's table.

Happy! Say *I'm happy* and give a big smile. Then say *Now look* and pretend to wipe your smile off your face with your hand and throw it to the children. Demonstrate that the children should pretend to 'catch' the smile and put it on their faces. Say *Now you're ...* and get the children to call out *happy!* Repeat the procedure several times.

Follow the leader Get the children to stand in a line behind you. Say e.g. *Walk ... now jump!* Move round the classroom and the children follow imitating everything you do.

Hopskotch: Play a simple version of this traditional children's game. Use chalk or tape to make three squares (approximately half a metre square each) in a row on the floor. Children take turns to throw an object onto one of the squares. They then jump once up and down the row of squares. On the way back they pick up the object they have thrown before jumping out. Other children watch and chant *Jump, jump, jump* or *One, two, three* as their friends play.

Maracas Say *We're ...*, name an animal and clap your hands or shake a maracas. Children pretend to be the animal you name and move around the classroom. As soon as you stop clapping or shaking the maracas, children stop and freeze.

Colour dice Make two large dice by covering two boxes with paper and colouring a circle of red, yellow or blue on each side. Children take turns to throw the dice and call out the colour. When the colours on both dice are the same, everyone claps.

Switch! Say e.g. *Rabbit!* and demonstrate that the children should make rabbit ears with their hands. Then say *Butterfly!* and demonstrate that the

children should make flying movements with their arms. Alternate the instructions and children respond by doing the actions.

Changing places Children sit in a circle. Go round the circle and give each child a name e.g. *apple, banana, biscuit, sandwich* etc.. Say one of the names. Children with that name respond by exchanging places with another child in the circle with the same name.

Card game Give the children instructions using cut-out cards e.g. *Show me the mouse! Show me the clock! / Put the mouse here! (holding the sticker card on your head) / Put the clock here! (holding the sticker card under the table)*. Children listen and follow your instructions. Whenever you say *Stop!* they fold their arms.

Read my lips! Move your lips or whisper familiar words or phrases. Children concentrate on your mouth movements and repeat what you say.

Pass the secret! Children sit in a circle. Whisper a word to one child e.g. *Mouse!* That child whispers the word to the child next to them and so on round the group. The last child says the word that they have heard.

Feely bag Put cardboard silhouettes, toys or real objects in a bag. Children take turns to put their hand in the bag, feel one of the objects and guess what it is e.g. *Banana!* before taking it out to check.

Close your eyes! Stick three or four flashcards of familiar items on the board. Say *Close your eyes!* and demonstrate this. Remove one of the flashcards. Then say *Look!* and children call out the name of the flashcard which is missing.

Listen and count! Clap, nod, or stamp your feet one, two or three times. Children repeat the action and call out the number.

Playground game: *Hello clock!* Choose one child to be the clock and to stand facing the wall. The rest of the children stand at the other end of the playground or gym. The children call out *Hello clock!*. The clock responds first by saying *Dong!* once (and the children take one step forward), then by saying *Dong!* twice (and the children take two steps forward) and then by saying *Dong!* three times (and the children take three steps forward). The fourth time the children say *Hello clock!*, the clock turns round, says *Hello!* and chases them. The child who is caught has the next turn.

Hurry! Sit the children in a circle making sure there is room to walk round behind them. Walk round the circle with a sock. Put the sock behind one child. Get that child to stand up, pick up the sock and walk after you round the circle until you get back to their place and sit down. As you walk round the circle, say rhythmically e.g. *Hurry, Jenny, Hurry, Jenny* etc. and get the children to join in. The child with the sock then has the next turn walking round the circle.

Circles in the air Move your index finger in large circles in the air and get the children to do the same. Say e.g. *Touch yournose!* and move your finger to touch your nose. Repeat the procedure several times alternating instructions for children to touch different parts of their body and to repeat the word each time.

Louder and softer Children say a rhyme or sing a song they know in a whisper. Raise your hands to indicate they should say/sing it loudly; lower your hands to indicate that they should say/sing it softly. Use your hands to vary the volume with increasing frequency as the children become familiar with the game.

Playground game Draw a big picture on the ground with chalk e.g. a house, with a tree and a flower. Give groups of children instructions in turn e.g. *Look! Birds on the ... house.* Children respond by pretending to be birds and flying to the part of the picture you say.

Bees and flowers Divide the class into two groups: bees and flowers. Get the bees to go *Buzz, buzz, buzz.* When you say *Fly, little bees!* they run and try and catch the flowers. Repeat several times and then change roles.

Musical bumps Play any music and children dance. Every so often pause the music and say a colour e.g. *Red!* Children with red on their clothes sit on the floor. Repeat the procedure several times naming different colours the children know.

Musical statues Play any music and children dance. Every so often pause the music and say an animal e.g. *Lion!* Children pretend to be lions and freeze. Repeat the procedure several times naming different animals.

Hoops Put several different coloured hoops e.g. red, yellow, blue on the floor. Children walk round the hoops. Every so often clap your hands and say a colour e.g. *Blue!* Children stand inside the nearest hoop of the colour you call.

Smiley or sad Put a picture of a smiley face on one side of the classroom and a sad face on the other. Say e.g. *I like bananas!* Children repeat the sentence and go to the smiley face if they like bananas. They say nothing and go to the sad face side if they don't like bananas. Repeat the procedure naming different foods or other familiar vocabulary.

Circle guessing game Children sit in a circle. One child sits in the middle holding a flashcard or vocabulary card so the others can't see. Children take turns to guess what the child has. The child who guesses correctly has the next turn.

Playground game: Divide the children into four groups and get them to stand in different corners of the playground or gym. Choose one child to be e.g. the gorilla. Get the gorilla to say *I'm hungry. One...two...three!* As soon as the gorilla says *three!* the children run and change corners and the gorilla tries to

catch them. Repeat the procedure choosing a different child to be the gorilla each time.

Blindfold Game Blindfold the children in turn. Give them a piece of food to eat (check for any allergies first) or an object to feel. Children identify the food or object and say the name.

Mime game Mime eating food e.g. a banana or doing an action e.g. dance. Children guess what you're eating or doing and call out the name. Repeat the procedure and, if appropriate, invite individual children to take turns to come and stand by you and do a mime to the rest of the class.

Stop! Say e.g. *You're little frogs! Jump!* and demonstrate that the children should pretend to be little frogs and jump. Then say *Little frogs, stop!* and demonstrate that they should freeze in position. Alternate the instructions several times.

Now! Children stand in a circle. Give instructions e.g. *Fly... now!* / *Swim ... now!* Children listen to your instructions but only respond with the actions when you say 'now'.

Big or little Say the names and do actions to imitate animals children know e.g. gorilla, mouse, elephant, bee. Children look and call out *Big!* or *Little!* in response. Alternatively, point to things in the classroom e.g. the door, a pencil sharpener, the board, a rubber etc.. Children look and call out *Big!* or *Little!* in the same way.

Follow the rhythm! Play a drum or tap on the table with your hand and children listen: *TAP... TAP... TAP... It's an elephant!* / *Tap, tap... tap, tap... tap, tap... it's a frog!* Repeat and children call out the names of the animals. They then move around the classroom following the rhythm and pretending to be either an elephant or a frog.

Jump to the flashcards! Stick flashcards on different walls in the classroom. Use action words the children know e.g. dance, run, swim, fly to give instructions to different groups in turn e.g. *Jump to the teddy!* / *Fly to the train!* / *Dance to the cat!* etc..

Do this! Divide the children into groups e.g. teddy bears, cats etc. Give instructions e.g. *Teddy bears, do this!* and demonstrate the actions or, if you want to make the game more challenging, say e.g. *Teddy bears, touch your nose!* / *Cats, stand up!* etc..

Sets Prepare a set of items which are the same e.g. teddy bears on different coloured paper (red, yellow, green, blue, brown) for each child. Children listen to your instructions e.g. *Blue teddy bear, red teddy bear* etc. and hold them up or arrange them in order on their tables.

Note: The above games and activities are compiled and adapted from Read C. & Soberón A. *Hello Robby Rabbit 1 & 2* Teachers' Books, Macmillan Education.