



# 6 WAYS to make active learning work in your class

Bringing activity, teamwork and fun into everyday lessons will encourage children to recover lost skills and develop new ones, says **Jon Smedley**...

## 1 | ACTIVE STARTERS FOR LASER FOCUS

Active learning can get your lesson off to a flying start. Let's take a lesson on addition. You can do this with students sitting down and working through the sums. Or you can give each child a number card, put some music on and get them dancing around the room. Once the music stops, they have to join up with the student closest to them and add their two cards together. Take examples from around the room and write the sums on the whiteboard. The game continues so pupils have a chance to pair up with another person and complete a different sum.

## 2 | OUTDOOR LEARNING

With 'exploring the world around us' in the primary curriculum, why not take Reception children on a walk through the local area or around the playing field and when they come back to the classroom, they can draw what they have seen, whether that's buildings, nature or people. When working on sound and letter recognition, pupils can go on a lost letter hunt, searching high and low for lower case and capital letters hidden around the playground.

## 3 | RAINY DAY ACTIVITIES

Sometimes the UK weather can get the best of our outdoor learning intentions. In torrential rain and gale force winds, students can still move their bodies, get their hearts beating and endorphins flowing. In the classroom, kids can become meaning detectives and hunt around the room for synonyms that match the word on their sheet. Or you can give pupils word cards, and ask them to hop or skip around the hall to find a partner to form a compound word with.



Jon Smedley is a former primary teacher and sports co-ordinator, and founder of Teach Active. Find 50 free active lesson plans at [teachactive.org](http://teachactive.org)

## 4 | BETTER CONCENTRATION AND MEMORY RETENTION

A recent study found that regular physical activity has a positive effect on children's developing brains. So, when you are working on something in class that requires memory retention, such as learning and revising the times tables, it's good to get pupils moving too. They can jump over a small bean bag each time they say a number as they work their way through the times table. This type of activity helps students to remember better.

## 5 | SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Active learning can be a useful tool when used with small groups of children who need extra support. One of the schools we work with decided to focus on active lessons with a group of pupils who were underachieving. Eight Y5 boys who were classed as vulnerable were put into a group and the teachers focused on active learning lessons with them. It worked so well for them that they not only met expected standards at the end of Y5 but stayed on track throughout Y6.

## 6 | RECOVERING CONFIDENCE

It may look as though students back at school don't have a care in the world, but even the youngest children will have sensed some of the turbulence caused by the pandemic. Help pupils to recover their confidence and make up lost learning through team games, with the emphasis on fun. An English lesson where children work in groups by playing charades to act out the meanings of new words is a great way to boost communication in an enjoyable way.