

Five creative ways to... prepare the class to focus

1. Deep listening

Ask all the children to close their eyes and still their bodies. They can be lying on the floor or sat in their chairs. Ask them to pay attention to their breathing, slow breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth. Ask them to listen to all the sounds in the room. Then to stretch their listening to all the sounds outside of the room in rest of the school. Then all the sounds outside of the school. Bring their listening back through these steps until they are focusing on the classroom sounds once again.

2. Senses and sounds

Using either sounds or scents, invite the children to focus on that stimulus and let their imagination and thoughts flow. You can put a few drops of essential oil on a tissue for each child to smell or play a music track to listen to. Get them settled with some paper and a pen and let them mark-make, scribble, draw or write anything that comes to mind.

3. Automatic writing

Every child writes for three minutes without stopping. You are going to write, but until you start you will have no idea what is going to come out. Start with the words 'I am writing...' and do not stop until the timer goes off. If anyone's mind goes blank, just write 'I am writing, I am writing, I am writing...' until something else appears. Don't plan, just write. When they have finished asked them to underline any words, phrases, sentences they particularly liked.

4. Riddle me this

Give the class a riddle. Explain that they are all working as a team against you. If one of them guesses correctly they win one point for the whole class. If they can't guess you win one point. They have a limited number of guesses (five for example). Hold up your fingers to show them how many guesses they have left. They must put their hand up to guess and if someone calls out the whole

class will lose a guess. This will encourage them to work as a team to beat you.

5. Visualisation

When the children have their eyes closed and are settled comfortably, you can narrate a scene for a few minutes for them to visualise. Ask them to let the images flow into their mind and then at the end, they can write, draw or share what they saw. The scene you describe can be a location from a topic or story you are working on with them or can be something generic like a hot sunny beach.