

Teaching Tips

Kinesthetic activities for active learners

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Students come in all sizes and shapes and with different interests and personalities. They also differ in their learning styles. What is learning style? "The term learning style is used to encompass four aspects of the person: cognitive style, i.e., preferred or habitual patterns of mental functioning; patterns of attitudes and interests that affect what an individual will pay most attention to in a learning situation; a tendency to seek situations compatible with one's situation; a tendency to seek situations compatible with one's own learning patterns; and a tendency to use certain learning strategies and avoid others" (G. Lawrence, 1984. Cited in R. Oxford, 1989).

One interpretation of learning styles divides learners into four different types: the *visual* learner, the *tactile* learner, the *auditory* learner and the *kinesthetic* learner. These types relate to the student's modes of perception:

(a) *Visual* learners see images in their minds. They enjoy looking at books, poster, pictures and displays. They understand better if a concept is given visually: written on the board or in the book. They prefer reading to listening activities. They tend to watch the teacher's face intently, almost reading lips. They rarely speak or participate orally.

(b) *Tactile* learners use concrete objects as learning and memory aids. They need to hear and physically carry out a set on instructions. They like to touch and manipulate their environment. They need physical activity as a release of tension.

(c) *Auditory* learners prefer to hear new information, not read it. They often do not do very well on written tests or reading assignments. They use rhythm and sound as learning aids. They do well on oral tasks and can memorize easily. They like acting out examples and can easily retell something they have heard. They often seem brighter than they are.

(d) *Kinesthetic* learners must move; they cannot sit still. They touch, fiddle, fidget and twitch, doodle, fold papers, write words over and over. They like to do things with their hands and are good at taking things apart and putting them together again. They

are good at physical tasks and sports. They use movement, rhythmic routines as learning and memory aids. They learn best with quiet periods followed by active periods. They often seem disruptive in class and can even unexpectedly stand up and walk across the classroom to talk to another student, sharpen a pencil or even ask the teacher a question.

This column will concentrate on the kinesthetic learner. In *secundaria* and *prepa* classes these are often the most obvious group: they disrupt class constantly and, as teachers, we have to channel this nervous energy before it becomes contagious and all the students are wandering around and they become impossible to control.

Since kinesthetic learners need to move around, it is impossible for them to sit still for an hour (or two hour) class. As a teacher we have to give them accepted outlets for their uncontrollable energy. What can we do? Send them to the board. Find physical or circulation tasks for them: Races, *Simon Says* and the manipulation of flash cards can be useful. Let them physically manipulate sentence structures. Give them opportunities to move around the room and visit other students. Keep them busy.

Instead of having students do written exercises at their desks and then correcting them orally, write them on the board and have the most kinesthetic learners come to the board. You can even have a contest, dividing the class into teams and having the teams race to the board and those that write the answers the fastest win.

You can also enlarge Xerox copies of exercises from your textbook or from a different book and put up three or four on different walls of the room. Students have to stand up and go to the exercises to copy them and answer them in their notebooks. Once they have the answers, correct them as a group or have volunteers write the answers on the exercises themselves.

Use a lot of tasks that get the students moving. Communicative information gap activities are often very active. Here is a task you can use with your beginning students to practice the alphabet.

FIND YOUR CONTACT

Structure/Vocabulary: Spelling, "How do you spell your last name?"

Functions: Asking for and giving information.

Materials: Listening comprehension (Teacher's copy), cards.

Pre-Activity

Skills: Listening and writing.

Organization: Individual, whole group.,

Procedure: (1) Explain that students are spies and they have to find out the names of their contacts over the phone. (2) Spell out the names twice and students write them. (3) Correct. Read each name twice. If students have trouble, repeat again. You can have students write the correct answers on the board or you can write them as the students dictate them back to you. Don't worry about pronouncing them correctly. (Note: These are real last names.)

1. Wallechinsky 2. Kempthorne 3. Svitil 4. Bierderman 5. Billmyre,

Activity

Skills: Listening, speaking, writing.

Organization: Mixer

Situation: *Part One:* Students are spies and are going to call their local contacts in order to find out the names of their contacts for their next job. *Part Two:* Students are on the job and must find their contacts.

Procedure: *Part One:* (1) Give students a card with a name. (2) In a mixer, students find a partner and stand back to back. (Since they are talking on the phone, they can't see each other.) (3) Students ask "Who's my contact." and partner answers. Spy asks how to spell the name and writes it down. (4) Repeat until each student has the name of his contact. (5) Collect cards. *Part Two:* (1) Hand out cards again, giving students a new identity. (2) Spies have to find the contact that was given to them in Part One. ("Excuse me. What's your name?... How do you spell it?") Students cannot show their cards. Tell students they can pronounce the name any way they want. The pronunciation isn't important; the spelling is.

Names that can be used:

Mr. Fishbein	Mr. Fishbain	Mr. Dishbein	Mrs. Schamberger
Mrs. Schamberger	Mrs. Schemberger	Mr. Cussen	Mr. Cosson
Mr. Cossen	Miss Horowitz	Miss Kuropatkin	Ms. Guenther
Mr. Schlossman	Mr. Schlossmen	Ms. Furneaux	Ms. Furno
Mr. Rasmussen	Mr. Rasmissen	Mrs. Smithe	Mrs. Smythe
Mr. Raichen	Mr. Rauchen	Miss Kupferberg	Miss Kupferburg
Mr. Lammerhirt	Mr. Lammershirt	Ms. Dollfuss	Ms. Dollfoss
Mr. Pfeiffer	Mr. Pfeiffen	Mrs. Karlowitz	Mrs. Karlowicz
Mr. Kutzwara	Mr. Kotzwara	Miss Reigger	Miss Riegger
Mr. Harsholt	Mr. Hersholt	Ms. Willer	Ms. Wyler
	Mr. Lionsky	Mrs. Leonski	

Post Activity

Skills: Writing, speaking, listening.

Organization: Individual, mixer.

Procedure: (1) For homework: Ask students to find unusual names. (2) As a warm up, have students assume their unusual name as an identity and introduce themselves to others. They have to be able to spell their names since the others will ask how to spell it.

REFERENCE

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