



art games

Play and games assist children's cognitive development, encourage the development of thinking skills and divergent thinking, promote social development and consolidate social and language development.

In terms of art-based learning, Art Games are a very successful strategy for engaging students with artworks and ideas associated with art making. Their particular value is in 'opening up' or 'unpacking' the experience of looking at and engaging with a wide variety of artworks. Art Games also encourage good routines of sharing and debating personal responses.

Art Games are based on a constructivist learning approach which actively uses individual knowledge and imagination to construct possible meanings and to explore ideas. They are fun to play, but, to maximise learning outcomes, teachers will need to use the learning experiences in Art Games as opportunities to extend knowledge, language, imagination and social skills. Scribbling, individual and group work, listening, brainstorming, designing, reporting, debriefing and evaluating should be built into the Art Games routines.

Art Games can be played in a school or art gallery setting.

Learning level:

Art games can be played from early years of schooling to secondary.

Take Ten and **Card Connections** provide the resources and routines on which many other games-based learning activities can be based. Many teachers have found these to be engaging and successful strategies for preparing students undertake a wide variety of looking and research tasks within an exhibition.

Take Ten

Resources: A 'gallery space' somewhere in a classroom or art room. Extra lighting (such as a reading lamp or spotlight) for dramatic effect is optional. Some painted cardboard boxes or blocks of wood to act as display units. Objects (art/non art) as selected.

Group size: Class

Learning level: Mid primary–junior secondary

Take Ten is a classroom-based activity which builds familiarity with the routines of looking at groups of objects. The Take Ten principle is that this activity can take place for ten minutes, once a week. It might also involve ten objects.

Set aside a corner of the classroom. This is now a 'gallery'. Students can decide how it is to be set up to look like a display space. Into this space is placed, week about, a number of objects. An easy rule is to use 5–10 items. This number (approximately) will allow for a variety in selection but not put pressure on individual students to collect a lot of things. It also keeps the focus tight, which is part of the strategy.

Take ten minutes out of the classroom routines to spend time looking at, and discussing, this selection. The teacher will usually set the parameters by running a 'pilot program' which is designed to introduce the language and processes of interpretation and debate.

Card Connections**Resources:**

Postcards or laminated card-sized images.

Group size: Class

Learning level: Middle primary–junior secondary

A random selection of cards is laid out on a table. Individual students or small groups (of about 3 students) take turns to make groupings based on similarities and differences between the images. The time allowed for each group is short. At the end of this time the group reports, giving reasons for their decisions. Someone scribes, noting the reasons for the selection. At the completion of the session, the teacher or some students summarise and draw conclusions about the classification of images and the kinds of classification words used.

This activity can be extended by investigating, (through looking at books and web sites), how the 'art world', or galleries in particular, classify and identify groups of artwork.



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Card Connection Plus

The following activities build on the initial matching 'rules'. Once a match-up has been made each student must decide on five words which describe something in or about the artwork displayed. Each word has to begin with the first letter of the student's first name.

So Sarah will look for 's' words and may decide on sky, shining, sleeve, silver and secret.

Sarah's task now is to go into an adjoining gallery and look for one artwork which matches or links in some way with the last word from her five word selection.

Sarah is looking for a work that can be associated in some way with the word or idea of 'secret'.

In the group debrief the focus should be on not just the words but also the aspects or points of contact within the artworks selected. Scribing will provide a checklist which can be referred to later back at school. This can be used in designing lead questions for interrogating artworks.

Card Connections can become a series of problem-solving games 'rolling' from one gallery space to another with the selection/match-up criteria changing along the way. If, for example, Sarah was exploring aspects of the word 'secret' in one area, the challenge could change to making a match up based on the opposite to 'secret' which might be 'revealing' or well-known'.

The word might be varied as individual students move from room to room. So 'secret' might become 'secretive' or 'secret place'.

Word Wars

This is an excellent way to generate a lot of words which can be associated with one selected work. It's effectively a brainstorming strategy. It involves 'close focus' looking, listening and lateral thinking. Its primary outcome is to set up a sequence of explorations based on the words generated during the game. This is an excellent 'warm up' activity for students within an exhibition. It sharpens observation skills and generates language and terminology that resources follow-up learning activities back in the class room or art room.

Resources:

An artwork (or reproduction). Cards and markers for scribing words.

Group size:

Class or smaller (for example, partners)

Two teams (one way would be to divide the class) look at the same artwork. Choose an artwork which is visually complex. One student from each team gets to call out a word which can be associated with the work. A time limit (10 seconds or forfeit a turn) will keep things moving. If the words are written onto cards, these can be looked at again at the end of the game and assembled into groupings (such as colour words, natural objects, action words). These same words can be taken back to school and used to resource a creative writing project. Or each student can take one word card and make his or her connection with artworks on display. A group debrief will allow all students to share in the thinking processes.

Word Wars Plus

The following Art Games are based on Word Wars.

The first two (I can see and Remember) work well with younger students.

I Can See

In this picture I can see... Each student in a group gets a chance to say something, which he/she has 'found'. To add complexity each student could be asked to also mention things found previously (for example, 'In this picture we / I can see: a cat, a tree, a cloud, some water and a gate').

Remember

A group of students sits in front of a work. The group has two minutes to look hard; trying to see everything there is to see. Then the group faces away and different students take turns to say what they can remember seeing. Repeat one more time to extend the number of items observed and remembered. The students cannot repeat items already 'called' - so they all need to listen to each other.

Perfect Match

The word/cards produced during a Word Wars game are redistributed to the group. Each student has a card. Within a gallery area each student tries to match the word with a work in the area.



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Looking with style

The following art games are designed to help students become aware of some of the formal qualities which help to give art works their visual identity. They can be used to introduce the idea of art and artists having particular styles of expression or communication.

Colour Cues

There are a number of colour-based identifying and choosing activities which can be carried out in most gallery areas. Here are some:

- Favourite colours
- Hot and cold colours
- The brightest or darkest colours
- Paintings which use lots of different colours
- Paintings which use only a few colours
- The 'right' colours – that is, has the artist been clever enough to make the colours look like the real thing (for example, skin colour or cloud colour).

Rough and Smooth

Some artists like to make the skin (or surface of the painting) smooth, patterned or bumpy. Find some different examples (or find the smoothest or roughest).

Shades and Shadows

The teacher demonstrates to a group of students what shading (tone) looks like in a painting. Sometimes it might be shading within a shape. Sometimes it might be shadows made by objects. Students (within a prescribed area) then find their own examples and to show them to a partner.

Shapes

Ask the students to go on a shape hunt within one gallery area. The task could be as simple as:

In this room there are some circles, squares, triangles, sharp shapes, wobbly shapes, squashed shapes and curvy shapes. Many of them are hiding. Can you find them all?

Perhaps different groups could be different shapes (for example, a circle group) rather than asking all students to look for a variety of shapes. This could work in a partner or small group format. Laminated badges (each with a particular kind of shape) make good clue tools which allow students to operate in independent groups.

Line-up

How many different lines can you find?

Look for: straight lines (such as trees), crooked lines (such as the edge of a road), and wavy / curvy lines (such as the edge of a tree).

Look also for lines standing up, leaning or lying down, outlines, lines criss-crossing each other, dotted lines, thick lines, skinny lines, fuzzy, dark, light, the longest, the shortest, the tiniest ...

Position, Position

Where's the best place to stand when looking at a work of art? Notice how when you get up very close things look fuzzy or rough and when you stand back they all look very clear. Why doesn't the Art Gallery put marks on the floor to tell people the best place to stand?

Picture Puzzles

The following activities actively involve Primary – Middle Years students in undertaking mind-games which are useful in 'kick starting' ideas linked to creative writing or simply encouraging students to see looking at art as an active, fun process. These activities should be selected and adapted by the teacher according to students' levels of interest and abilities.

Before undertaking individual / small group work it is suggested that the group undertake one activity together (using a larger work) to get a clear understanding of the task.

Far Horizons

None of these artists seem to be able to agree on where the horizon line should go. You'd think there would be a rule which said, 'This is the best position'. Find and compare two works in which the horizon is placed at different heights, then discuss with someone else any reasons the artists may have had for placing their horizons in a particular position.

Oops!

The artist forgot to put in the sky. Can you find all these paintings? Do you think the artist just forgot – or could there be some reasons why the sky has been left out?

Bird and worm's eye

Find some works which show a contrast in viewpoints from bird's eye to a worm's eye view. Ask the students to consider and discuss the advantages of different kinds of viewpoints.



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Ants

Students develop a story which involves being reduced to the size of an ant and setting out on a journey of investigation within the picture. What would be the best picture or sculpture in which to have an ant-sized adventure?

Hiding

Find a picture which has some good hiding places.

In You Go

If you could step through the frame and visit one of the places illustrated in these paintings which place would you choose to visit?

Remember

There may be a scene or image in this exhibition which reminds you of something you did or a place you have been to. Try to find one which reminds you of these things.

What is it about this artwork which plays on your memory?

Dream On

Perhaps there's a work in this exhibition which reminds you of a dream (or is dream-like) in some way?

Sounds OK

If you could 'turn up the volume' on any of these images what kind of sounds might you hear? Which 'thing' would produce the loudest / quietest sounds or noises? Which artwork (or thing within it) could produce the widest variety of sounds?

Calendar

Choose a selection of works to be used as illustrations for a calendar or a computer screen saver. The theme is 'The Seasons'. Which ones would you choose?

Dawn to dusk

Different artists have been attracted to places at different times of the day. Can you find some pictures which take viewers from night to dawn then noon to dusk?

Just excitable

Nature has many moods. Here are some examples:

a windy day, a cold day, a hot day, a warm day, a stormy day, a rough sea, a calm sea, a peaceful scene, a frosty scene.

Can you find any artworks to match these moods?

Weather Forecast

Imagine that you are doing a weather forecast using the frame of a landscape painting as a 'window' on a real day outside. What would your weather report read as?

In the Mood

Here are some feeling or mood words: happy, lonely, sad, cold, very cold, hot, very hot, anxious, worried, funny, boring, interesting. Find one or more paintings (or sculptures) which match or appear to connect with any of these words.

Hypotheticals

Hypotheticals based on imaginative scenarios are an excellent way to free up thinking about what an artwork might be about or the secrets it holds. The following activities can be easily conducted in a gallery setting. The game can function in a classroom setting provided there are a number of images (such as art cards) to hand. There are many variations on an imagination theme. Here is a selection.

What if...?

You find yourself inside this painting. What happens next?

Everything inside this painting begins to move. What happens next?

A person in an artwork suddenly says something to you. What do they say?

Artist Interview

You are the artist and someone is going to interview you about this work. There are some prepared questions. What are your answers?

Living It

You become someone in a work of art – and the work 'comes to life'. What happens next?

Secrets

Someone in a picture or sculpture in this room has a secret. Who is it and what does this person know?

Chat Space

You can overhear a conversation taking part between two or more people in a work of art. What kinds of things are being said?