

Five Minute Fillers

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Introduction

Work is complete, books are put away and with just five minutes left until the bell goes there isn't time to begin anything to new. How can this time be filled productively?

You suddenly find yourself with a class because the teacher has been called away. What activities will keep the students occupied until the regular teacher returns?

You are a substitute teacher in a strange classroom and have finished the assigned work with some time left over. What can you do now?

These situations are frequently faced by teachers and although you probably have ideas of your own, this book may provide some interesting and innovative additions to your repertoire.

Five Minute Fillers contains ideas for all subject areas: language arts, math, social studies, history, geography, science, art, music, and drama. Some activities can be used to fill more than the five minutes of the title, others are easily adaptable for a shorter length of time.

There are activities for the whole class, group work, and partner and independent activities. Some require previous preparation, others need a board or chart paper, and some require no material at all.

Some activities reinforce topics and concepts previously taught, some will encourage students to voice and justify opinions, others will promote creativity. Activities are grouped under subject headings, but no age or grade level has been allocated to any of them. This is because most activities can be modified to suit different age levels.

Using the Activities

Organization

To make the best use of these activities some organization can be done earlier.

The Name Box

Give each student a number. I used the number from the class register.

Write the numbers on squares of card and place in a box.

When a student is needed for an activity draw a number and identify the student.

Students are selected at random.

Keep the number out of the box until all the numbers are drawn

(This works well for selecting students for classroom chores, as well!)

Group Organization

Group activities can be started quickly if the groups are organized beforehand.

I usually preferred groups with mixed ability for activities such as those given here.

Each group should include students of varying academic ability, a good reader and a mix of outgoing and shy students.

2. Wordo

Make copies of the WORDO sheet on page 27.

This is a bingo game for spelling or vocabulary words.

- a) Write the words to be used on the board or chart paper. If spelling books are available the student can select words from the current list.
- b) There are twenty spaces on the cards.
You can designate some spaces free, or students may use a word more than once if you are using less than twenty words.
This works well with younger or less able students.
- c) Students choose words and write them randomly on their cards.
- d) Students cross off the words as they are called.
- e) When you call the words, be specific about where the word should be.

Example: Under the W - friend.

This means that a word can be called more than once if it is given a different location.

Example: Under the O - friend.

- f) Mark the words on the check sheet on page 28.
- g) The game continues until a student has filled in their card, when they should call out WORDO.
- h) You may have more than one winner for each game.
The game is not over until the WORDO sheet has been checked.

These games can be varied by playing until just the four corners or one horizontal line or one vertical line are filled

3. Synonym WORDO

Use the WORDO cards for this activity.

- a) Write a list of words on the board.
You will need more words than squares on the card.
- b) Students put some of the words in the squares on their card.
- c) Call out a *synonym* for one of the words on the list.
Students have to identify the word from its synonym.
Words can be used more than once if a different synonym is called out.

MATH ACTIVITIES

A. Quick Activities

1. Sequence Counting

This may be done as a whole class or group activity.

- a) To begin the first person thinks of a sequence of numbers and gives the first three or four.
- b) Proceeding round the group or class each student in turn has to say the next number in sequence.
- c) The activity continues until a student makes an error.

Sequences can be forward, backward, by ones, twos, threes, fives, tens, etc.

For older and more able students the activity can use fractions, decimals, money or units of measurement.

2. Think of a Number

Students can do this activity mentally, using pencil and paper or it can be used as a drill in the use of calculators.

- a) Students are given an equation to begin with.
 $25 + 6$
- b) The teacher continues to call out numbers and operations.
Example: plus 4 minus 3 plus 2
- c) This continues, and finally the teacher asks for the answer.
- d) The operations can be more or less complicated according to the ability of the students.
Example: 3 times 2 . . . plus 6 . . . divided by 3
*** Note - these will not necessarily follow the orders of operations rule.*
- e) Students can create their own sequences and then share these with a group or partner.

- g) Give one point for a correct answer and two points if a student or group has a correct answer that no other group or student has.

3. **What Am I?**

This teaches the students to listen carefully, compile information and think logically.

- a) The teacher thinks of a mammal, a bird or a fish, a city or a country.
- b) Depending on the age and ability of the students, give them a clue about the object.

Examples: I am thinking of an animal.

Students will have to work out the type (bird, mammal) before working out the exact object you have selected.

I am thinking of a way of travelling.

Students must find out the method of transportation.

- c) You can limit the number of questions or give a time limit for the students to get the right answer.

Students, particularly young ones, will guess wildly at first but gradually will work out questions that enable them to narrow the possibilities.

Point out good questions that help to compile information.

Old Favourites

1. **I Spy**

Students take turns to be the leader and do the “spying.”

It can also be played using words in another language.

2 **I Went to the Store and Bought**

- a) First person says: *I went to the store and bought a blue pen.*
- b) Second person: *I went to the store and bought a notebook and a blue pen.*
- c) Third person: *I went to the store and bought a chocolate bar, a notebook and a blue pen.*
- d) Continue in this way, adding items until someone makes an error.

Variations: On My Vacation I Saw We Went on a Picnic and Ate . . .
I Went to the Zoo and Saw . . .

3. **Five Minute Portraits**

- a) Students work in pairs and draw a quick facial portrait of their partner.
- b) This can be done using pencil or charcoal.
Use coloured pencil, paste or paint if more time is going to be given to the activity.
- c) Stress that careful observation is necessary and attention to details such as hair style, shape of eyebrows, and mouth.
- d) Completed portraits can be displayed and identified.

4. **Write the Lyrics**

This activity can be done as a class, group or partner work.

- a) Select a topic for the “song” the students are to write.
Examples: a school event, such as Sports Day, a current event or public holiday.
- b) Students use the melody of a song that is well known to them and write their own lyrics to fit the melody.
You may need to point out that a simple melody, such as a folk song works best.
- c) When the lyrics are finished, the students should practice singing the song.
Movement and actions may be added.
- d) Completed songs can be presented to the class.

- Variations:**
- a) Create songs about topics being studied: a novel, geography or science topics.
This can help students to remember facts about topics.
 - b) Create a rap on a given topic.

Point out that the words may not be offensive.

5. **Make a Memory Song**

This can be done as a whole class activity.

- a) Select a topic where important facts have to be remembered: order of operations in math, order of operations in doing experiments in science, colours of the rainbow, rules for grammar, names of continents, etc.
- b) Choose a melody to be used. Remember, simple is best!

SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE, HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY ACTIVITIES

1. Using Maps and Atlases

- a) Students can locate and name the continents and oceans on a map of the world.
- b) List specific countries on the board or chart paper. Students locate and name these countries on a map of the world or a map of an individual continent.
- c) Put a list of countries on the board or chart paper. Students have to name the continent where each is located.
- d) Put a list of cities on the board. Students name the country where each is located.
- e) Given a list of cities, the students use an atlas to give its location using latitude and longitude.
- f) Given a list of rivers and lakes, students have to name the country where each is located.
- g) Given a list of countries or cities, students have to tell which hemisphere each is located.

Some of these activities can be done as an oral quiz with students working in groups, pairs or independently.

2. What Do You Know?

- a) Give the students a topic and ask them to write down all the facts they know about this topic in a given time limit.
- b) Students share their information, deciding which facts are correct.
- c) This activity will enable students to share and learn more information. Suggestions for topics: a country, a city, a well known building, an historical event, an animal, a famous person, etc.

3. Animal Classification

- a) Provide a list of animals.
- b) Students have to classify them as mammals, birds, amphibians, etc. The classification will depend on the age and ability of the students.

4. If You Could Live in Another Time Period

- a) Students choose a different time period in which to live, giving the reasons for their choice.