



## 30 Ways to Promote Active Engagement in the Preschool Classroom

The U.S. Department of Education is calling on all early childhood practitioners to intentionally promote children's active participation and engagement in classroom activities. So, what can you do to answer this call?? Here are 30 ideas to start facilitating the *active* engagement of your young learners NOW!

### Active Engagement During Large Group or Circle Time

#### Children using their bodies:

1. "Show me a body that is ready to...[read a story, sing a song, check the weather]."
2. "Clap and say each number for the days on the calendar."
3. Sing shorter songs that include repetitive, simple actions that children can imitate and display.



#### Children using materials:

4. With each child holding a small picture of something from the book, have children hold up their picture when they hear the corresponding word used in the story.
5. Make all children the weather helper by having them each (or in pairs) select the weather picture for the day from their own picture ring.
6. If practicing letter sounds while book reading, give each child a small ring of 2-3 letter cards to hold up a specific letter if they hear a word read that includes the sound made by the letter.
7. Demonstrate how to use props for music or a story by gaining students' attention and saying, "Do what I do."



#### Children interacting with others:

8. "Turn to your neighbor and tell them...[favorite color, favorite animal, etc.]".
9. While reading a book, ask a different type of question on every page.
10. During a story, ask students a question with a verbal choice (e.g., "Is that a big dog or a little dog?").

### Active Engagement During Small Group

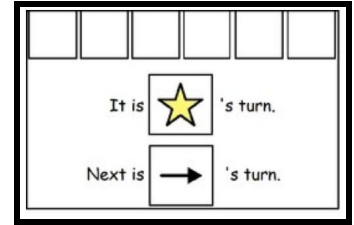
#### Children using their bodies:

1. "Thumbs up if you had the same idea or thumbs down if you had a different idea".
2. Show a picture of a member of the group and ask children to wave to that person.
3. Ask children to "Do what I do" while you point to and label body parts.

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### **Children using materials:**

4. Provide simple or complex visual pictures for the steps of the art activity or a video model showing the child completing the steps.
5. Provide each child with a turn-taking visual when there is a wait time during a game or steps in an activity.
6. Create a picture ring of shapes that can be used to prompt children with things to make with shaving cream, playdough, blocks, etc.



### **Children interacting with others:**

7. When students are using art materials, comment on what they are doing (e.g., "You're painting a duck!").
8. Provide all children with pictures or an augmentative device to use to request a turn in the game.
9. Limit the actual materials that are available and sitting out, but have pictures available to prompt a request for items.
10. Ask questions during a turn-taking game (e.g., "Whose turn is it?" or "Which card do you think he has?").



## **Active Engagement During Exploratory Play, Free Play, or Choice Time**

### **Children using their bodies:**

1. Imitate and label the actions of a student stacking blocks or scooping up sand in the sensory table.
2. Comment on what you see children doing with their bodies (e.g., laying on the floor, jumping high, sitting with a friend).
3. Create different types of spaces that give children opportunities to stand, sit, lay down, pull themselves up, or walk along a stable bookshelf.

### **Children using materials:**

4. Preview what activities are out for free play and show pictures of each.
5. If a child is wandering, approach with two items in your hand and offer a choice.
6. As a child puts the pieces together of a toy, imitate what they are doing while you map words to your actions, then offer a new action with the pieces.
7. Have visual maps showing how to put blocks or shapes together to make something else (e.g., a house, a road, a pool, a car).

### **Children interacting with others:**

8. Prompt children to give each other a high five when they make something together (puzzle, block tower, etc.).
9. While playing at the sensory table, provide a limited set of items to each child while the adult holds a clear box of other items to prompt and model asking for and sharing other items.
10. Using a visual schedule of the steps to an art project, ask children, "What's next?" or "Sally, can you help me to know what to do next?"



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