

**Motivating children to
really love their
English class**

CONNIE HATWELL

MOTIVATING YOUNG LEARNERS TO REALLY LOVE ENGLISH

Nowadays most youngsters are not easily entertained and are quite often a demanding audience, constantly bombarded with stimuli, from Spiderman to Pokémon, from karate and ballet lessons to the latest version of a Magna film, so to capture our children's imagination we need motivating fun classes that can compete with our young learner's attention as much as any PC can.

It would be unrealistic to think that young learners would be motivated to learn English with only their academic or future career success in mind yet there is still a need for their learning to be meaningful and that would require conscious effort, building cognitive structure that goes beyond just memorizing to achieve a good mark in a future test or exam.

Through engaging, dynamic and interactive classroom games and activities you can increase the young learner's communicational competence and give them a willingness and desire to communicate in English providing them with self-confidence and a sense of achievement.

Games to motivate very young learners to produce language

Against the snake!

Draw a large scary looking snake on the board and draw lines across its body, pretend that the children have been swallowed by the snake and tell them that for every question they get right they move nearer to freeing themselves.

Picture dictionary

In small groups bring children to the board; show them a word which they have to draw on the board for the rest of the class to guess.

Draw or write on your partner's back (with your finger of course)

Choose words, numbers, shapes on the board children in pairs; one chooses an item and draws or writes on their partners back for them to guess.

The last one standing.

Place 6 target flashcards around the classroom, above each write a number.

Children choose a card and stand under it. Throw the dice and call out the number. The children standing under that number must say the word and quickly sit down in the middle of the classroom. Repeat with the remaining children until only one is left standing.

Sticky ball competition. (Language production). You need a sticky ball

Pin up selected flashcards on the board. Above each card write a number which will represent the points given (higher scores for words that are harder to remember or pronounce).

Divide the class into teams, each child takes it in turns to throw the sticky ball and if it sticks to a card and the children can say the word correctly, points are given.

Games to motivate young learners to read

TIC TAC TOE

Draw up a tic tac toe grid on the board. In each square write a number corresponding to a target word you want your children to read and pronounce correctly , then divide the class into two teams one being noughts and the other crosses ,finally teams take it in turns to call out a number and win the square if they can read and pronounce the word correctly.

Action bingo

Pin up some action words on the board and give each word a corresponding number, then draw up a simple bingo grid on the board, children copy it down on a piece of scrap paper and add in the numbers of their choice ,finally do the actions and children cross off the number if it corresponds to the action.

Tour of the city

Pin up picture cards for places in the town around the class. Make up mini word cards for things you can buy in these shops. Children walk around the class as if in a town and pin up their mini cards. Or alternatively place a shop keeper in each place and children can use this opportunity to practice simple dialogues.

Dance cards

Write some movement words on some large pieces of card. Check for understanding.

Put on some fun music and hold up the cards. Children read the words and do the actions dancing to the rhythm of the music.

An Activity to motivate young learners to listen

Interactive storytelling.

Choose a simple story that has at least 4 main characters which are present throughout. Divide the class into 4 groups give each group a character with a corresponding action to represent themselves. Tell each group that when they hear their character mentioned in the story they must perform the character action. Finally read out the story.

An activity which motivates children to use all skills

Running dictations

A running dictation can practice all skills and is an exciting game to use when you wish to brighten up a simple reading text.

Put your children into pairs, one being the writer who would need a pencil and paper and the other being the runner. Pin up the reading texts on a wall away from the writers (outside in the corridor would be ideal)

The runner has to run up to the texts read as much as they can remember then run back to the writer, say out loud what they have read and the writer writes down the words they hear. Children swap roles after a while.

And to finish.....

Here are a few motivational quotes loved by students and teachers for the healthy growth of kids:

"Because life is a gift all of us are gifted" (Noah Benshea)

"No one is perfect –that's why pencils come with rubbers" (Anon.)

"Writing is good, thinking is better. Cleverness is good, patience is better" (Hermann Hesse)

"Use what talents you possess; the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang the best" (Henry Van Dyke)

