

**Cooperative learning
in the Primary
classroom**

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Cooperative learning in the primary classroom

Cooperative learning involves students working together in small groups to accomplish learning goals.

R. M. Gillies (2007)



Features of cooperative learning

- ✓ Positive interdependence: pupils need each other to complete the task.
- ✓ Individual accountability: pupils are responsible for their own contributions.
- ✓ Group processing: pupils reflect on how they are working / have worked as a group.
- ✓ Interpersonal skills: pupils learn and use skills such as listening to others, encouraging and resolving conflict.
- ✓ Face-to-face interaction: pupils work in close physical proximity.

Benefits of cooperative learning

- ✓ More active learning: Children are more engaged. They also have more opportunities to develop strategies for problem solving and use higher order thinking.
- ✓ Increased communication: Children are exposed to a wider variety of language. They are also more likely to use creative thinking and take risks with their language.
- ✓ The development of interpersonal skills: Cooperative learning activities help improve relations in the classroom and develop children's emotional intelligences.
- ✓ More opportunities for feedback: Children get instant feedback on their learning from their partner or group so they can quickly adapt or develop their ideas.

Developing skills for cooperative learning

Team building

- Just like me!

Children love to find things in common with their classmates. Read out a list of statements. The children listen and say 'Just like me!' when a statement is true for them. If you wish, you can add a physical action to the activity, i.e. stand up, hands up, finger on nose.

- Complete a Venn diagram

Develop thinking skills by working with a graphic organizer. The children work in pairs to complete a Venn diagram with things they have and don't have in common. Prompts on the board will support the pupils with content and language.

Active listening

- Follow the instructions

Children often switch off after the second instruction so it's a good idea to give pupils practice in listening to a set of instructions. Cumulative instructions, where the instructions get longer and longer, are a great way of doing this.

- Split dictation

This activity requires pupils to listen to a partner in order to complete a text. Each pupil has a different half of the same text and they take turns to dictate their information to each other. Don't forget to highlight useful classroom language such as: *Can you repeat that, please? Can you spell that, please? Can you speak more loudly / slowly, please?*

A
Seahorses _____ between _____ and _____ centimetres _____.
They've _____ a _____, curled _____ and _____ long, _____ head.
_____ got _____ hard _____ and _____ can _____ colour _____.
Seahorses _____ tiny _____ and _____. Do _____ know _____ seahorses
_____ got _____ teeth _____ a _____?

Effective talk

- Support children by displaying Talk Cards so the children know when they should be talking in pairs, groups or as a whole class.
- Teach and display key language for effective talk. This includes language for asking for clarification and repetition, asking for and giving opinions, making and responding to suggestions and praising and encouraging.

Working towards more cooperation in the classroom: informal cooperative learning groups

- Think-pair-share

In this activity pupils work with their Talk Partners. Set a task and ask the class to think on their own for a minute. At the end of this time, the pupils do the task with their partner. Finally, the pairs share the information with the whole class.

· Three-tier interview

The children work with their Talk Partner to do a task, for example ask and answer some questions. Once they have completed the task, they turn to a new partner and report what they have found out. Children enjoy dramatizing this activity by preceding the information with 'Do you know

· Stand up-hand up-pair up!

In this activity the pupils move around the class to talk to different partners. On a signal by the teacher, the pupils stand up, raise their hand and then get into a pair with another pupil who has their hand raised. They then share their information with the partner. This may be a question and answer exchange or different pieces of information on a topic. When they have exchanged information, they raise their hands again and pair up with another pupil.

· Get one give one

Children love to share what they know about a topic. In this activity, the pupils write three things that they know on the left of their page. Encourage higher level classes to think of facts that other classmates might not know. The pupils then pair up with another pupil and read their three sentences to their partner. The partner listens and writes down one new piece of information on the right of the activity. Once the children have given and collected a piece of information, they move to a new partner and repeat the process, reading out / listening to all the sentences each time.

Working in formal cooperative learning groups



Think about the cooperative project.

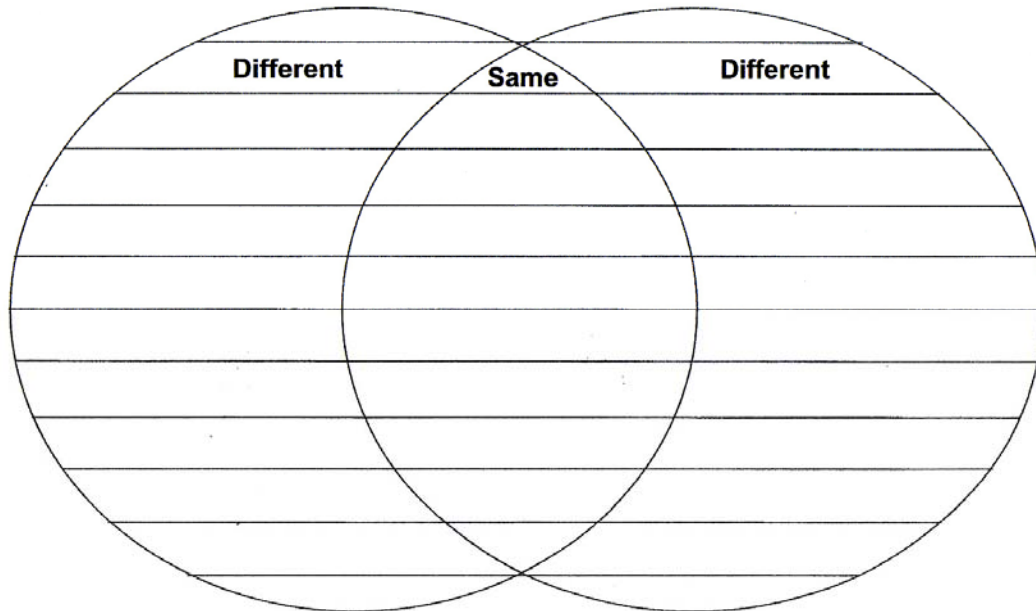
1 Are the objectives and outcomes clear?	YES	NO
2 Do pupils <u>need</u> to work together to create their zoo?	YES	NO
3 Do pupils always have the same roles and responsibilities?	YES	NO
4 Do pupils practise interpersonal and group skills?	YES	NO
5 Are pupils helped to develop these skills?	YES	NO
6 Do pupils only reflect on the final piece of work?	YES	NO

Materials

Just like me

Name: _____

Name: _____



Three-tier interview

Unit 2 Lesson 5 Communication Activity

Pupil B

Ask and answer to complete the questionnaire. Tick (✓). Tell a friend.

My friend's name: _____

How often do you ...

	never	once a week	twice a week	three times a week	every day
clear the table?					
feed your pet?					
walk the dog?					
wash up?					
cook dinner?					
dust?					

How often do you clear the table?

I clear the table twice a week.

Get one give one:

What I know.	What my classmates know.
1
2
3

Split dictation B

_____ are _____ one _____ thirty _____ long. _____ got _____ long,
 _____ tail _____ a _____, thin _____. They've _____ very _____
 skin _____ they _____ change _____ too. _____ eat _____ fish
 _____ plants. _____ you _____ that _____ haven't _____ any
 _____ or _____ stomach?

Investigate a zoo together

Animals	Objects in animals' living areas	Services

Project 1: The zoo challenge

1 Make notes about your three animals.

Name of the animal: _____

Is it a mammal, a reptile or a bird? _____

Does it live in a hot, a warm or a cold climate? _____

Does it live on land or in water? _____

Does it live alone or in a group? _____

What does it eat? _____

Name of the animal: _____

Is it a mammal, a reptile or a bird? _____

Does it live in a hot, a warm or a cold climate? _____

Does it live on land or in water? _____

Does it live alone or in a group? _____

What does it eat? _____

Name of the animal: _____

Is it a mammal, a reptile or a bird? _____

Does it live in a hot, a warm or a cold climate? _____

Does it live on land or in water? _____

Does it live alone or in a group? _____

What does it eat? _____



grass



leaves



seeds



fruit



meat



fish



insects

1 Make notes about your zoo.

Name of the zoo: _____

Animals in the zoo:

What the animals need:

1	_____	_____
2	_____	_____
3	_____	_____
4	_____	_____
5	_____	_____
6	_____	_____
7	_____	_____
8	_____	_____

Services for visitors: _____



Think about teamwork

2 Read and circle.

✓ sometimes ✓✓ often ✓✓✓ always

I contribute to the project.	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
I take turns with people in my group.	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
I listen to other people in my group.	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
I respect other people's opinions.	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓
I enjoy working in a group.	✓	✓✓	✓✓✓