Interactive Starters and Plenaries

A Bank of Ideas created by TES forum members

Many of the ideas below can be used for either starters or plenaries, which is why I haven’t categorised them. Obviously the plenary should really be about assessing the children’s learning and judging where they have got to, whereas the starter can be solely about getting their minds working or judging what they have remembered from the previous session.

According to OfSTED:

“the plenary is poorly used if it is simply a bolt-on-extra which provides an opportunity for groups of pupils to present their work daily; it is essential time for making sure that pupils have grasped the objectives and made progress, so that the next lesson can begin on firm foundations” – so, you’ve been told!

Feel free to adapt as you feel fit. Contact us via TES if there are other ideas you would like to submit ☺

Pass the parcel

Pass around a box filled with statements about the topic you will be studying in the lesson. Play music, when the music stops, the child with the box must pick out a statement, read it and decide whether it is true or false. The statement can then be placed in a corresponding hoop – true/false or agree/disagree etc.

Could also be used to review what they learnt in the previous session by filling the box with questions which the children should answer when they pick them out.

Move to the answer

Similar to pass the parcel. Chn pick a statement from a box/hat etc and class must move according to what they think of the statement – dedicate an area of the classroom to agree and one to disagree. Could work for maths questions – odd/even, multiple of 3, multiple of 10 etc.

Beat the teacher

Everyone (teacher included) has a mini-whiteboard and pen. Teacher gives a calculation (I tend to use it for grid method practice) and pupils and teacher start doing it. I either give them the time it takes me plus 1 min, or set a timer on the IWB to do it. They love it! Means you get instant feedback as to how they are doing and it gives them competition to be the first with correct answer.

Bingo

Use with numbers, words, pictures etc. Chn can choose own numbers, but with words and pictures it’s usually best to have something created in advance. Not just to be used for maths – consider other areas of the curriculum!

Definition bingo where you give the children a selection of words to choose 4 from, then you read the definitions. First one to cross off their 4 words wins. It works well with maths, science, geography and French.

Box game

Child comes up to the front and steps into the imaginary box (but there's no reason why it couldn't be real!), they then can't leave until they get a question correct (maths).

Easy/Medium/Hard/Mega-hard

Hard/medium/easy/mega hard - I start by picking someone, and give them a medium question, they then get to pick next person and level of difficulty, of course they always pick hard or mega hard for them to do so it's a good way to test them on other stuff and you're not picked on for choosing the 'victims'.

Blockbusters

http://www.bigbrownenvelope.co.uk/ - version for promethean and smartboard on here.

http://www.teachers-direct.co.uk/resources/quiz-busters/subjects/ks2.aspx - lots of versions already made on here – fantastic free resource.

Who wants to be a millionaire?

www.primaryresources.co.uk (sorry, can’t provide an actual link as they don’t work for some reason!) hosts a free powerpoint version of this.

Find me a partner

Half of the class are given questions and half are given answers. Children must silently go around the room trying to find out who their partner is. Could also be done with them talking and the questions and answers being stuck on their backs to make it a bit more challenging. Alternatively, instead of questions finding answers, questions could find other questions which provide the same answer or answers could find other answers from the same times tables and then order themselves. Many different possibilities for this one!

Question answer match

Provide groups or pairs of children with a selection of questions which they should match to the correct answers in a set time limit. You should add some to trip them over too…this could be your differentiation! ;)

Charades

Get them to act an adverb or another term you have learnt during the lesson and the other children have to guess it.

Taboo

Children choose, from a bag, a term they have learnt during the lesson. They should attempt to describe the term to the other members of the class without using the word itself. Children can then jot down word they think it is on whiteboard or put hand up as soon as they know. Set a time limit to prevent too much pondering!

Odd one out

Provide children with a set of three statements. Children should decide which is the odd one out and why. They must also be prepared to justify their choice.

Hotseating

Need I say more?

Call my bluff

Provide children with a new or unfamiliar term. Give them three possible definitions – children should work in pairs to decide which definition is the correct one. Could work well in the plenary to see who has understood new terminology well.

Mystery Number Game

First time the teacher picks the number and says something like, "It's a number between 0 and 300," the children then need to use good maths language to work out what the number is, they get 7 goes to find it, sometimes I give them a 'magic guess,'....it's good for using various strategies and also a memory test as to 'waste' a question by not thinking or remembering isn't good!

Fizz Buzz

A game whereby pupils count around a circle if number is a multiple of 5 they don’t say number they say fizz, they say buzz for multiples of 10 and fizz buzz for multiples of both.

First letter – last letter

In pairs or teams with or without dictionaries they have a start word and next word in list has to start with last letter (or letters) of previous word e.g. helpful- lovely- yoghurt  
  
To make harder could insist on a subject area for words to fit too or word type e.g. adjectives only (not adverbs as all end y in mainly!).

Definitions

Have set of words and definitions (good for literacy but also for science vocabulary or other topic vocabulary)

* hand out and kids move around trying to find their partner word/definition
* use to play bingo cards have words teacher reads definitions
* on table how quick can you match them all
* use later as pairs game in independent time

Spot the Mistake

Put up small set of calculations linked to LO and get them to spot mistakes  
or word problems again put in some mistakes linked to things kids often do wrong and get them to spot the mistakes.

Jump up!

Have everyone sat down at basic level if doing initial sounds everyone has a card with that sound on if word begins with it they jump up then sit again.   
At higher level could be if they have answer to a problem or if they have the missing punctuation as teacher reads.

Alien Counting

Explain to chn that you are going to be using an alien form of counting and asking questions in maths today. Tell them that each time you pat your shoulders that is a unit, each time you click your fingers that is a ten and if you pat your head, that is a hundred. Use this technique to create a number – can they tell you what it is? Great for place value. Can also use arms to create multiplication sign and then get them doing calculations. They must answer questions using the alien technique. Hope this makes sense.

Cut up – back together

Give the children a cut-up text and get them to put it back together again – you can make this as difficult or easy as you like. Children could work in pairs – this would allow both of them to have a fair say.

Odd one out

Provide the children with a selection of 5 words (give the pictures to match if you like) – children should decide the odd one out.

Plum, onion, carrot, cabbage, broccoli

Instantly you might think that plum is the odd one out, as it is a fruit, the rest are vegetables. However, children could come up with other ones that are different from the rest e.g. onion – it begins with a vowel.

Eyes closed

You could get the children to close their eyes and describe something to them, then ask them to draw on white boards what they think you are describing. E.g. I have shape with 3 sides - look at all of children’s ideas. Extend to 4 sides, 2 sides are the same length. Depending on ability add in things like it has a line of symmetry. Can they name the shape they have drawn etc?

What’s the question?

Give them an answer and ask them what the question is. This generates discussion.

Making numbers

Get the children to draw 3 dashes on some paper, as if for hangman. Roll a die and call out the number.   
  
They have to write the number in any one of their spaces. Repeat twice. At the end they will have a 3-digit number. Everyone with the biggest number wins a point. Do this a few times and record their points on a class list or the board. Use tally marks as an added learning opportunity.  
  
If they are Low Ability, start with two dice. HAPs can develop to four dashes.  
  
Important questions to ask are "Does anyone think they definitely have the biggest number possible? How do you know?"   
  
You can vary it with the target being to find the lowest total instead. Probability is being brought in very subtly, but this is a strong way to develop their understanding of place value.   
It is great for KS2 as well, as it gets chldren used to saying the names of big numbers correctly. By Year 4 or Year 5 you can use up to 7 dice, so if you rolled 3,5,4,2,1,6,1, for example, they have to be able to say "Six million, five hundred and forty three thousand, two hundred and eleven" to win the point.   
  
Number fans

I often use number fans - so that every child can answer, they have to find their answer then keep it hidden and we all turn them round at once so then you can see who knows and who doesn't!

Bus Queue – ordering numbers

Use kinaesthetic strategies such as having number cards and asking the children to order themselves, I have done this with ordinal numbers and a pretend bus queue. I have also done it with random numbers up to 100 and the children had to be in order largest to smallest.

5 answers – fastest fingers

I also sometimes ask the children to work in pairs and think of 5 answers (e.g. number bonds to 10.) They have to hold up 1 finger every time they think of one till they get to 5, sometimes we see who can fastest (especially with facts the SHOULD know!)

Odd and even popcorn

All children stand behind their chairs. If you shout out a even number they crouch down, and if an odd number they jump up? Last few in win.

Number Bonds – ball/beanbag

I was thinking of games for number bonds, such as throwing a small ball and shouting a number to a child, they throw it back giving me the number bond to 10, 20 or 100.Also giving out number cards and the children have to match themselves up.

The bond to ten game is very versatile. For example, what about making it the 'doubling' game, or the 'one less' game, or the 'nine more' game?

VCOP

I put together a VCOP ideas bank for a staff meeting, and it's on the Resource Bank if that would be useful.   
[http://www.tes.co.uk/Resources/Resource.aspx?resourceId=9...](http://www.tes.co.uk/Resources/Resource.aspx?resourceId=9272)

Noun/Adjective Game

Two children at front one starts with a noun e.g. chair and opponent says an adjective that could describe it e.g. brown other child says noun that could be described as brown etc repetition or an err in the game leads to you are out. Can make it harder banning all colours.

Words within words

Write a word on board and they look for other words hidden in it.

Football

try football it works for most topics u draw up a pitch with 5 lines running across it for marking draw goals, put the 'ball' in the middle and put the children in 2 groups or teams. They can either work as a team to answer questions or u can pick some out individually from each team if they get a question right they get to move a line across and if they get 3 in a row they get to shoot to save the other team must get their question right. This is a fun and interactive lesson and u can gauge the questions to ability if they have individual questions. A mix of both is the best way to work. If this sounds confusing try it out as it is really effective and the children dont realise they are learning as much when it is so fun.

Pick ‘n’ Mix

In Y5 my pupils play multiplication and division pick and mix and LOVE IT! We have a box with all the chn's names in (use for mixed ability groups), the chn stand in a very large circle as there are 34 of them, and the take it in turns to pick a name out of the box. They ask the chosen person a mult. or div. question and the other has to answer it in a given time, decided at start of the game. They enjoy playing it as are a very competitive class but I can assess their mult. div. facts by their answers and by the questions that they ask. It takes a while to get around the circle and sometimes has taken a week's MOS to complete.

Fly Swatters

Split the class or a group into 2. Ask them to choose a member of their group to be the "guinea pig". Have a series of cards/posters/items on either a table or stuck on the wall. Each "guinea pig" is given a fly swat. You ask them a question and they must swat the answer as quickly as possible...the one who loses must go back to group and they choose someone else. One who wins must answer again (maximum of 3 goes).  
  
Active and fun...just don't give it to a violent class...you can imagine the scene!

Volcanoes and Lakes

Draw a volcano and a lake on the IWB and think of a rule (i.e. odd numbers go in the volcano and even numbers go in the lake, multiples of 4 go in the volcano and every other number goes in the lake).  
  
Ask the children to give you numbers (give them a range to avoid stupid numbers) and then place their number in the volcano or the lake depending on the rule.  
  
The children have to guess the ule for the numbers in the volcano.  
  
Once the children are used to the game, you can get them to come out and lead a round.

Websites

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| A blockbusters style quiz: http://www.teacherled.com/2008/03/26/letter-quiz/  Bingo which comes with books that it can check itself: http://www.teacherled.com/2008/01/28/bingo/  A boggle style game: http://www.teacherled.com/2008/03/03/letter-dice/  Keyword jumble, comes with maths keywords but you can enter custom words. I use it mainly as a filler exercise: http://www.teacherled.com/2008/01/28/keyword-jumble/  Stage Cross, a game that I use for small group plenary competitions at the IWB: http://www.teacherled.com/2008/01/28/stage-cross/ |
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There's a thing on that fiery website that generates an object, a character and a setting, then get them to build a class story, get one sentence from each child, my kids loved it and tried to come up with elaborate sentences  
  
http://www.fieryideas.com/freebies.php

TaskMagic is brilliant for starters and plenaries with a whiteboard, or for class work on PCs. It makes loads of different games automaticaly based on your own words, pictures or texts. It's not a freebie, but there is a free 30 day trial download: www.taskmagic.co.uk (It just stops working after 30 days, there's no registration or anything, and if you like it you can order a licensed version.)

Countdown

http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/maths/countdown/