



The Questioning Toolbox

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Introduction

The most commonly used questioning methods are the least effective – and it matters! Take for example the “volunteers” approach: *you ask a question; hands go up; you choose someone to answer; they answer; you comment on that answer*. What is wrong with this?

- Many students keep their hands down, and may not even listen to your questions.
- You only learn what **one** student thinks, not how all the rest would have answered.
- Students don't discuss their answers and correct each others' misconceptions.
- The best students answer quickly, so there is little time for the others to think out their own answers.

Assertive Questioning - Methodology

The group works on a thought provoking question and gives them a set 'thinking time' (e.g. 2 minutes) for discussion. Following the thinking time, the teacher asks one learner from each group to give their answer. These individuals are nominated by the teacher. The teacher asks a number of learners their answers saying just 'thank you' after each, and perhaps 'why did your group think that?' or 'did any other group get that answer?' or 'has any group got a different answer?'

The correct answer is not given away at this stage!

The teacher then encourages the class to discuss these various answers, and to agree, and justify a 'class answer'. Minority views are allowed, but the aim is consensus. Only when the class has agreed its answer, does the teacher 'give away' the right answer. The teacher reviews the class's thinking.

Benefits

- There is lots of thinking time.
- All students are thinking – “the teacher might choose me”.
- All students are talking and checking each other's thinking – they need to agree an answer with its reasoning. Group members will be cross if one of their number misrepresents their group's answer to the class. So peer-pressure increases participation.
- You get detailed and representative feedback on all the class's thinking, and can eventually correct misconceptions before they take root.



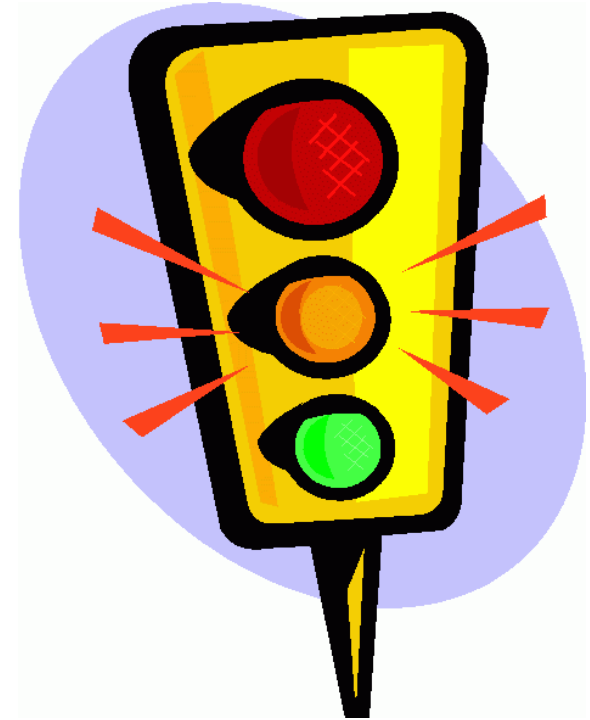
Ways to incorporate questioning into your session

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Traffic Lights

Use traffic lights as a visual means of showing understanding.

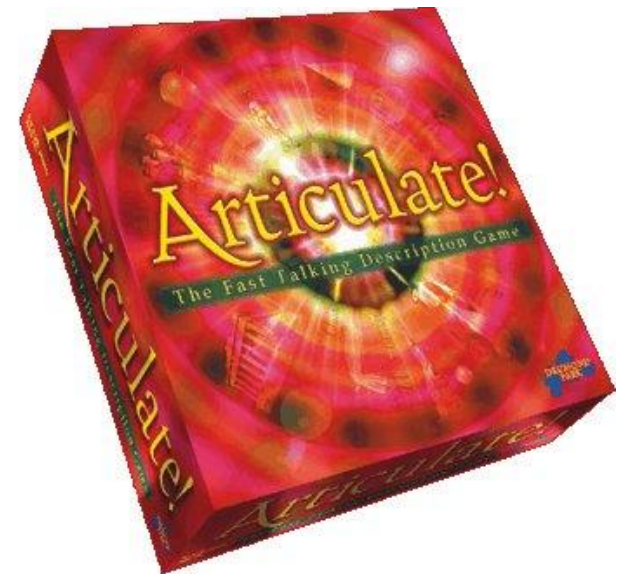
- Students have red, amber and green cards which they show on their desks or in the air (red = don't understand and don't think they can answer, green = totally get it, confident can correctly answer)
- Ask a question, students raise a card depending on how confident they are in answering it. Teacher would find out which questions students were less confident about and therefore what may require more teaching. Get them to answer some, not all to confirm they are correct and to check understanding.



Articulate then Answer

Give students the opportunity to articulate their thinking before answering the question:

- 30 seconds silent thinking before any answers
- Write some thoughts down before answering
- Discuss with your neighbour or small group first and then the teacher decides who is going to answer
- Continue with the assertive questioning methodology.



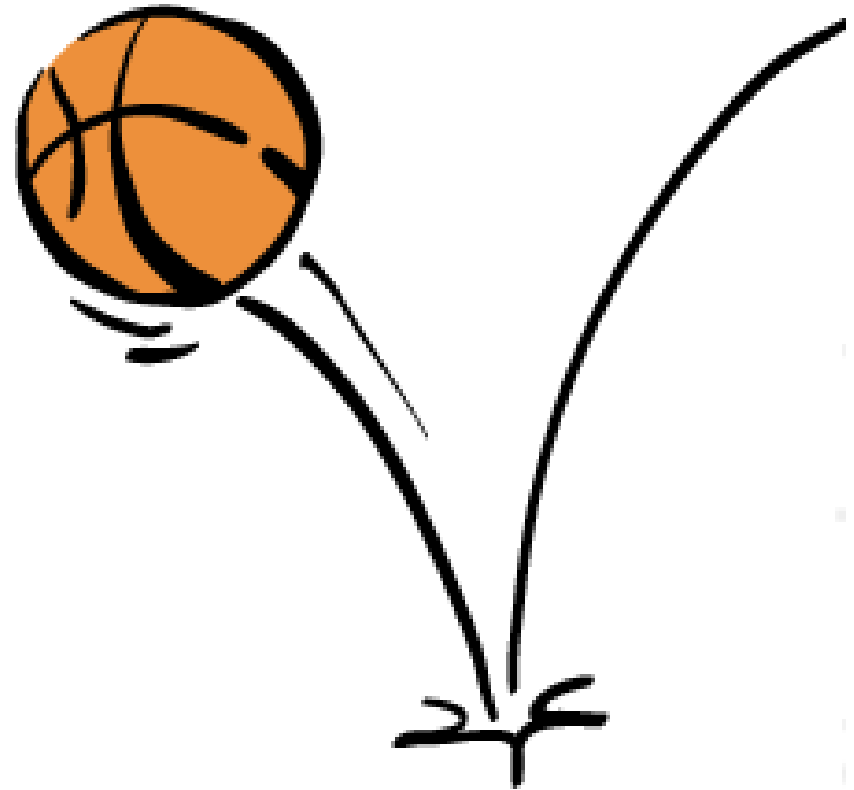
Bouncing

Bounce answers around the room to build on understanding and have students develop stronger reasoning out of misconceptions.

E.g. “Jimmy, what do you think of Sandra’s answer?”

“Sandra, how could you develop Carl’s answer to include more detail?”

“Carl, how might you combine all we’ve heard into a single answer?”



Thumbs

Check class understanding of what you are teaching by asking them to show their thumbs.

Thumbs up = I get it (can answer question)

Thumbs half way = sort of (think can answer correctly)

Thumbs down = I don't get it (very unsure of answer)

It is important that you get students to answer occasionally and confirm understanding.



Socratic Questioning

The six steps of Socratic questioning creates a critical atmosphere that probes thinking and once more gets the students questioning in a structured way. There are six main categories:

Q1. Get your students to clarify their thinking, for instance: “Why do you say that?”“Could you explain that further?”

Q2. Challenging students about assumptions, for instance: “Is this always the case? Why do you think that this assumption holds here?”

Q3. Evidence as a basis for argument, questions such as: “Why do you say that?” or “Is there reason to doubt this evidence?”

Q4. Viewpoints and perspectives, this challenges the students to investigate other ways of looking at the same issue, for example: “What is the counter argument for...?” or “Can/did anyone see this another way?”

Q5. Implications and consequences, given that actions have consequences, this is an area ripe for questioning, for instance: “But if that happened, what else would result?” or “How does... affect?” By investigating this, students may analyse more carefully before jumping to an opinion

Q6. Question the question, just when students think they have a valid answer this is where you can tip them back into the pit: “Why do you think I asked that question?” or “Why was that question important?”

This approach is a fantastic way to structure dialogue and to involve all students in exploring and developing their arguments.



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Think – Pair – Share

Teacher poses a question; learners have a minute to think of an answer.



Think

They share their answer with a partner.



Pair

They then share ideas with another pair.



Share

(small group work increases the ‘surface area’ of talk in the classroom as opposed to whole class discussions)

Post-It

Use post-it notes/questions to evaluate learning.

The purpose is to find out the misconceptions they have formed so that they can be FIXED in the subsequent teaching sessions.

Ask all to answer the question(s) on a post it note and place on a board. Use the assertive questioning methodology by choosing a collection of answers that are similar – why did you think that? Etc.



True/False

Individual, pair or group have a true/false card and you can ask questions and gain levels of understanding (assessment for learning) through their responses.

Write a statement on the board – they have to indicate whether they think it is true/false.

It is important that whatever the learners decide you challenge why they think that? How did they reach that conclusion? You need to check that their reasoning is correct and not just a lucky guess!

True



False



A B C D

Laminate a set of cards so every member of the class has four, with A,B,C and D written on them. Ask questions with four answers and learners can show you their answer.

Encourage them not to look at other people's responses.



Pair Checking

Teacher asks a question and the learners work alone to answer it.

Pairs then compare answers, giving their partner one good point and one way in which their answer could be improved while the teacher observes.

The teacher then gives the correct answer.

Pairs now suggest another improvement to their partner's answer.



Quick Question Relay

Prepare 5-10 questions.

Divide class into teams.

First team members come out and get a question and take it back to the team.

Write answer on the paper and second team members come out.

If correct they are given the next question. If not they have to return to team.

Continue until all questions have been completed.



Lollipop Sticks

Get the students to put their name on a lollipop stick at one end (and decoration if they wish), keeping the other end bare.

To small groups or pairs ask a challenging question. Use the bunch of lollipop sticks as a way to randomly choose which learner would answer the question following the group's discussion. Continue with the assertive questioning methodology.

Be creative, could use wooden spoons if caterers, spatulas if H&B students etc.





Resources for Photocopying and Cutting Up

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Instructions on how to use these resources

This document contains everything you need to create a questioning toolbox for your classroom or workshop. The questioning toolbox is a physical box containing items and equipment connected to assessment for learning strategies around questioning. Here is a suggestion on how to use each part of this document:

1, 2, 3, 4 Cards – Print off enough for a class set. Laminate them and clip them together. Hand them out to learners and display questions with four possible answers. Learners can then hold up the card which they think indicates the correct answer.

A, B, C, D Cards – As with the 1, 2, 3, 4 cards.

Traffic Light Cards – Print off enough for a class set. Give each student a red card, an orange card and a green card. Ask them to display the card which most matches where they are at. **Green** = I am confident and know what I am doing; **Orange** = I am OK but might need some help; **Red** = I do not understand and cannot do the work.

Smiley Faces – Print off enough for a class set. Give each learner a set of smiley faces. Ask them to display a face which most matches where they are at. Smile – confident and know the answer; straight face – think I know the answer; sad face – do not know the answer.

Tick and Cross Cards – Print off enough for a class set. Create cards which have a tick on one side and a cross on the other. Laminate them. Hand them out to learners and display questions which have 'yes/no' or 'agree/disagree' answers. Ask learners to show you what they think is the right answer.

Ready-to-use Plenaries – You could laminate them. The teacher can call on them at the end of any lesson. Supplement them with the 'Ideas on how to use the Plenaries' sheet.

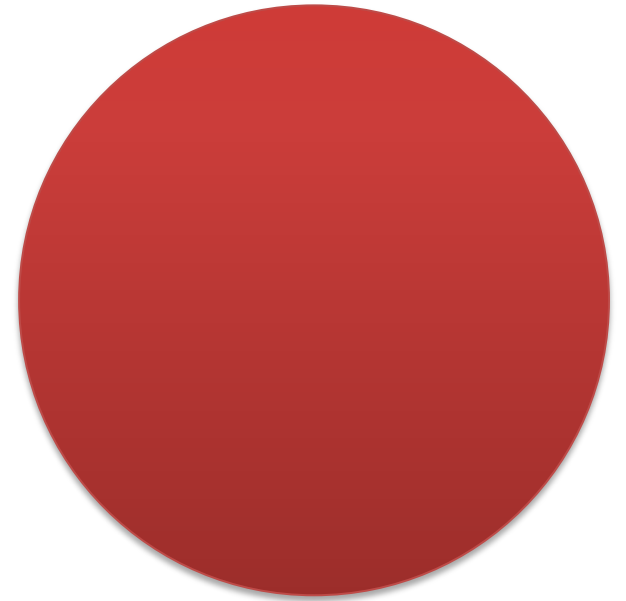
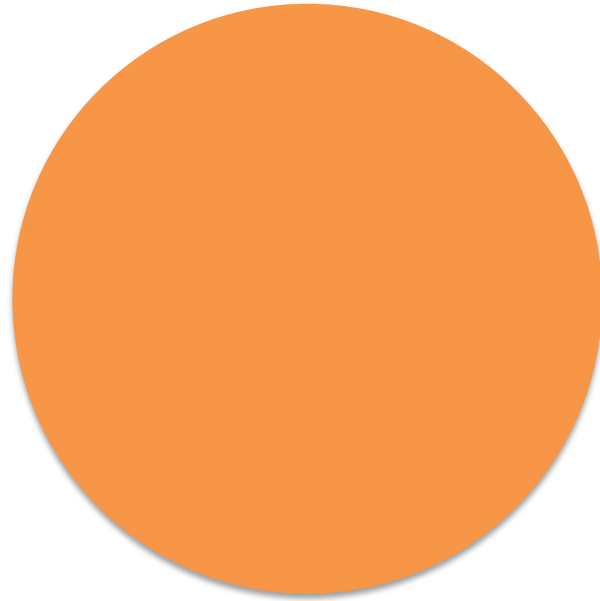
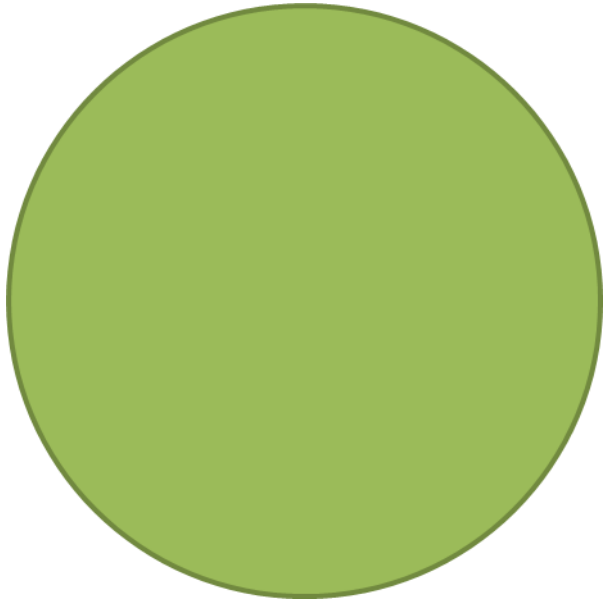
A

B

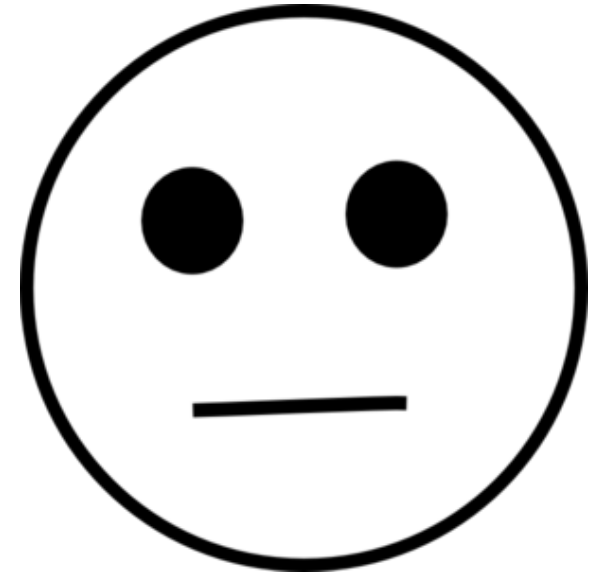
C

D





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True

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False

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Ways in which you might use the plenary material:

- Keep the sheets on hand in your classroom and select questions or tasks which suit the flow of the lesson.
- Invite a student to select a number between 1 and 150. Use the corresponding task or question as your plenary.
- **Use the grid of 150 numbered squares from the toolkit. Invite learners to throw a counter onto the grid to select the plenary for that session.**
- Create a collection of slips of paper number 1 – 150. Place these in a bag, hat or container. Invite a student to select a slip at random. The number on the slip is the plenary for that lesson.
- Photocopy and laminate the sheets. Stick them on your classroom wall. Invite a student or group of learners to look through the sheets and to pick out a plenary with which they would like to end the lesson.
- Photocopy and laminate the sheets. Stick them on your classroom wall. Cross off each plenary you use with your classes. Work through the sheets until you have tried all the plenaries.
- Create a subset of the above questions. Type these into Microsoft Word so that you have one per page in a large font. Print these off and bind them into a plenary question-booklet. You can then show your class a series of questions (or ask a student to do it) at the end of a lesson.
- Divide the questions and tasks into 15 groups (1-10; 11-20 and so on). Invite a student to select a group and then invite a second student to select a plenary from within that group. For example, the first student might select group 7 (61-70) and the second student might select plenary number 68.
- Divide your class into groups. Invite each group to choose a different plenary. Conclude the activity by having the groups share their answers or responses.

150 Plenary Questions and Tasks

1. What have you learnt today?
2. What is the most important thing you have learnt today?
3. What do you know now, that you did not know at the start of the lesson?
4. How has your understanding changed as a result of the lesson?
5. What three things have you learnt today?
6. What would you choose as the key thing you have learnt today? Why?
7. What do you want to know as a result of what we have learnt today?
8. What can you do now, that you could not do at the start of the lesson?
9. How has today's lesson changed you knowledge or understanding?
10. What questions do you have, based on today's lesson?
11. Why do you think we have studied what we have studied this lesson?
12. How might you change today's lesson for future learners? Why?
13. How might you use your learning from today's lesson in the future?
14. What has been the purpose of today's lesson?
15. How might you use what you have learnt today?
16. If you were going to teach this lesson to younger learners, what would you identify as the key things they would need to know?
17. Based on what we have learnt today, what do you think we should study next? Why?
18. Where might you make use of the learning you have done today?
19. Under what circumstances, or for what reason, might we need to use today's learning?

20. How might you test one of your peers to see what they have learnt today?
21. How might you explain what you have learnt today to your parents?
22. How might you explain what you have learnt today to an alien?
23. How might you explain what you have learnt today to someone younger than yourself?
24. What connections can you make between today's learning and what we have studied previously?
25. How does today's learning connect to what you already know?
26. How might today's lesson have been different? What might have been the result of this?
27. How might we have learnt the same things, but in a different way?
28. Who might use what we have learnt today in their daily lives?
29. How have you worked today? Why?
30. How might you improve your learning next lesson?
31. What have been the strengths and weaknesses of this lesson?
32. What skills have you used during this lesson?
33. What skills have you improved during the lesson? How have you improved them?
34. What knowledge have you gained this lesson?
35. How might you use the knowledge you have gained in this lesson in the future?
36. How have you interacted with your peers during this lesson?

37. What strengths and weaknesses have you seen in yourself this lesson?
38. What changes might you make next lesson to how you work?
39. How has today's lesson made you feel?
40. To what extent do you feel you have engaged with the lesson today? Why?
41. To what extent do you feel you have learnt in today's lesson? Why?
42. How have you learnt this lesson?
43. In what way(s) has your mind been changed by today's lesson?
44. If you were to go back in time and start today's lesson again, what would you change and why?
45. How could you have done things differently this lesson? What affect might this have had?
46. How did you feel at the beginning, middle and end of the lesson?
47. How have you used you existing skills and knowledge in today's lesson?
48. What have you done well this lesson and why?
49. Write a poem about what you have learnt today
50. Create a short story based on today's lesson
51. Write a set of five questions based on today's lesson and then use them to interview you partner
52. Draw a picture showing what you have learnt today
53. Draw a cartoon strip showing what you have learnt today

54. Draw a cartoon strip showing how you will use today's learning in the future
55. Write a letter to one of next year's learners explaining what today's lesson is about
56. Write a speech persuading people that what we have learnt today is important
57. Produce five key points which sum up today's learning
58. Create a mind-map showing what we have learnt today
59. Create a set of instructions for today's lesson which anybody could follow
60. How might you combine today's learning with something else you already know?
61. What existing skills or knowledge could you combine today's learning with?
62. Write a song or rap about what we have learnt today
63. Create a poster advertising today's learning to other learners
64. Create a television advert 'selling' today's learning
65. Create a radio advert 'selling' today's learning
66. Create a quiz, based on today's learning, which you could use to test other learners
67. Explain what we have learnt today without using words
68. Create a short presentation explaining the key points from today's lesson
69. Create a leaflet about what you have learnt today

70. Write a letter to a person in the nineteenth-century explaining what you have learnt today
71. Write a message to an alien explaining what you have learnt today
72. Use symbols to show what you have learnt today
73. Make a model of one aspect of your learning
74. Sculpt one of the key ideas from today's lesson
75. Construct a timeline showing your learning through the lesson
76. Swap your work with a partner and assess it: What have they done well? How might they improve?
77. Assess your own work: What have you done well? How might you improve?
78. What strengths have you shown in today's lesson? What areas for improvement can you find?
79. Find a partner who you don't often work with. Swap your work and do a peer-assessment. Identify three strengths and one target for improvement.
80. What is the most important thing we have learnt over the past few lessons and why?
81. Write down all the things we have learnt today. Once you have done this, order them according to how important you believe them to be.
82. How would you have taught today's lesson and why?
83. What difficulties have you encountered today? How have you dealt with them?
84. What difficulties might a student encounter if they were new to today's topic?

85. Assess your learning using the learning objective: Have you met? How? If not, what do you still need to do in order to meet it?
86. What evidence do you have showing what you have learnt today?
87. What key question would you ask to find out whether someone has understood today's lesson?
88. Write an exam-style question and mark-scheme based on today's lesson
89. Write three key questions you think people in the class should be able to answer, based on today's lesson. When ready, walk round and ask people your questions.
90. Identify the key learning points from today's lesson
91. Compare what you know now with what you knew at the start of the lesson. How is it different?
92. Write a quiz based on today's lesson. Make sure you cover all areas. When you are ready, test your partner.
93. What different possibilities can you imagine for next lesson, bearing in mind what we have learnt today?
94. Pick one thing you have done today and identify how you could do it better
95. Pick one thing you have done today identify why it was good and how it helped you
96. How useful is what we have learnt today? Why?
97. Write what you have learnt today on a piece of paper and hand it in on your way out
98. If you feel you have fully understood the lesson, give a 'thumbs up'. If you feel you have understood most of it, turn your thumbs sideways. If you feel you have struggled to understand it, give a 'thumbs down'.

99. Think about today's lesson. Give yourself a score between 1 and 5.
1 = I have really struggled and need more help.
5 = I have understood nearly everything and could explain to others.
Once you have done this, find someone with a different score. Either ask them for help, or offer them help.
100. Write down the questions you still have about the topic, and which you do not feel have been answered yet.
101. What criteria would you use to judge whether someone has fully understood the lesson today?
102. How does today's lesson connect to your existing knowledge?
103. How does today's lesson connect to our previous areas of study?
104. How might today's lesson connect to other areas of the curriculum?
105. Write down what you think is the most important thing you have learnt today, and then hold it up for everyone to see
106. Draw a line and label it from one (no idea) to ten (completely understand). Indicate where you feel you were at regarding the topic when the lesson began, and where you feel you are at now. Then, explain your choices.
107. Work in a group of three or four to create a freeze-frame showing the key thing you have learnt today
108. Work in pairs. Take it in turns to mime key ideas and information from the lesson. The other person has to guess what is being mimed.
109. Create a short role-play in which someone's life is changed through learning what we have learnt today
110. Create a pair of still images showing life before and after what we have learnt today

111. Work in groups. Create a role-play showing what life would be like if no one knew about what we have learnt today.
112. Work in pairs. Create a thirty-second sales pitch for today's learning which could be used on a television shopping channel.
113. Work in pairs. One person is the interviewer. The other person has had their life changed by what we have learnt today. Conduct an interview for the BBC news using these roles.
114. Work in groups of three or five. One person is the chairperson. The rest split between for and against.
The motion is: **'Today we have learnt some incredibly important things'**. The debaters must argue the point while the chairperson referees.
115. Work in pairs. Each person, in secret, chooses an emotion. Next, conduct a discussion about what we have learnt today, while playing that emotion. When the teacher says, continue the discussion but swap your emotions.
116. Work in groups. Turn today's lesson into a dramatic story. One person reads the story aloud while the rest of the group act it out.
117. Write a postcard to a friend explaining what you have learnt this lesson. Draw a picture for the front showing what you have learnt.
118. Write a text message explaining what you have learnt this lesson
119. Choose three keywords we have used this lesson. Write a definition for each and then give an example.
120. Choose one thing you have done this lesson and redo it so that it is better
121. Plan your own lesson covering what we have studied today
122. Compare what you have learnt this lesson with what you learnt last lesson. How is it similar? How is it different?

123. Write a list of what you have learnt today. Give examples for each item so as to show your understanding.

124. Produce a summary of what you have learnt today. When done, rewrite it using fewer words. After that, reduce it to either a single sentence, or three bullet points.

125. In pairs, discuss what you have learnt this lesson. Be ready to share your thoughts.

126. In pairs, assess your work. Take it in turns to go through and identify the strengths and one area for improvement in your work, and in that of your partner.

127. In pairs, take it in turns to interview one another about today's lesson. Take notes as you go.

128. In pairs, produce a list of key words and definitions which link to today's lesson. Then, jumble them up and challenge another pair to match the correct word to the correct definition.

129. In pairs, discuss how you think what we have learnt today is used in the wider world. Be ready to feed back to the whole class.

130. In groups of three or four, take it in turns to try and talk for a minute about today's topic without pausing or repeating yourself.

131. In pairs, one person is 'for' and one person is 'against'. The motion is: **'What we have learnt today is extremely important.'** The people 'for' will go first, for a minute. The people 'against' will get a minute after that. Finally, there will be a minute of free-for-all, where both sides can speak.

132. Take it in turns to draw something connected to today's lesson. The other person must try to guess what it is. The drawer is not allowed to talk, or to write any words.

133. In groups of three or four, discuss what you have learnt this lesson. Appoint one person as the leader. It will be their job to share your group's ideas with the rest of the class.
134. In groups of three or four, identify what you think are the three most important things we have learnt today. Elect one representative. They will travel to other groups and try to persuade them of your views.
135. In groups of three or four, produce a role-play based on something we have learnt today.
136. Write a possible exam question based on today's learning. Swap books with a partner and attempt their question.
137. Write a possible exam question based on today's learning. Then, write a model answer.
138. Write a series of multiple choice questions based on today's learning. Swap books with a partner and attempt their questions.
139. Draw between three and five key concepts or ideas linked to today's lesson. Do not label them. Swap books with a partner and try to identify what the concepts or ideas are.
140. Write three possible exam questions based on today's learning. Walk around the room and ask your questions to other learners. Discuss their answers with them.
141. In groups of three or four, write a short summary of everything we have learnt today. Produce a series of appropriate actions to go with your summary. One person will read the summary out to the class while the rest of your group do the actions.
142. Write a question, based on today's topic, with which you think you can beat the teacher.
143. How might you translate today's lesson into a graph?

144. How might you explain what we have learnt today using symbols?
145. How might you express what you have learnt today using your body?
146. What do you feel you have got from today's lesson?
147. What would you like us to study next and why?
148. Why might people have decided that it is important for young people to know about what we have studied in today's lesson?
149. Where might you use today's learning in the next month?
150. How would you describe your experience of today's lesson using colours and shapes?