

Key Stage 3 Lesson Starters

Focus

- each lesson starter is planned to deliver specific teaching objectives from Year 7 of the Key Stage 3 strategy's *Framework for teaching English, Years 7, 8 and 9*. The starters can be adapted to fit objectives for Years 8 and 9 if appropriate;
- objectives are usually, but not only, at word and sentence level;
- each lesson starter usually addresses between one and three objectives.

Principles

- strong links are forged between reading and writing
- overall emphasis is on active learning and interaction
- a range of teaching strategies is employed, including alternatives to questioning
- a range of learning styles is included, so that pupils have the opportunity to work alone and to learn from/support one another
- teaching of word level objectives includes both knowledge and strategies
- opportunities are built in for revision and consolidation as well as new learning
- expectations for all pupils need to be high enough to provide sufficient challenge for all abilities
- content needs to be at an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils to experience success
- transfer of learning to pupils' independent reading and writing is an underlying principle.

Progression

- pupils' current knowledge base is taken into account
- where a lesson starter does not lead straight into the main part of the lesson that follows, its content should be directly linked to pupils' needs or to work in another lesson soon afterwards
- successive lesson starters can take account of progression in pupils' learning

- successive lesson starters build on what has been taught previously and sometimes prepare the groundwork for new learning in future lessons.

Practice

- independent/investigative work is balanced with direct teaching
- classroom ethos should provide a safe and supportive talk environment to encourage all pupils to participate in the oral work that is a key feature of lesson starters
- activities allow pupils to work as groups, pairs and individuals
- sessions need to be fast-paced (though not necessarily delivered at high speed)
- classroom organisation has to be considered: flexible seating arrangements, lines of eye-contact, space for groups to work
- resources need to be planned/prepared in advance to ensure availability.

Generic activities and routines for KS3 lesson starters

Teacher in focus

In the KS3 lesson starter, the aim is to ensure that every pupil is fully engaged with each of the tasks or activities, whether working as an individual, part of a group or with the rest of the class. Most lesson starters will include several short activities that maintain pupils' interest while focusing explicitly on the teacher's chosen objective. A well-balanced starter will allow time for pupils to work without teacher intervention for some of the time, but will also include some direct and specific input from the teacher in order to move the learning on, influence the direction that the learning takes, differentiate the level of challenge to meet pupils' individual needs and ensure that the main teaching points are conveyed clearly.

Examples

- Explanation
- Composition
- Discussion
- Using questioning techniques, giving instructions or providing a challenge
- Summary

Get up and go

These activities involve pupils in some kind of action or movement around the room. The pupils will usually operate as pairs or individuals and, sometimes, as small groups. The movement may be fairly static (as in changing chairs with a partner to position themselves correctly for the two parts of a word) or the whole class may be moving around the room at the same time (as when each pupil holds part of a clause and must locate pupils with the remaining words to complete the sentence).

Examples

- Demonstrate
- Select an action
- Work in role
- Choose position or change position

Time out

These activities provide pupils with a few moments to think, talk, write, read or work without teacher intervention. They provide useful opportunities for pupils to collaborate and support one another and can help to ensure that it is not only the most vocal pupils and the quickest thinkers who eventually contribute to whole class discussion. Time out may last from just a minute's discussion time with a partner to several minutes for an activity such as reviewing writing. Since a complete lesson starter will not usually be longer than ten to twelve minutes, most Time out activities will last between one and four minutes.

Examples

- Investigate
- Hypothesise
- Summarise
- Plan
- Draft/Quickwrite
- Frame ideas or questions
- Gather or collate
- Discuss/Decide
- Edit, change or complete

Show me

The pupils are provided with some means of showing the teacher their response to a series of questions, using pre-printed cards, hand-written cards or card fans that can be opened and displayed in different combinations. If these visual prompts can be laminated, they can be held up easily and can be used again. The pupil's choice is usually limited (for example, to an either/or choice, such as **s** or **es** for the correct plural suffix for the words the teacher says) so that the activity can be well-paced. Show me activities require pupils to make their decisions quickly without picking up aural clues directly from those around them. For this reason, they are ideal opportunities for on-the-spot, speedy assessment - it will be very evident which pupils are making incorrect choices when they hold their cards up and the teacher can spot equally well those who are a little hesitant.

Examples

- Choice cards
- Word or letter fans
- Mini-whiteboards
- Large format notepaper