

## Tuneful Chatter Resource: Teamwork

### Age Group: 2 – 5 years

Early years activities for teamwork, sharing, turn-taking and play.

By Grace Wilkinson and the darts team



## Warm Ups

### Fabric Exploration

**You will need:** A clear space and any fabric you can find. This could be a blanket from the reading corner, a tablecloth, a bedsheet, or even old scarves.

This activity gets the imagination rolling, as your fabric can turn into anything. You could even place the fabric into the middle and see what the little minds decide that it becomes. But if you're stuck for inspiration, here are a few ideas we have used before:

- If you're exploring a story, can it be made into something from that story? For example, in the cave in *We're Going On A Bear Hunt*, can everyone fit under the fabric and sit in the cave? Can we take turns crawling through the cave?
- What else could the fabric be? A sledge being pulled around the floor, a big crashing wave, getting hair wet by being lifted up and down. Can you turn it into a hiding place away from aliens, an iglu or even a superhero cape or princess dress.
- How can we make it more sensory? Can the staff make a breeze with the fabric by lifting it up and down? Focusing on the textures, does it feel nice on the skin? Can we make a swinging hammock if it's stretchy? Can we roll it up like a taco?

**Top tip:** Things like fabric or texture colour can help set the scene for a session. Don't be afraid to use the same fabric for different themes; as long as you sell it with storytelling, the children will be happy to believe it is what you say it is.

### Introducing Ourselves

**You will need:** A prop or imaginary object.

This activity helps with turn-taking and getting voices into the space. After a few weeks of repetition, you may well see more willingness from quieter voices in the room.

With everyone sitting in a circle, introduce the object to the room, passing it around the circle for each child to introduce themselves in turn. Model first, introducing yourself with a simple statement e.g. Hello, my name is Grace.

**What object do I choose?** This may be a character in a story, an imaginary object picked from the images in the book, a twig (or adventure stick), an instrument, or something that lights up. If your object doesn't exist, ask the children to describe it to build that sense of magic.

### Access

Introductions can also be made through Makaton, Sign Language, or staff verbalisation if the prop is introduced to every child, no matter where they are in the room or how much they can contribute verbally.

### Examples

How do you move the object? If it's an animal, are we gentle? Do we throw it or pass it carefully? Is it a heavy rock or a sticky apple? If so, how does this affect how we hold it? What is the temperature e.g. is it a cold snowball that makes you shiver.



A favourite adaptation of this is from The Hungry Caterpillar. It starts as a small green pom-pom, then gets bigger each week (sew a couple more pom-poms on each week) until it finally turns into a butterfly made from paper.

**Top tip:** If you're unsure what object to use, introduce an everyday object but whisper that it's magic! Give it a name, turn it into a character, and your everyday pinecone, pen, or teddy bear will become much more exciting.



### Main activities

#### Collective Movement and Mime

This is a good exercise for maintaining or developing focus. It introduces the idea of teamwork whilst adding some structure to the creativity.

Choose a shape that you will make as a group. Depending on the theme, you will create an object or scene with your bodies together:

- Line (one behind the other)- This could be a train, a caterpillar, a worm, a river, or a huge broomstick.
- Circle (holding hands) - This could be the sun, a big wheel, a planet or a puddle.
- Line (shoulder to shoulder)- This could be a rainbow or skiers ready to race down a hill.
- Archway (two lines facing, palms joined in the air) - This could be a tunnel, where each child takes turns to break off and run through.

We can then add movement to bring this to life.

Movements could include:

- Moving in that shape together - creating a gigantic worm that wiggles around the room, a spinning planet, penguins racing to the other side of the room on their bums.
- Tiptoeing in turn overstepping stones or creeping towards pirate treasure.
- Changing speed/size - a slow-moving train to a fast one, a large puddle and a small one.
- Marching together—You could introduce, “Follow the leader” or call-and-response, e.g., “We’re going on a bear hunt, and we’re going to catch a big one.”

### **A Big Old Boogie**

**You will need:** A speaker/ device to play music from

We often use this towards the end of a session or story to celebrate the happy ending or resolution. It’s always a fan favourite with the children, too.

**Is this activity simply having a dance together?** Yes. To keep the energy, copy children’s movements, get them to copy yours, or encourage them to copy each other. We love this exercise as 100% effort is key from us as grown-ups. The silliness we show gives the children the chance to be silly too.

**How can I add to this activity to keep it engaging?** There are many variations. You can introduce a pause in the music and get them to freeze. You could also introduce structure by asking them to stomp or clap to the beat. You could also introduce a sequence of repeated dance moves inspired by the theme. Or, take the pressure off and dance how you like.

**What if there is a lot of energy in the room already?** Introduce a second, slower song, ask them to notice the difference and see if it encourages calmer movements. You can also play around with volume, get the children to adapt their movement depending on what they hear.

We have used this as a dance with aliens, in the dark with our eyes closed - with shy groups, or a goodbye dance with ‘The Tiger Who Came to Tea’ before they head home.

**Top tip:** If you don’t know what song to use, you can always ask the children to tell you their favourite songs or learn from their grown-ups beforehand.





## Cool Downs

### Creative Breathing

**You will need:** Feathers (optional)

A breathing activity helps to create a sense of calm after busy and exciting sessions. We would set this in a circle or allow children to sit independently in a space in the room.

- First, model how to take a deep breath through your nose and out through your mouth. The more exaggerated you model this, the better! Repeat this around five times, the final breath being the biggest.
- Can I tie this into my theme? There are many examples of how breath can be written into your story. Are you blowing bubbles, blowing out candles, sending a star, or casting magic into the sky? If it helps, set the scene of imagining the object in your hand in front of your mouth. Then send your hands upwards with your breath, wiggling the fingers to let it go.
- How can I make the room feel calm? You can always add some calming meditation music or nature soundtracks. Consider turning down the lights or adding a sensory light for them to lie and watch whilst breathing.

**Top tip:** If the group find it difficult to grasp, use feathers. Place them in their palms, and their breath will move the feather from their hands.

### Goodbye Song

Find a goodbye song that works for you! Repeating this activity every week provides a recognisable structure that flows nicely to the end of every session. We would advise doing this in a circle to maintain the calm after breathing.

A simple verse that we use and repeat is:

Goodbye everyone!

Goodbye everyone!

Glad that you could come.

How else could it be sung? Maybe loudly, then in a whisper, or quickly, then slowly, squeaky or in the voice of a character. The children always develop inventive ideas on ways to sing if you ever find yourself stuck.

You could also introduce Makaton, movement or actions to the song. It could be as simple as a wave or patting the knees to the beat.

