

Circle games

Circle games are invaluable in the primary classroom. They can be used to refocus a fussy class, invigorate a sleepy class, calm an over-stimulated class and organise pupils into working groups. By playing circle games pupils can practise positive communication skills. Circle games reinforce a climate of trust, friendship and fun.

When teaching PSHE education and citizenship lessons, class teachers often like to begin with a circle game.

Below are a selection of circle games taken from various resources and collected over many years...some will become your favourites and your children's favourites.

Affirm special names

Each child says their special name in turn. Special names can be decided at the beginning of the year and can be positive alliterative names, *Amazing Angela* or *Happy Helen*.

To develop self esteem

Alphabet

A child calls out 'a' and the person on their left calls out 'b' and so on around the circle. The facilitator calls out two letters that must change places or says a word and the letters used in that word must swap seats. If 'alphabet' is called, then all students must change places.

A mixing up game

Bananas in pyjamas

A child is chosen to stand in the middle of the circle and shuts their eyes or wears a blind fold. Another child is chosen to say '*bananas in pyjamas*'. The child in the middle has to guess who it was that spoke.

To develop listening and awareness of who is in the class

Birthday month

If your birthday is instand up, change seats (across the circle)

A mixing up game

Breakfast

Go round the circle with everyone saying what they had for breakfast. Someone is then chosen to go into the middle and ask '*what did I have for breakfast?*' The first person to correctly remember then has a chance to go into the middle and so on.

A memory game

Bugs Bunny

Everyone in the circle claps to a rhythm. One person calls a name and that person has to put both their hands up by their ears. The person on the right must put their hand left hand to their ear and the person on the left must put their right hand to their ear. The last one to do their action has a go at calling someone's name out.

A fun game to get everyone concentrating

Can we cross your golden river?

The children chant 'Can we cross your golden river?' Reply with an 'only if' statement. For example: 'Yes, but only if... you are wearing blue' or 'Yes, but only if you know bullying has happened in the last week'.

A mixing up or setting the scene game

Chinese drawing

The first person draws a number on someone's back with their finger. This person draws the same number on the next person's back and so on round the circle....does the circle end with the same number that started?

Good for lessons studying media stories/ historic written sources and developing gentle touch

Chinese whispers

Set a whisper round the circle – children pass it on...and see what it ends up as

Good for lessons studying media stories or gossip within a bullying context

Choose a cheer

(Develop a range of different cheers with the class) One child chooses a cheer for the whole class to cheer! Or choose one child to be cheered!

A celebration or to encourage a team mentality

Co-operative fish

There are 6-8 fish, cut up into 4 pieces. These pieces have been muddled up and are handed out randomly. Children complete the jigsaws and help each other. This can be done in silence also.

To group children in smaller groups

Class story

The group make up a story by saying one word at a time

Can give a feeling of whole class involvement/achievement

Crazy creatures

The facilitator calls out a number between 2 and 6. The class gets into groups of that size. Facilitator calls out '4 legs, 5 hands, 2 knees' and groups must make a creature where they are all touching each other and their total contact with the floor is 4 legs, 5 hands, 2 knees. Creatures can be presented to the rest of the class.

To group children in smaller groups and develop gentle touch

Don't jangle the keys

Pass a set of keys around the circle without jangling them or making a sound.

A calming/closing/relaxing/coming back together as a group game

Drop your name in the well

Imagine a well in the middle of the circle. Going round the circle, children take it in turns to say their name as if they are dropping it in a well. Their name might be a stone (whisper) a pebble (louder voice) or a boulder (a very deep loud voice).

To develop confidence

For breakfast I ate... or I went to the shop and I bought... or In Granny's basket there is...

Each child adds something to the list that the next child has to remember the whole list and add on their item.

A round to develop listening and memory

Fruit salad or animal zoo or vegetable stew or rainbow or calculator

Label all the children as a fruit, vegetable, animal, colour of the rainbow, number. When the facilitator calls their name they must walk across the circle and swap seats with another child. If you say 'fruit salad', 'vegetable stew', 'animal zoo', 'rainbow' or 'calculator' (depending on which game you are playing) all the children change seats.

A mixing up game

Gentle Giant

One child sits in the middle of the circle (the gentle giant) and paper flowers are placed all around the child. The rest of the children are numbered 1-5. The leader calls out a number from 1-5 and the relevant children try and take a flower from the garden. If they manage this without being touched by the giant, they return to their seat keeping the flower. If a child is gently touched by the giant they need to return to their seat with no flower. However if the giant was not gentle they can keep the flower.

To develop gentle touch and turn taking

Groups

Children get into groups depending on what is called out. For example, number of letters in their first name.

To group children in smaller groups

Guess the noise

The facilitator holds a bag containing a range of objects that make a noise. The children are blindfolded or have eyes closed, or the object is shaken in the bag. The facilitator shakes an object. The children must guess the object.

To encourage listening skills

Handwriting

The children work in pairs with their eyes closed and take it in turns to 'write' on their partners palm a word, letter or shape with one finger. Encourage clear and exact writing. The child who is receiving the message tries to guess what it is and may ask for a repeat if necessary.

For developing a sense of gentle touch

Hello, my name is ...

Say hello to person on your left, using their name 'Hello...' Introduce yourself. 'I am...' Introduce the person on your right, 'This is...' Children continue this pattern around the circle.

To get to know each other and to develop thinking/presentation/organisation skills

House on fire! (for adults or older children)

Each child chooses one item to save from a burning house, the facilitator lists these. All the participants walk around meeting each other and giving another person their object, (by telling them their object) they then pass this on to the next person and so on. At the end, the facilitator asks who has what object and checks these off on the list to see if everyone's special object has been saved.

A listening, memory and meeting everyone game

I am Sam I am

Everybody lines up and walks around the circle, saying 'I am Sam I am' in a particular style (happy, cool, shy, friendly) - encourage the children to really show the emotion. This can be done individually with the other children deciding which emotion is being demonstrated.

To develop understanding of feelings

I'm thinking of someone in the class who...

Someone chooses a person and describes three things about them. These descriptions can include positive aspects of their personality and strengths as well as their appearance. The rest of the class guess who the secret person is.

To develop self esteem

Jack in the box

The first person stands up, says their name and then introduces the two people on their left, starting with the person nearest to them, and so on round the circle. Each person stands up and sits down quickly when their name is called.

A quick thinking name game that raises energy

Keeper of the keys

A chair is placed in the middle of the circle. A bunch of keys is placed underneath. Someone is chosen to be detective and sit on the chair blindfolded. The facilitator chooses a thief and they must creep quietly in the middle and remove the keys as quietly as they can. The detective must listen carefully to try and hear which direction they went in. The thief returns to their seat and puts the keys behind him/her. The detective is then allowed to open his/her eyes and has three goes at guessing the thief.

Can develop listening skills, settle a class for more circle work, raise self esteem

Lines

Children line up in sequence depending on what is called out (youngest to oldest, height, hand span, how long it took them to get to school). This can be done silently to make it more difficult.

To group children in smaller groups

Magic box

Mime opening a magic box and take an item out. Mime using it/wearing it etc...then put it back it back in the box and pass the box on. (You could always use a real box if preferred but with imaginary objects.) The box can have a theme, if appropriate, for the lesson to follow.

A game to develop concentration, mime skills

Magic wand

The facilitator has a magic wand. As they point it round the circle, one by one, the children suggest ideas for the class to act as. The facilitator says 'act' and all children start acting. The facilitator says 'stop' at anytime and the wand continues to be pointed round the circle.

To awaken a sleepy class, to be aware of the difference of stillness and movement and develop turn taking

Melting ice, snow people

One child follows the other, children slide off their seats as if they are melting very slowly.

A calming/closing/relaxing/coming back together as a group game

Mexican wave

One by one, children stand up around the circle and wave their arms high to make a Mexican wave.

A celebration or to encourage a team mentality

Mini meditation/visualisation

Read out or play from a CD a visualisation or meditation to calm the pupils.

A calming, relaxing, coming together as a group activity

Mirroring

Children paired in two lines opposite each other have to mirror the others actions. The leader makes smooth movements which the follower copies/mirrors. They can go through activities like face washing, brushing teeth etc. Pairs can present to the class who can identify who is leading.

Good for developing eye contact/partner relationships

Monster

The monster stands in the middle of the circle and engages eye contact with someone and walks towards them to eat them for dinner. The only way that person can save themselves is to look at someone else, when they have eye contact they can say their name. If they do this before the monster catches them they are saved and now the monster must walk towards the named person and try and catch them for dinner.

Good for developing eye contact

Mouse tails

Cut up pieces of string. Children stick these in the backs of the shoes/socks – tread on each others to pull the tails out of the socks!

To raise the energy of a group

Music – picture in my mind's eye

Play some music and ask children to listen to quietly – they might like to describe the image they see in their mind's eye.

A calming and relaxing activity

Musical chime

One child is blindfolded and sits in the centre of the circle. A musical chime is passed around the circle as quietly as possible. The child in the centre has to guess where the chime is.

To develop listening and class working together

Musical statues

The facilitator puts the music on, children dance and move. When the facilitator pauses the music, children become statues.

To awaken a sleepy class, to be aware of the difference of stillness and movement, body control and to develop listening

Paper, scissors, rock

Choose one child to begin the game. The child plays with the person to their left. All children count to three and make paper (flat hand), scissors (index and middle finger held open like scissors) or rock (clenched fist). One is declared the winner. The rules are scissors cut paper, rock blunts scissors and paper wraps rock. If they make the same action they have another turn. The eventual winner moves on to the next child on the left. The play continues until the action arrives back at the start.

Good for developing partner work

Pass the wink, nod, smile, squeeze

One by one each child passes the nod/wink or squeeze (hands or fingers) around the circle.

A calming, relaxing, coming together as a group game

Pass the conch shell

Each child listens to the shell and passes it on...

A calming, relaxing group activity

Pass the rhythm

The leader claps a rhythm, the next person repeats and so on round the circle.

To encourage a speedy round and bring a group together

Pass the pom pom

Give all the pupils a coloured pom pom. Pass them to the left, as the facilitator says 'left'. Repeat and change to 'right'. Do this very slowly at first and gradually speed up. Ask children to close their eyes and repeat this. Each time every child should be holding a pom pom. It is harder than it sounds! Children can then swap seats across the circle – depending on which colour ball they are holding

To encourage right and left sides of the brain and group dynamic

Postie

Each child is given a number. The facilitator asks certain numbers to change places. For example 'the post person is delivering to numbers 6 and 21' or 'the post person is delivering to all even numbers in the street'. If 'collection time' is called everyone changes places.

A mixing up game

Say my name, swap seats

Child A says another's name (child B) and they swap seats. Child B says another's name (child C) and they swap seats and so on, until all the children have swapped seats.

For mixing up, ensuring everyone is included and remembering names

Silent orchestra

The facilitator plays an imaginary, silent instrument – children copy. Extend by asking pupils to lead. Extend further by children only looking *across* the circle – children must only copy the person opposite. Extend further by putting a child in control and the others guessing who it is.

Good for working as a group, concentration, eye contact

Sleepy tambourine

Pass a tambourine around the circle. It must not make a sound – children must pass it carefully so as not to wake it up.

A calming/closing/relaxing/coming back together as a group game

Spot the leader

A person is chosen to be detective and faces away from the circle. A leader is then chosen to lead the group in body percussion (clapping, tapping, clicking, rolling hands), the group follow watching the changes but not staring at the leader. The detective is then returned to the circle and has three chances to guess the leader.

To develop awareness of who is in the class and self esteem, group work

Stand up, sit down

All the class sits down in the circle, one by one the children stand up but must not stand up at the same time as each other or the whole class must start the game again! This must be done silently. Repeat, to sit down.

Can help to develop turn-taking

Count up/down

As above but count in numbers as children stand up.

Can help to develop turn-taking

Sticky jelly

The facilitator takes some imaginary sticky jelly from their pocket and throws it across the room, it lands on someone's face and they must peel it off (it is very noisy jelly) and send it across the circle to someone else.

Good for initiating eye contact

Story stem

Split the circle into two halves. The facilitator stands up and begins a story. They then walk over to the other side of the circle and touch someone on the shoulder. They tell the next sentence and touch someone else from across the circle to continue...and so on...

Can give a feeling of whole class involvement/achievement

Straight face

In two straight lines one person has to get the person opposite to smile. This can be done with an inner circle facing an outer circle. This should only be done for a short time, 15-30 seconds for each attempt and then swap partners. A similar game is **I love you honey** – one person stands in the middle and must try to make the others laugh by saying 'I love you honey'. If someone laughs, they must go in the middle.

A fun game to develop eye contact and laughter!

Squeak piggy squeak

One child wears a blindfold (child A). The facilitator spins them round carefully and helps them walk to another child (child B) and places child A's hands on child B's shoulders. Child B says 'eek, eek, eek' (in a squeaky piggy voice). Child A must guess who it is.

To develop listening skills, awareness of touch, awareness of who is in the class

Super heroes!

All the children take turns to perform a super hero gesture (like Superman, for example)
A celebration or to encourage a team spirit

Super flourish

Rather than passing on a gesture, pass on a flourish like the queen.
A celebration or to encourage a team spirit

Tangles

Children stand in an inward facing circle, with their eyes shut. With arms outstretched they slowly move towards the centre. The object is for them to join hands without seeing who they are connecting with. When this is done, they all open their eyes. They must now untangle themselves so that they form a circle without letting go of each other.

A touch game to encourage team-work

Treasure

Sit a child on a chair in the centre of the circle. Blindfold them. They are the guard. Put some treasure for example, a bunch of keys under the chair. Choose another child to come and 'steal' the treasure...the guard must protect the treasure by pointing and saying 'stop' to the thief...the thief must get the treasure before this happens.

Can develop listening skills and settle a class for more circle work

Truth/untruth

The children take it in turns to state something true about themselves. Then they take it in turns to state something which isn't true.

Good when discussing gossiping or being honest, getting to know each other

Under the blanket

One person (child A) leaves the room and another hides under the blanket in the middle of the circle. The circle closes up and child A comes back in and has to say who is missing.

To encourage awareness of being a part of the class/group

Weather massage

If your school follows the massage in schools programme you might like to practise the weather massage.

A calming, relaxing, coming together as a group activity

Who has left the circle?

All the children wear blindfolds. The facilitator touches one child on the shoulder who leaves the room. The other children remove their blindfolds and guess who has left the room.

To encourage awareness of being a part of the class/group

Who's got the phone?

One child wears a blindfold. The facilitator gives another child a mobile to hide. All the children sing 'who's got the phone'. The child with the phone sings 'I've got the phone' (using a silly voice). The blindfolded child must guess who it is that has the phone.

To develop listening and awareness of who is in the class

Zombie

One person is chosen to start. They make eye contact with someone across the circle, walk towards them (in a zombie-like fashion) and take their place. That person then repeats. Continue until everyone has had a go.

A mixing up game and to develop use of eye contact

Zoom, zoom, Eek!

Pass the word 'zoom' very quickly round the circle. One child might decide to 'eek' which reverses the zoom! The aim is for all children to be involved so young children could be given only one 'eek'. With older children, encourage them to notice what happens (i.e. some children get left out) and rectify it.

Good for lessons on bullying when it includes excluding from friendship groups