

QUALITY CIRCLE TIME

Structure and Tips

Focus and Skills

Find a focus that:

- Links with the PSHE lessons
- Connects with the children`s needs

Remind the children of the 5 skills:

- Lower Prep – children recite the skills and do the motions
- Upper Prep – ask questions that remind them of the skills

Step One: Meeting Up – You choose a game to help everyone ‘meet up’. By beginning with a specially selected game, and not with ‘talking’, you establish that learning is fun – and being with each other is even more fun.

Examples:

- Fruit Basket
- Change places if...
- Simon says
- Follow the Leader
- Hunter and Hunted
- Who’s talking now?
- Pass a Greeting
- Walking on... (mud, ice, trampoline, quicksand, hot coals...)

Step Two: Warming up – Children need to ‘warm up’ to speaking. By using a small talking object, during ‘the round’, every child has a turn and knows not to interrupt the one who is speaking.

- Small children can have a puppet tell them what is going to happen and asks them what they would like to say.
- The round could be a whole sentence based on a given sentence stem, or a word, or a turn-taking song or rhyme.

Examples:

- ✓ My name is _____ and I like to _____
- ✓ I like to play with _____ (person) because _____
- ✓ I know someone is unhappy when I see them _____
- ✓ If I were a magician, I would _____
- ✓ At school, I like it when _____
- ✓ One thing I am looking forward to is _____

Step Three: Opening up – We help children develop empathy, by exploring situations and issues that are important to them.

Puppets (P1-2 mostly): The puppets can have the same problems as the children, for example not wanting to

- leave Mum in the morning, feeling shy, unable to share.
- Puppets also have a lot of joys they want the children to share in.

Stories: These are a powerful way of engaging children's hearts and minds.

- role-play, mime, thought tunnel– where any 'story' can be acted and reflected upon.

Whole group activity: When you want to make things more exciting

- 2 min for children to go around shaking everyone's hands and telling them a fact about themselves or child needs to find a seat and others keep on moving around to shut them out
- Discuss the difference between telling tales and reporting bullying by sharing examples and why people don't always report incidents
- Ask if anyone needs help; pupils raise their hands and share – Ask for suggestions to help those children (Would it help if...?)

Step Four: Cheering up – Often the previous ‘opening-up’ step is intense – involving children in imagining, mime and empathising. Step Four helps to get children ‘centred’ again.

- ❑ children can teach new games to their peers
- ❑ mime, learn to skip with their accompanying rhymes
- ❑ sing new songs
- ❑ praise each other for the particular skills or values

It’s a time for celebration!

Examples:

- Well done, everyone, for speaking clearly and confidently
- Mexican wave
- Ask children who within the group is an excellent listener
 - give out 1 or 2 certificates
- Commend specific children who were very sensible or made useful suggestions



Step Five: Calming down – We now need to bridge the children calmly to go to their next activity.

- ❖ pass an object around without any sound
- ❖ play some of nature's sounds on a CD and they have to listen and guess.
- ❖ teach some simple breathing techniques
- ❖ simple visualisations
- ❖ Pass the squeeze

‘Pick ‘n’ Mix’ the Five Steps

You can choose different steps according to the emotional and social needs of your children and size of your circle. You might do a Meeting Up– Opening Up– Calming Down.

✓ BUT you **never** end on a Step Three – Opening Up

Step Three opens hearts and minds – so it always needs another step after it to distance the child from his/her earlier involvement and to get them ready to rejoin the ‘outside’ world.

Golden Rules for adults

- Prepare a structured session plan and all its resources.
- Base the plan on the needs of the children.
- Put a really happy, fun face on – or delay Circle Time until you can!
- Be led by the children's needs, feelings and thoughts.
- Don't speak too much, but join in.
- Keep a brisk pace
- No 'put downs' in the circle – always praise the child who is doing the opposite behaviour to the child whose behaviour is worrying you.
- Don't be afraid to try things out and learn from experience.