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# Introduction

Learning centres are a wonderful way to encourage independent learning, add creative reinforcement to more structured lessons, and allow students to work at a comfortable pace. Learning centres may be an integral part of a unit of study or a reward for having completed the day's assignments. Learning centres make it possible for teachers to be in more than one place at a time. Teachers are able to work with groups of students while sending individual students or pairs to learning centres. This book will supplement your good ideas with a potpourri of additional ideas which can be placed in the various learning centres.

## What Is a Learning Centre?

A learning centre is an area in a classroom where one or more children can participate in activities designed for enrichment and review of current learning and for reinforcement of the skills being taught. A learning centre coordinated with the curriculum enhances skills and learning.

A centre can consist of games, activities, manipulatives, or reading materials. A listening centre with special equipment such as a tape recorder with headphones, a computer, calculator, or typewriter may constitute a centre. As new topics are introduced or areas of special interest develop, new centres may be created. Rather than serve as primary instruction, a learning centre supports what is taught in the classroom. A centre provides an alternative to the traditional concept of seatwork. It allows the student an opportunity to independently practise skills and assume responsibility for learning, while freeing the teacher to work with small groups or individual students.

## Why Should I Use a Learning Centre?

Children learn best when they are actively involved in learning. Manipulating maths materials, writing and publishing their own stories, creating plays, exploring the world through maps and globes, or reviewing new vocabulary words are just a few of the learning centre activities that provide students with hands-on involvement. Centres accommodate different learning styles which, in turn, give students an opportunity to become more creatively involved in their own education.

Learning centres also help students learn how to work independently. As students want to find the answers for themselves, they become more responsible for completing tasks, checking them, and cleaning up. As patterns for using the centres are established, organisational skills develop.

The nature of the learning centre gives students freedom to learn on their own. They begin to think more critically and solve problems. Specific activities may require higher levels of thinking, as well as providing an environment that is conducive to this kind of learning.

*Learning Centres for Intermediate Classrooms* provides a sampling of a variety of learning centre activities that are ready to use with little or no preparation. The activities will supplement classroom studies in the areas of English, Maths, Science, Study of Society and Environment, Technology, and for a fun way to reinforce all subjects, Games and Puzzles.

# Introduction *(cont.)*

## How Do I Set Up a Learning Centre?

The organisation and setup of learning centres are keys to developing a successful program in your classroom. Where and how you place your centres is important, remembering that they must be useable within your classroom. They may be set up on walls, in corners, behind partitions, on tables, on desks, or even in storage bins. Some centres may require an arrangement of equipment and materials where there is a water source, electrical outlet, or a special light. Wall space around a room is often a good place to set up learning centres. With such an arrangement, students are spread out around a room, so crowding doesn't take place. Flexibility is your most important asset in setting up centres.

## How Do I Use a Learning Centre?

Your first job is to introduce the learning centre to your students. Let them know what the centres are for and how to use and take care of them, including cleaning up. This should be repeated every time new centres are introduced. Plan to spend some time at the beginning of each month explaining the proper procedures to follow at the centres. It may be helpful to post procedures and rules near each centre. Some general rules include the following:

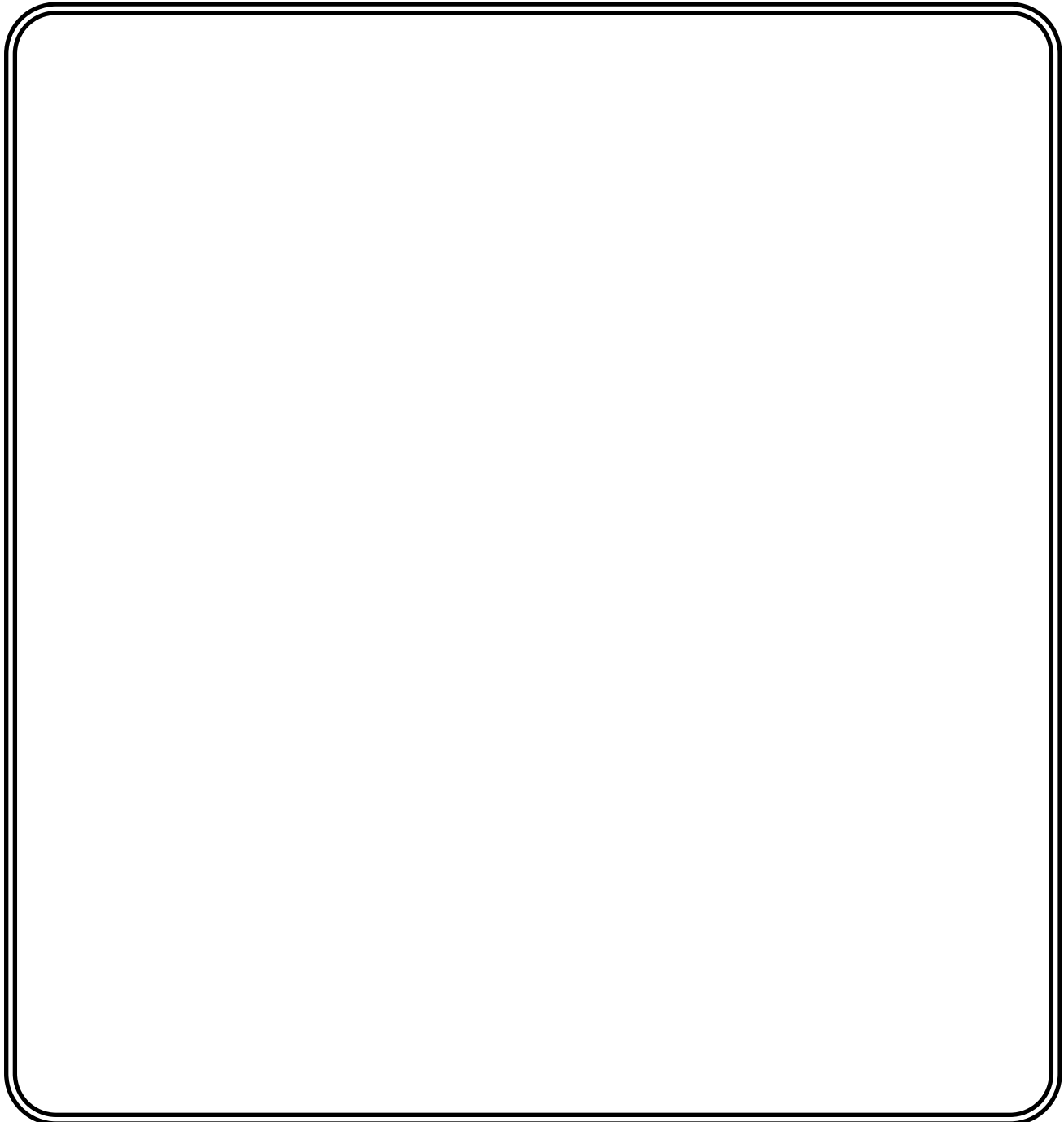
1. Use only one centre at a time.
2. Put finished activities away before leaving.
3. Keep voices at an appropriate level.
4. Be careful with materials and equipment.
5. When finished, quietly return to your seat.



# A New Product!

New products are being created all the time. Now it's your turn to think of a new product and sell it. First, you will need to brainstorm for some ideas. Your product could be a food, a hair product, a cleaning aid, a new kind of shoe, or whatever you can imagine.

In the space below, write the advertisement that will promote your new product. Be sure to make people excited about your new product, tell them why they should buy it, and where to find it. Next, create a poster to show what your product will look like. You can use the back of this page to make a sketch. Make your poster colourful and attractive so that people will want to buy your product. Use the checklist on page 11 to check your work.



# Interviews

Interviews and profiles of famous people are a popular form of journalism. You will be interviewing a classmate, and, in turn, your classmate will interview you. First, make a list of interesting questions. The usual questions like, where were you born, what is your favourite colour and how many brothers and sisters do you have are fine but think of some unusual questions, too. After you have plenty of questions (try to have about 10–15), get together with a partner and take turns interviewing each other. Write the responses quickly and, after the interview is over, take your notes and write a story about your partner and include the most interesting facts. Your interview should be at least one page. When you are finished, your teacher may want to collect the interviews and put them into a classroom book, complete with a photograph. She or he may also ask you to introduce your partner to the rest of the class by sharing some of the things you learnt in your interview.

Here are some interview questions to add to the ones that you come up with:

- If you were an animal, what animal would you be?
- What is your favourite season of the year, and why?
- If you could paint your entire house inside and out with one colour, what would it be and why?
- When you have children, what will you name them?
- If you could only have one book for the rest of your life, what book would you choose?
- If you were a car, what car would you be?
- What food do you hate the most?
- Do you like to climb trees? Why or why not?
- What is the most unusual place you have ever been?
- What is the most embarrassing thing that has ever happened to you?
- What chore do you dislike the most?
- What famous person would you like to meet?
- Who do you look like the most, your mum or your dad?
- What is your favourite song and why?
- What would you like to change about yourself?
- Do you think you will be famous some day? For what?

# Writer's Guide

## ☐ *Personal Experience Story*

A personal experience story is a true story about something unusual that happened to you. It can be amazing or wonderful, scary or sad, or something which caused you to say to yourself, "Oh, yeah! Now I understand!"

Write a personal experience story. Write it in the *first person*, that is, using the pronoun 'I.' Use nouns, verbs, and adjectives which will make your story come 'alive' for your reader. Allow your reader to see, smell, feel, and hear what happened. Always remember that when you write, you write something for someone else to read. You want your story to be as clear as possible.

Some suggestions for ways to begin your personal experience story are as follows:

- The funniest thing that ever happened to me was...
- I'll never forget the day that...
- Have you ever had a big surprise? I mean a REALLY big surprise? Well, I want to tell you about the biggest surprise I ever had. It was...
- I was so scared the day that...

Now, do you have a few ideas about how to begin your personal experience story? Good! Now you can get on with it!

## ☐ *Poetry*

There is a style or form of poetry to fit every taste. Some poems are formal with a specific rhyme scheme. A *limerick* is formal in the sense that it contains a definite number of lines (five), with a specific rhythm like these:

There once was a great reading class  
That tried very hard, but alas,  
The spring sun was shining,  
And the students were pining  
To run without shoes through the grass.

There once was a student in school  
Who followed a practical rule:  
She hid all her books  
In crannies and nooks  
And never ate bugs from a pool.

As you can see, *formal* doesn't necessarily mean serious!

