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Introduction

What is a Smart Starter?

A Smart Starter changes “extra” moments in a classroom setting into teachable moments. They are designed to take short amounts of time. However, Smart Starters are NOT short on substance. The Smart Starters in this book are packed full of important skills to practise and polish or to reinforce and extend.

When are Smart Starters used?

As their name suggests, they are good for igniting learning. Instead of the slow move into a class period, lesson or school day, a Smart Starter quick-starts the action. Each one warms up the brain with a sparkling challenge. Students also need this kind of spark at times other than the beginning of the day or class period. Use a Smart Starter anytime there is a lull, or anytime students need a break from a longer activity. They work effectively to stimulate thinking at the beginning, end or middle of a class period, or any other time you can squeeze in an extra ten minutes.

Why use Smart Starters?

They’re energising! They’re stimulating! They’re fun! They nudge students to focus on a specific goal while “waking up” tired minds. They require students to make use of previously acquired knowledge and skills. Because of their short length, they ensure quick success and quick rewards – thus inspiring confidence and satisfaction for the learners.



How to Use This Book ...

Kick-Off a New Unit

The starters are grouped by general topics and skill areas. One or more of them might help to ease students into a new area of study. For instance, start off your unit on learning about pronouns with *Let's Agree* or *Definitely Indefinite!*

Spark a Longer Lesson

Any of these short activities can be expanded. A starter may inspire your students to develop questions or examples along the same lines or to expand the warm-up into a full-blown writing project. The concrete poetry project is a good example.

Review a Concept

Dust off those rusty skills with a Smart Starter. For instance: Are your students using misplaced and dangling modifiers? Refresh and deepen what they know about word order and meaning with *I Misplaced It!*

Charge-Up Thinking Skills & Ignite Creativity

The Smart Starters are not only for English lessons. Use them **anytime** to stimulate minds. Doing a Smart Starter will sharpen thinking processes and challenge brains. In addition, Smart Starters work well as starting points for students to create other similar questions and problems.



Let's Agree

A pronoun must agree with the word it refers to, its antecedent. It must agree in gender and number. Read the first set of sentences to students and have them identify the antecedents. Discuss how the pronouns and antecedents agree. Then write the second set of sentences on the board and have students edit them to make sure the correct pronouns are used.

Set 1:

1. Some of the students brought their lunches to the beach.
2. Mr Pinella brought a huge tub to hold all of them.
3. That was a great idea, except Mr P. put the tub too close to the water.
4. While everyone was looking at the tidepools, the tide came in and flipped it over.
5. All of the lunch bags were sopping wet, and Mr P. had to rescue them.
6. There he was ankle-deep in ocean water holding 30 dripping brown paper bags!
7. What a sight!

Set 2:

1. Everyone had sandwiches in their bag.
2. It's a good thing that most lunch-packers use plastic bags; it helped protect the food from the salt water.



It Is Definitely Indefinite!

Help students remember whether indefinite pronouns are singular or plural. Have students fold a paper into two columns. Students label the columns. Read the sentences or write the sentences on the board. Have students write the indefinite pronouns in the appropriate columns. Check for accuracy as students share their lists with the class.

Example: Everyone wants something, but most of the people get nothing.

Singular

everyone

something

nothing

Plural

most

- Anything can happen anytime, so you should be prepared for all events.
- Now, each of the boys must do detention because many observers told on them.
- Several had homework today because none of the students wanted to work in class.
- Both of the girls were asked to clean the board, while others had to work.
- Most of the biscuits from the party were eaten, but someone took just a bite out of a few and left them for someone else to eat. How rude!

Skill: Misplaced Modifiers



I Misplaced It!

It is important for students to identify misplaced modifiers. Help them to find the nasty beasts. Write the example sentence on the board. Ask students to describe the action in the sentence. Discuss how the placement of the modifier changes the sentence meaning.

Example: Misplaced: The kids saw three pigs riding the bus.
Correct: The kids riding the bus saw three pigs.

To reinforce the importance of watching for misplaced modifiers, write several of the misplaced sentences below on the board. Ask students to illustrate a sentence as it is written.

- Driving down the street, the deer ate corn as we watched.
- Dressed in a satin green gown, the boy couldn't take his eyes off the young woman.
- I sent a postcard to my friend in a bright green envelope.