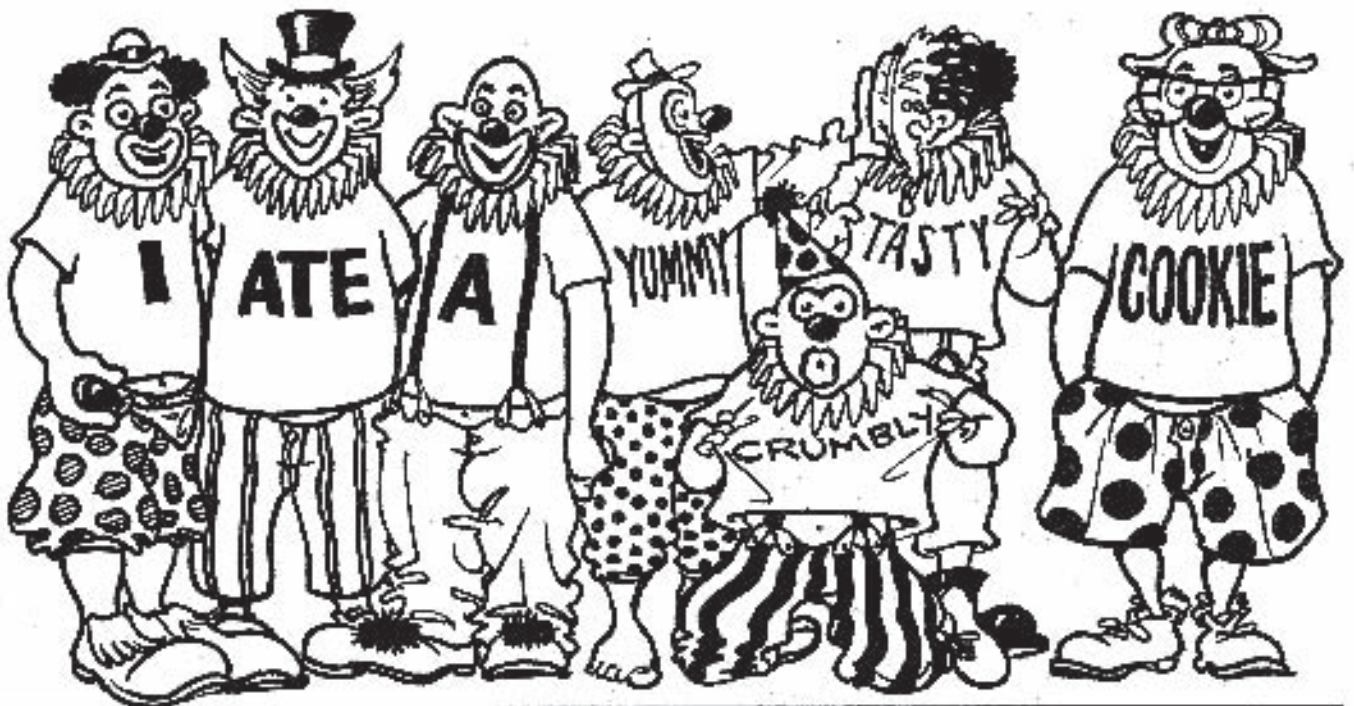


Ten-Minute English Warm-Ups



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INTRODUCTION

This book rests on three simple—but vital—ideas:

1. Skill building does have a place in the whole language classroom. To become competent and creative users of English, children need to know about and practise such varied skills as making effective word choices, editing, researching, creating lively dialogue and—yes—even getting punctuation and spelling right.

2. Skill-building practices in the English classroom must themselves be “whole”. The practices provided for students should integrate English. They also should build on the strengths students bring to the activities, so that as students learn the basics, they also use language joyfully.

3. Quick skill practices, if done regularly and tied to the English processes, can produce big results. To paraphrase the tortoise, short and steady wins the race.

THE WHOLE LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

In the whole language classroom students are involved in authentic work: reading books, writing for real audiences, talking about ideas and asking questions. The class is collaborative and student-centred. The focal point is the students' language and their ability to use that language in a variety of situations across the curriculum and in the world outside the classroom. (For a more detailed overview, see “Whole Language at a Glance” in the Resources section.)

POSITIVE PRACTICE

The whole language teacher is a coach who inspires, challenges, observes and empowers. As with an athletic coach, part of the job is to provide meaningful practices. In the whole language classroom, this means practices that develop key language and thinking skills. The teacher-coach carefully helps students link each practice to the ultimate payoff: playing the real “games” of reading, writing, talking and listening.

This book offers over seventy such integrated and powerful warm-up activities. These reusable practices are designed to encourage learning through trial and error, to

give students choices, to encourage students to take responsibility for creating meaningful work and to give them access to important ideas. While doing these practices, students have the opportunity to talk and listen to classmates, to draw upon their own background and skills, and to work collaboratively. All this occurs with a simple learning routine: Students try the activities, receive specific and meaningful feedback, and gain skills to use when they do the real work of language: reading, writing and carrying on conversations. (See “Tips for Effective Practice” on the following page.)

TEN MINUTES AND BEYOND

All of the practices can be done in about ten minutes, though occasionally a bit of preparation may be needed—for example, having the students collect photographs. In most cases, no special materials are required. For some activities, we have provided sample topic lists to help you get started. Items that are used in several practices—for example, fables, homonyms, proverbs—are given in the Resources section.

What if you can find more than ten minutes to invest in the kinds of practices presented here? Every practice activity is accompanied by an open-ended project. These in-depth activities are perfect for providing options to those students who have finished their other class work. Or use these extensions to encourage independent learning outside school hours. Many of these projects provide opportunities for creative parental involvement.

ACTIVITY SEQUENCE

The road to literacy is nonlinear. So is this book. You can start anywhere you like: at the beginning, in the middle or at the end. The skills exercised by a given activity appear in bold-face type in the activity overview.

If you want to focus on a specific skill—for example, descriptive writing or vocabulary building—turn to the index. There, you can look up practices according to skills or types of writing.

Whatever path you take into the book, we hope it leads to productive and joyful learning.

Tips for Effective Practice

Introducing a skill

When students are introduced to a new skill or concept, give them many practice opportunities in a short time. Mass practice, at this point, is a productive strategy.

Reinforcing a skill

When students have a growing understanding of a concept or skill, when your goal is to polish or reinforce, distribute the practices overtime. Having time elapse between practices at this stage will produce greater results.

Creating effective practices

- Keep practices short. Avoid boredom.
- Vary the formats. In addition to word-based practices, include speaking, listening, drawing, acting and so on. Consider different learning styles.
- Actively involve students; for example, try to tie activities to the knowledge they bring to the situation.
- Encourage collaboration. Sharing knowledge at this point in the learning process can give the tentative learner a big boost.
- Be clear about the short-term and long-term goals of the activity, and share the goals with the students. This can be as simple as saying something like, “We’re practising using quotation marks today because you’ll be using them in your picture-book making project next week.”
- Provide immediate feedback. This often involves student self-correction or peer evaluation.
- Do NOT mark practice. Students need to know that practice is a part of learning. At this stage, perfection is not expected. Mistakes are part of the process. Evaluation comes much later, after sufficient practice. (Having students mark a “P” at the top of practice papers helps them differentiate practice from other types of classroom work.)

AS TOLD TO

Movie stars and sports heroes often have their life stories ghostwritten—but why let them have all the glory? Your students can “ghost tell” stories for each other to sharpen **speaking** and **listening** skills.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Have students brainstorm their own lists of topics about their lives. Possibilities include places they have visited, people they know, events they have participated in and objects that having meaning for them—for example, musical instruments or sports equipment. (Keep the lists in writing folders or journals for use when the practice is repeated.)
2. Tell each student to pick one topic.
3. Divide the class into pairs.
4. For three or five minutes, have one student tell the other about the topic. While the first person talks, the partner takes notes. Explain that it's OK for the listener to ask for clarification or a slower pace.
5. The listener then retells the story.
6. Repeat this activity the following day with the roles reversed.

EXTENSION:

The students turn the notes into complete ghostwritten stories and then bind them into an “As Told To” anthology.



BOOK COVERS

Book covers are usually created after the book is written. But they don't have to be done this way. The task of designing a cover before writing a book can help students identify the **main idea**.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Have each student think up a topic for a children's picture book, for example, a trip to the footy or how to make a pizza.
2. Students list several important characters or actions that might be included in the book.
3. Now, they plan the cover of the book. This includes writing a working title and making a rough sketch of the cover art. The idea is to show and tell readers what the book is about.
4. Have students share their preliminary covers in small groups.

EXTENSION:

As an alternative to traditional book reports, students can create new book covers for the books they have read.

