

## Sticky-Note Compounds

*Builds vocabulary, spelling skills*

Prepare sticky notes in advance by writing on them the individual words that together form compound words. (For example, write *foot* on one sticky note and *ball* on another.) Put one note on each student's desk. As students come into the classroom, challenge them to find a classmate who has a sticky note that when paired with the one on their desk will form a compound word. Set a time limit on the activity.

## It Doesn't Add Up

*Builds math computation and thinking skills*

Provide for students several columns of numbers. A sum appears at the bottom of each column. But the numbers don't add up to the sum. They *will* add up, however, if one of the numbers is removed. Challenge students to figure out which number in each column does not belong. For example, the number 14 does not belong in this column.

$$\begin{array}{r} 26 \\ 19 \\ 14 \\ 22 \\ +18 \\ \hline 85 \end{array}$$

## Words Up!

*Builds spelling skills*

Write a long word on the board. Tell students they have 3 minutes to write down as many small words as they can find in that long word. Students can use the letters in any sequence. They might work independently or in pairs. You might allow them to use a dictionary to check their work. For older students, limit words to those with four letters or more or reduce the time allotted to complete the activity.


## Anagram Puzzles

*Anagrams are a terrific tool for stimulating students to think critically.*

Write the four phrases below on a board or chart. The letters in each phrase can be rearranged to spell a word. The words all have something in common. Challenge students to figure out the four words *and* what the words have in common.

- I PLOT
- TRAITS
- DENTS IT
- RANGER ED

**Answers:** *pilot, artist, dentist, and gardener are all jobs*



**What  
If...?**

*Pose the following question to students to start a lively discussion or use as a prompt for a quick journal-writing activity:*

What if you could meet one famous person, either alive or dead? Who would that person be?

# Snackin' With 20 Questions

*Builds classification, questioning skills*

Hold up a paper bag that contains a favorite snack food, such as pretzels, carrot sticks, or popcorn. Organize students into teams. Each team gets to ask a yes or no question about the snack food. If the answer is no, play moves to the next team. If the answer is yes, that team guesses the snack. If the team is incorrect, play moves to the next team. If the team is correct, the teammates divide the snack among themselves.

# Getting to Know U.S.

*Builds geography skills*


To help students get to know their U.S. geography, divide students into two groups. Have each group form a line in front of a U.S. map. The first two students in line should get ready because you will call out the name of state. The first of the two students to touch that state on the map goes to the end of his/her line. The other student is eliminated. Play continues until the last student in one of the lines has been eliminated.

**Variation:** If students are learning the state capitals, you might call out the name of the capital instead of the state name. Students must identify the correct state.

# Math Jeopardy

*Builds and reinforces math facts knowledge*

Use a Jeopardy-game format to review math. Provide students with the answers to math facts in the form of a statement. For example, "The answer is 30" or "When you multiply these two numbers, you get 30" or "These numbers are factors of 30." Students must give factors in the form of a question. For example, "What is 5 times 6?" or "What is 10 times 3?" Variation: Organize students into teams to complete the activity.



**What If...?**

*Pose the following question to students to start a lively discussion, or use it as a prompt for a quick journal-writing activity:*

What if you were able to buy one more thing to fit in your room at home? What would that thing be? Why would you choose to buy it?

# Analogy Puzzles

Analogies are a terrific tool for stimulating students to think critically. Write the following analogies on a board or chart. Challenge students to select the appropriate conclusion to each analogy. Have students share their responses and the reasoning behind them. Correct responses are shown in ***bold italic type***.

1. Author is to story as poet is to \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. play  
b. script  
c. ***poem***  
d. Mother Goose
2. Bee is to hive as boy is to \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. ***house***  
b. sting  
c. hornet  
d. office
3. Buy is to sell as stand is to \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. run  
b. salesman  
c. ***sit***  
d. lean
4. Mitten is to hand as sock is to \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. glove  
b. shoe  
c. ***foot***  
d. fingers
5. Spring is to season as August is to \_\_\_\_\_.  
a. ***summer***  
b. September  
c. vacation  
d. month

# Order! Order!

*Builds following-directions skills*

Place a slip of paper on each student's desk. That slip should have written on it a single direction from a sequence of four to five directions. (Examples: Directions for making chocolate chip cookies, playing baseball, or driving from school to the library.) Give students five minutes to find the classmates who have the other parts that complete their set of directions. Then the classmates stand and read aloud their set of directions in the correct sequence.

# Story Ball

*Builds storytelling, sequencing skills*

Tell students they will create a story in five minutes. Provide the opening sentence of the story. Toss a ball to a student. That student must say the next sentence. Then the student tosses the ball to a classmate. Continue until time is up.

**Extension:** Audiotape the activity and transcribe the tape. Have each student copy his or her sentence onto a piece of drawing paper and illustrate the sentence. Compile the sentences to form a book for the classroom library.

# Math Fact Match-Up

*Builds math facts or computation skills*

Here's a quick math facts review that gets students out of their seats. Gather index cards to match the number of students in the class. Write a number problem (for example,  $5 + 4$  or  $9 \times 3$ ) on half of the cards. Write the answers to those problems on the other set. Put one card facedown on each student's desk. Direct students to turn their cards over. Give students one minute to find the classmate who holds the matching number problem or answer.

**Note:** Of course, each solution card should be different from all the other solution cards.

**Variation:** For older students, make the math problems more challenging.


# More Anagram Puzzles

Anagrams are a terrific tool for stimulating students to think critically. Write the four phrases below on a board or chart. The letters in each phrase can be rearranged to spell a word. The words all have something in common. Challenge students to figure out the four words *and* what the words have in common.

Adapt the activity for younger students: To make the activity easier, tell students what the words have in common or arrange students in pairs to solve the anagram puzzles.

- TUTOR
- CASH FIT
- HOLD PIN
- ROUND ELF

*Answers: trout, catfish, dolphin, and flounder are all fish*



*Pose the following question to students to start a lively discussion, or use it as a prompt for a quick journal-writing activity:*

What if you could change one thing about yourself? What would you change? Why?

# Act-Out Adjectives

*Builds parts of speech and vocabulary skills*

This activity adds a new twist to the traditional game of Charades. Whisper an adjective to a student, or hand that student a slip of paper with an adjective written on it. Have the student act out the adjective without speaking as classmates try to guess the word.

**Variation:** This same activity might also be used to review verbs or nouns.

# Alphabet Scavenger Hunt

*Builds spelling, observation, and classification skills*

Use this activity with individuals or small groups. Assign each student or group a letter of the alphabet. Set a time limit, and challenge students to find as many classroom items as possible that begin with the assigned letter.

# Fractions in Action (Percents Too!)

*Builds geography and fraction/percent skills*

Call on students to close their eyes and spin a world globe. Students use a finger to stop the spinning globe, then write on the board the name(s) of the place(s) to which they pointed. Ask questions about the list of places that can be answered as a fraction. For example, *Out of the total number of spins, how many times did someone point to a body of water? a body of land? a spot north of the equator?*

**Variation:** Older students might answer using percentages rather than fractions.

# PixPuzzles

Picture puzzles such as the ones below are a terrific tool for stimulating students to think critically. Write or draw the following puzzles on a board or chart. Challenge students to study the puzzles to see if the words -- and the way they are written -- give them clues to the common expressions the puzzles illustrate.

1.  
ONCE

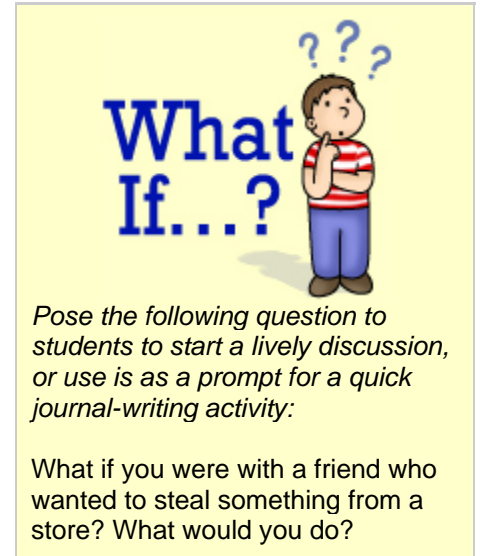
-----  
TIME

2.  
calm storm

3.  
tune  
tune  
tune  
tune

4.  
par  
two

*Answers: 1. Once upon a time; 2. calm before the storm; 3. fortune; 4. two under par*



# Thinking in the Abstract

*Builds creativity and cooperation skills*

Divide students into groups of four. Give each group a sheet of paper; give each student a different colored marker. The group will have four minutes to create an abstract design. Say "start" to signal the first student to start drawing. After one minute, say "time" and tell the first student to pass the design to someone else in the group. Repeat until students have a finished creation to display.

# Guess the Gadget

*Builds following directions and descriptive writing skills*

Organize students into small groups. Provide each group with a piece of paper that has written on it the name of a common gadget or utensil found in the home. (Examples: blender, CD player, electric can opener.) Give each group five minutes to write clear directions on how to use the item without mentioning what that item is. When time is up, call on one person in the group to read the directions. Can the other groups guess the gadget from the directions?

# Revising Nursery Rhymes

*Builds vocabulary (synonym and antonym) skills*

Provide each student, pair of students, or small group of students with a copy of a familiar short nursery rhyme in which specific words are underlined. Challenge students to think of or use a dictionary to find a synonym or an antonym for each underlined word. Students rewrite their nursery rhymes, using the new words, then share their revised rhymes with the class. Time limit: five minutes. Give a prize for the most creative rhyme!

Resource: [The Mother Goose Pages](#)

# Anagram Puzzles

Anagrams are a terrific tool for stimulating students to think critically. Write the four phrases below on a board or chart. The letters in each phrase can be rearranged to spell a word. The words all have something in common. Challenge students to figure out the four words *and* what the words have in common.

Adapt the activity for younger students: To make the activity easier, tell students what the words have in common or arrange students in pairs to solve the anagram puzzles.


- RAN IT
- BY CECIL
- CUBAN MEAL
- BELOW SIMON

*Answers: train, bicycle, ambulance, and snowmobile are all forms of transportation*

# What's My Line?

*Builds creativity skills*

This activity works well for individual students, pairs of students, or small groups. Give each student or group an index card with the name of a common object written on it. (Examples: helicopter, alligator, toilet paper, sweater, fishing pole.) Challenge the student(s) to create a slogan for the object on the card. Students can vote for their favorite slogans.



*Pose the following question to students to start a lively discussion, or use as a prompt for a quick journal-writing activity:*

What if your school was to choose a fast-food restaurant to take over the cafeteria? Which one would you prefer? Why?

# Crack the Codes

*Builds research skills*

You might prepare this activity in advance by writing on an index card a message or common expression in Morse Code. Provide students with a copy of the [Morse Code Alphabet](#) and let them decode the message. All messages might be common expressions such as the following ones: stone cold, tough cookie, monkey business, bad egg, work your fingers to the bone, money to burn, miss the boat, down in the dumps, lay down the law, quick buck, throw your weight around, on the same wavelength, space cadet, wrong side of the tracks, easy as pie, out like a light, back stabber, hush-hush, down-to-earth, or play hooky.

**Additional Resource:** [International Morse Code](#)

# Color the Mood

*Builds critical thinking and association skills*

Challenge students to act out moods they think different colors portray. Have classmates guess each mood and color depicted.

**Variation:** Create a simple geometric design divided into segments. Write a mood word in each segment. Hand each student (or student group) a copy of the design. Students should color each segment of the design with a color that they think portrays each mood. Watch the creative results unfold.

# Analogy Puzzles

Analogies are a terrific tool for stimulating students to think critically. Write the following analogies on a board or chart. Challenge students to select the appropriate conclusion to each analogy. Have students share their responses and the reasoning behind them. Correct responses are shown in ***bold italic type***.

1. Poster is to paper as tire is to \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. car
- b. round
- c. flat
- d. ***rubber***

2. Creek is to river as hill is to \_\_\_\_\_.


- a. ***mountain***
- b. valley
- c. slope
- d. island

3. Pottery is to kiln as bread is to \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. dough
- b. ***oven***
- c. wrapper
- d. slice

4. Razor is to shave as knife is to \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. ***carve***
- b. sharp
- c. fork
- d. blade



*Pose the following question to students to start a lively discussion, or use it as a prompt for a quick journal-writing activity:*

What if your parents threw out the TV? What would you do with all that extra time?

# ZIP Code Math

*Builds computation and research skills*

Create addition and subtraction problems using ZIP codes. The two-factor ZIP codes should result in an answer that is another ZIP code. For example: 60601 (Chicago, Illinois) + 10469 (Bronx, New York) = 71070. Challenge students to calculate the answers and use a ZIP code directory to determine the name of the place that corresponds to the answer. (Answer: 71070 is Saline, Louisiana.)

**Resource:** [City, State, ZIP Code Look-Up](#)

# Capital Bingo

*Builds geography skills*

Create a set of bingo cards with the name of a state or country in each square. Keep the cards handy and use them to play Capital Bingo. Call out the names of capital cities, and students mark the corresponding countries or states. Be sure to check the winner's card.

**Variation:** If you aren't studying capitals, adapt the bingo format to something you *are* studying -- math facts or vocabulary, for example.

# State Abbreviation Match-Up

*Builds geography and abbreviation skills*

Count out index cards equal to the number of students in your class. Write the full name of a state on the first card and the abbreviation of that state on the next card. Continue until you have written a state name or abbreviation on each card. Place a card face down on each student's desk. Then instruct students to turn over their cards. Give students two minutes to find the person who has the state name or abbreviation that goes with the card they hold.


# Anagram Puzzles

Anagrams are a terrific tool for stimulating students to think critically. Write the four phrases below on a board or chart. The letters in each phrase can be rearranged to spell a word. The words all have something in common. Challenge students to figure out the four words *and* what the words have in common.

Adapt the activity for younger students: To make the activity easier, tell students what the words have in common or arrange students in pairs to solve the anagram puzzles.

- RAPTOR
- NO CALF
- CARL AND I
- BRING HIM MUD

*Answers: parrot, falcon, cardinal, and hummingbird are all birds*



*Pose the following question to students to start a lively discussion, or use it as a prompt for a quick journal-writing activity:*

What if you could predict what your life would be like in 20 years? Where will you be, what will you be doing, and who might you be doing it with?

# Where Have All the Consonants Gone?

*Builds letter-sound and spelling skills*

Write several short, grade-appropriate words on the board, but omit one or more consonants from each. Have students name consonants that might complete each word puzzle. Some examples with possible responses:   ig (dig), mai   (mail), gu  h (gush), di  ch (ditch),   athe   (father),   ur  e (nurse), ri  p  e (ripple),   ui  l (quill). Ask students to work in pairs or groups, and award a point for each word puzzle they solve.

## "Happy" Face:

*Builds creativity and self-esteem*

Distribute one index card to each student. Have students complete this sentence: "Happy is \_\_\_\_\_." Tape some of the cards together to form a large circle (face) on the wall; use the others to create a "smile" line inside the circle!

## Newspaper Sentences

*Builds creativity and sentence writing skills*

Cut out words from the headlines in newspapers and magazines. Mix them up. Divide the class into small groups. Distribute the same number of words to each group. Give students two minutes to create as many sentences as possible from their pile of words. (Complete sentences only!) Students should record sentences as they go so they can reuse the words.

**Extra challenge:** Don't allow students to reuse words. Can they use every word in their pile?

## PixPuzzles

Picture puzzles such as the ones below are a terrific tool for stimulating students to think critically. Write or draw the following puzzles on a board or chart. Challenge students to study the puzzles to see if the words -- and the way they are written -- give them clues to the common expressions the puzzles illustrate.


1.  
MIND  
-----  
MATTER

2.  
K  
C  
E  
H  
C

3.  
SIDE SIDE

4.  
much soon  
much soon

*Answers: 1. Mind over matter; 2. checkup; 3. side by side; 4. too (two) much too soon*



*Pose the following question to students to start a lively discussion, or use it as a prompt for a quick journal-writing activity:*

What if one of your classmates was to become president of the United States? Which classmate would you predict would be, or which would you want to be, president? Why?

# Line Up by the Letter

*Builds listening and sequencing skills*

Try this activity when changing classes or when students are preparing to leave at the end of the day. Call out directions for lining up, such as "Line up if your first name begins with the letter *B*." or "Line up if your first name ends in the letter *R*."

**Extra challenge:** Have students line up in alphabetical order according to their first names or last names. See if they can do it without talking!

# Classroom Letter Hunt

*Builds sound-letter recognition and classification skills*

Organize students into teams. Give a direction such as "Make a list of ten things that begin with the letter *P*" or "List five things that end in the letter *T*." Students on each team brainstorm to create a list. They will learn that they must do this activity quietly so others don't overhear their work. You might challenge them to do the activity by writing rather than talking.

# Crossword Vocabulary Check

*Builds spelling and vocabulary skills*

Create a crossword puzzle to review the spelling or vocabulary words introduced in different subjects during the school week. Creating simple crosswords is easy when you use [Puzzlemaker.com](http://Puzzlemaker.com). Puzzlemaker also has a tool you can use to create simple word-search puzzles for reviewing spelling or vocabulary words. Students love puzzles, and puzzles provide painless review.

# Anagram Puzzles

Anagrams are a terrific tool for stimulating students to think critically. Write the four phrases below on a board or chart. The letters in each phrase can be rearranged to spell a word. The words all have something in common. Challenge students to figure out the four words *and* what the words have in common.

Adapt the activity for younger students: To make the activity easier, tell students what the words have in common or arrange students in pairs to solve the anagram puzzles.

- HEART
- RUNS AT
- TEEN PUN
- USA RUN


*Answers: Earth, Saturn, Neptune, and Uranus are all planets*

## Volume 10

# Act the Animal

*Builds pantomime or dramatic play skills*

Divide the class into two teams. Whisper the name of an animal to a student. Have the student act out the animal. The student's team has one minute to guess the animal. If the team doesn't get the answer, the other team gets a minute to guess. Use common animals for young students. Older students might use charade-like gestures to act out animals such as African elephant, red kangaroo, bald eagle, Canada goose, long-fingered bat, red-tailed hawk, mountain lion, turkey vulture, or desert tortoise.



*Pose the following question to students to start a lively discussion, or use as a prompt for a quick journal-writing activity:*

What if you had to choose the most important thing in life -- but it could *not* be money? What would you say is the most important thing in life? Why did you choose that thing?

# Historical Hangman

*Builds spelling and vocabulary skills*

Play the Hangman game using words related to a specific subject, time period, or historic event. For example, play the game using words related to colonial times. Those words might include the following: village square, Jamestown, apprentice, tavern, Cotton Mather, hornbook, Plymouth, cooper, plantation, saltbox house, *Mayflower*, apothecary, or venison.

# Find All the Parts


*Builds language (parts of speech) skills*

Provide students with a paragraph of text. You might write the paragraph on a board or chart, or you might use an overhead projector to project the paragraph on the wall. Identify a part of speech -- nouns, for example -- and have students locate and write all the noun words they find in that paragraph. How many students find all the nouns?

# Analogy Puzzles

Analogies are a terrific tool for stimulating students to think critically. Write the following analogies on a board or chart. Challenge students to select the appropriate conclusion to each analogy. Have students share their responses and the reasoning behind them. Correct responses are shown in ***bold italic type***.

1. Couch is to living room as stove is to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. heat
  - b. cook
  - c. ***kitchen***
  - d. eat
2. Gas is to car as wood is to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. reed
  - b. build
  - c. ***fire***
  - d. hammer
3. Carpenter is to hammer as mason is to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. brick
  - b. stone
  - c. cement
  - d. ***trowel***
4. Greyhound is to dog as robin is to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. nest
  - b. ***bird***
  - c. cage
  - d. chirp
5. Hair is to eye as spray is to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. comb
  - b. contacts
  - c. ***liner***
  - d. lashes



**What If...?**

*Pose the following question to students to start a lively discussion, or use it as a prompt for a quick journal-writing activity:*

What if TV had only one show that was shown 24/7? What show would you want to be on TV all the time? Why?

