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# JUMPSTART! LITERACY

GAMES AND ACTIVITIES FOR AGES 7 – 14

Pie Corbett



**David Fulton** Publishers

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‘The Wolf’s wife speaks’ (p. 123) and ‘The poem imagines it is a horror film’ (p. 109) appeared in *Poems Out Loud*, selected by Brian Moses (Hodder Wayland 2003). You can hear Pie reading the poems on the CD accompanying that book.

‘Six things found in an elf’s backpack’ (p. 112) first appeared in *The Snake’s Pyjamas*, edited by Pie Corbett and Valerie Bloom (Ginn 2003).

‘Sought it out!’ (p. 14) first appeared in *Poems for Year 4*, chosen by Pie Corbett (Macmillan Children’s Books 2002).

# Introduction

*Jumpstart!* provides a series of quick-fire language games that can be used in a variety of ways to 'jumpstart' creative literacy.

## HOW CAN THE GAMES BE USED?

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- **As starters:** most of the activities can be used to start a literacy session off. The advantage of using a 'starter' is that everyone is involved from the beginning. These activities are also useful for 'warming up' the brain and are an excellent way to help tune participants' minds into thinking and concentrating. The ideas in the final chapter are generic and can be used in most subjects as strategies for learning.
- **As bridgers:** sometimes a 'jumpstart' activity can help to provide stimulus during the course of a lesson, possibly prior to leading into a more in-depth activity.
- **As finishers:** most of the activities could just as easily be used to end a session during the plenary. These might be used to consolidate what has been learned during the lesson, or to tantalise the class with a taste of what is to come next!
- **At odd moments:** the quick-fire nature of these activities means that nearly all of them are perfect for slotting in when you happen to have a spare five minutes on your hands.

## WHY USE THE ACTIVITIES?

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The activities presented in this book can be used to:

- jumpstart a creative mood
- stimulate creative thinking
- strengthen the imagination
- have fun with language, creativity and thinking
- introduce or revisit a topic
- consolidate learning
- provide practice – to secure confidence
- improve – taking a topic one step further
- grab attention – focusing children at the start/during/end of a session
- assess understanding (using mini-whiteboards is a simple way of helping the teacher see whether most of the class has grabbed an idea).

## LITTLE AND OFTEN

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Some children need to revisit what has been taught on many occasions before they grasp or remember an idea. Spelling and sentence writing are often improved by regular short-burst activities.

## ADAPTING THE GAMES

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While I have often provided examples, model sentences or word lists, these should be adapted according to the needs of the class. For instance, many of the spelling games require you to select words/patterns that you are trying to teach or that a class keep finding difficult. When playing sentence games you may wish to invent sentences that relate to the type of text that you are teaching, or to use sentence structures that will help the children develop as writers.

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED

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All that you need to play many of these games is a class set of mini-whiteboards and some sort of whole-class board. Where other materials are required, these have been indicated clearly at the start of an activity.

## TIPS ON HOW TO APPROACH 'JUMPSTARTING'

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Here is a list of advice from teachers who use this approach regularly in their teaching:

- Keep the pace going – most responses need only take 10–15 seconds.
- A 'jumpstart' session might take 5–15 minutes.
- Challenge the class – for instance, ask those children who keep writing short sentences to extend them, perhaps by using the word 'because'.
- If using mini-whiteboards, don't wait for the last person to finish or you will be setting the pace by the slowest child.
- Many of the activities lend themselves to using mini-whiteboards, but could also be played with oral responses.
- If children struggle, model a few responses yourself to show them how to complete the activity, then complete a few on a whole-class board with the children helping.
- Move strugglers close to you so that you can see what they are doing – often they just need encouragement or a prompt.
- Activities may be played in pairs or individually. If in pairs, children should take turns (i.e. the person not holding the board could check what the other one has written).

- For some activities adopt a ‘think – pair – share’ approach: ‘think’ (about the task), ‘pair’ (discuss in pairs), ‘share’ (be ready to share your response with the class).

## FINALLY – KEEP IT MULTI-SENSORY

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Many of the ‘jumpstarts’ in this book are about developing thinking in a lively and creative way. The imagination can be strengthened, and some of these exercises will help children develop the ability to think creatively. The activities have been designed to help you use a balance of multi-sensory approaches in order to appeal to different learning styles:

- **Visual** – using objects, pictures and images
- **Auditory** – using sounds, voices, music
- **Cognitive** – using mnemonics, memory tricks, rules
- **Kinaesthetic** – using actions, drama, movement.

Symbols for each of these learning styles have been included at the start of each game, to show which of them are being targeted during the course of an activity.



Visual



Auditory



Cognitive



Kinaesthetic

The most important thing of all is to ensure that everyone has fun in the process!

Pie Corbett  
August 2003

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## CHAPTER 1

# Jumpstarting spelling

The activities in this chapter focus on improving spelling through a multi-sensory approach. Many children find spelling difficult and this hinders their ability to compose fluently. Spelling needs to be automatic (even if it is not a hundred per cent accurate!). A ten-minute daily session of whole-class spelling games can be a more effective way of helping children remember patterns than relying on a once-a-week spelling bash. Within a ten-minute session you could cover two or three games. Focus on words and patterns that they need, find difficult, or are the ongoing objective from your scheme.

### RIGHT FROM WRONG

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This game is quick and easy. It helps children look carefully at a spelling and try to decide whether or not it is accurate.

- Write on the whole-class board two or three ways of spelling a word, one of which is correct, e.g.

wos    woz    was    whas

- Ask the children to write on their mini-whiteboards the spelling which they think is accurate.
- Use words that the class often misspell, e.g. because, they, February, answer, ache, tomorrow, beginning, creature, mystery, chocolate, etc.

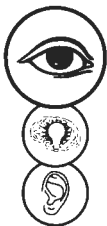
- Discuss the different methods that can be used to remember spellings. See what memory-joggers the children already use. How are they going to remember the words you've just discussed?
- Try to ensure that the most common 'tricky' words are really well known. Examples include:

about, after, again, all, another, away, because, brother, called, can't, could/would/should, don't, first, friend, girl, half, here, house, how, laugh, little, made, many, more, next, night, now, off, once, our, people, said, saw, school, sister, their, there, they're, these, they, three, to, too, two, very, water, were, what, when, where, who, will, with, your

Encourage the children to use the tactics explored here when proof-reading their own writing. It can help if they get used to putting a dotted line under any word that they think looks 'incorrect' as they write. This means that they can keep on writing without losing pace, and get used to returning to words after composition is complete.

## PHOTOGRAPH

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This game is simple to organise. It is a whole-class version of the famous 'look/say/remember/cover/think/write/check' routine. It helps to strengthen children's visual memory of different spellings.

- Write on the whole-class board a word that is commonly causing problems for the group, e.g.

because

- Ask the children to look at the word and chant the letters, trying to remember what the word LOOKS like and how it is spelled. I often suggest that they 'take a photo' (i.e. make a visual or mental note). It is worth asking them to look and then close their eyes – can they SEE the word in their mind?
- Practise this a few times before eventually covering the word completely. Ask the class to write the word on their mini-whiteboards and then to check what they've written carefully. Does it look right? Does it read back correctly? If not, change it!
- You might like to try this game with some of the trickier keywords that children need to be able to spell. Examples include:

above, across, almost, along, also, always, animals, any, around, asked, baby, balloon, before, below, better, between, birthday, both, brother, bought, brought, can't, change, children, clothes, coming, didn't, different, does, don't, during, earth, every, eyes, father, first, follow, found, friends, garden, goes, great, halves, happy, head, heard, high, I'm, important, inside, jumped, knew, know, lady, leave, light, money, they, said, was, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, February, August, December

Try to encourage the children to use a variety of spelling strategies, e.g. visual memory-joggers, thinking about other words that may be related or similar, and so on.

## RHYME IT

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This game is important because it tunes children into listening carefully to the sounds in a word. Being able to spell by analogy (if I can spell 'sick' then I can probably spell 'stick') is a tactic that most of us use – probably without knowing it.

- Write a word on the whole-class board and ask the class to come up with as many rhyming words as they can in a given time, e.g. 30 seconds. For instance, you might write up

feet

and the children will then generate rhyming words, thinking about their spelling as they write them down. Of course, here there is a choice between 'ee', 'ea' or 'e consonant e' (sleet, meat, seat, treat, wheat, heat, complete, etc).

- Bring the class together and list the words they've come up with. (Sadly, on this occasion, there are no rules that help distinguish whether a word is spelt 'eat', 'eet' or 'ete'. You just have to learn each spelling through constantly memorising, using and double-checking them.
- Try using the following words to generate rhymes:

train, wheel, bone, light, flies, soap, seed,  
snail, sign, goat, cream, face, five, bowl,  
cake, hook, wing, car, sock, back, shout,  
wood, led, bad, toy, day, gate, see, try, blow,  
true

- An extension of this game is to provide a 'rime' and let the children generate words within a

given time, e.g. ake = cake, lake, bake, make, take, mistake, etc. Try using the following 'rimes':

ake, ame, ave, ace, ate, ail, ain, ine, ipe, ice, ight, oon, ool, oast, eet

- Play 'rhyme chain' – one child says a word and the next has to find a rhyme. Keep going till the rhymes run out.
- Those who struggle with spelling may need to play 'phoneme fingers'. Like the rhyming activities above, this game helps to strengthen children's listening skills in an effort to improve spelling. In this game, you say a word, e.g. 'ship' and the children have to count silently the number of phonemes (individual sounds) and hold up the relevant number of fingers, e.g. 3 (sh-i-p has 3 sounds but the first 'sh' is represented by two letters).

## SPEEDWRITE

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This game helps children learn how to spell a word through kinaesthetic learning. It is a simple enough idea, but the technique has proved to be very effective.

- Write on the whole-class board a word that is of interest or causing concern. Look at the word together considering different ways in which it might be learned – maybe there is a useful rhyme, perhaps it follows a pattern, could there be a mnemonic to help you remember it?
- Once you've considered ways to recognise it, ask the children to write down the word as many times as possible within 30 seconds – with the correct spelling. This is most powerful

if they use joined-up handwriting – the hand eventually learns the pattern of a word.

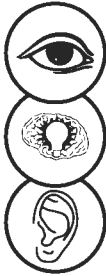
- Try working on words that all share a common pattern. For instance, you might decide to focus on 'would', 'should' and 'could'. There are endless groups that share patterns. Pick up on common patterns that the children find difficult. Also, focus on patterns given in the school scheme of work – both the current objectives, as well as those from previous terms if they have not been learned. Here are a few examples to get things started:

might, fight, right, sight, bright, flight  
foam, moan, groan, road, coast, float  
slow, know, narrow, borrow, below, follow, elbow  
jumped, leaped, wanted, cried, frightened  
sing, bring, king, wing, sling, running, fling  
slowly, calmly, quickly, angrily, happily  
curtain, fountain, captain, mountain, certain  
caught, taught, daughter, naughty

Do not underestimate how many times children have to spell a word correctly before that word becomes part of their automatic vocabulary. Of course, it helps if they really need that word in their writing, as this will give them a real purpose for spelling it correctly.

## FINISH

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This game is handy for children who struggle with spelling, as it provides them with a scaffold in the form of letters already being in place.

- Start by writing up parts of a word on the whole-class board and give the children a fixed amount of time – say 20 seconds – to complete the word. Sometimes they will be able to make several words. For instance,

st\_\_p

could be 'stamp', 'stop', 'stoop', 'steep', 'strip', 'strap', etc.

- You might want to use a dash to represent each missing letter. This narrows the options down, so give the children less time to work it out. An example could include:

v\_\_ry

in which case the answer could only be 'very' or 'vary'.

- You could choose a group of words where a choice of 'fillings' has to be made. For instance, you might write 'ur', 'ir', 'er' and 'ear' on the whole-class board.
- Now provide some words with a space and see if the class can decide which letters are required to complete the word, e.g.

th\_ \_st