

10 WAYS TO PRESS THEIR BUTTONS



Dave Foord is determined to put the fun back into fundamental learning – and what’s more, he has the technology...

One advantage of ICT is its potential to make learning more enjoyable. This doesn’t mean turning lessons into a hilarious stand up routine, or teaching every ‘boring’ concept through graphic-rich immersive games – but rather, using the technology to introduce elements of active learning. The ideas suggested here have been selected as being very cheap (mostly free), requiring minimal amounts of set up or preparation time, requiring only very basic IT skills from the tutor, and having a good educational value. Not all of them will work for every subject or organisation, but hopefully some of them will. The best way to find out which suggestions work best is to try them out; students are generally very forgiving of a teacher experimenting with something new, even if things don’t work as planned or expected.

1

Using internet based game templates

There are various tools and websites that allow a tutor to enter information that then gets converted into an online activity. Examples include quia.com, which is high quality, and has no adverts (but does involve a cost), or studystack.com, which makes its money from advertising, so is free to use. Both sites allow you to create your own activities but also

have resources created by other educators that can be used for free, by simply finding the desired resource, then copying and pasting the web address.



ABOUT THE EXPERT

DAVE FOORD IS A FREELANCE EDUCATIONAL TRAINER AND CONSULTANT, SPECIALISING IN THE USE OF LEARNING TECHNOLOGIES. HIS TRAINING IS BASED ON HIS EXPERIENCE AS A TEACHER WITH HIS SESSIONS BEING ACTIVE, ENGAGING AND PRACTISING THE PRINCIPLES THAT THEY TEACH. MORE DETAILS CAN BE FOUND ON HIS WEBSITE AT AGTRAINING.CO.UK OR HIS BLOG DAVEFOORD.WORDPRESS.COM WHERE YOU WILL ALSO FIND MORE IDEAS FOR 'FUN'DAMENTAL IDEAS...

2

Asking learners to create a quick fire presentation

One of the best ways to learn something is to teach it – it’s quite common a common tactic to ask learners to create a presentation, but the problem is you then have to sit through them all. Instead, why not use a principle

known as Pecha-Kucha? This is a very strict presentation format where each presentation is made up of 20 slides, each slide being on screen for 20 seconds, with presenters following each other in quick succession. The strict format encourages presentations to be less wordy, reduces waffling, and makes an excellent revision activity. A template for this is available at <http://tinyurl.com/8h6b4bc>.



3 Creating a screencast

Screencasting is where you use software to capture everything that appears in a selected region of the screen along with audio from a microphone and then save this as a video. Ask learners to create a screencast explaining a chosen topic or concept. In its simplest form this would be having an image or diagram and moving the cursor around whilst describing it.

If learners want to be more adventurous, then they can create labels, arrows and so on, which they can drag into the recording region. The end product is not the key here, but the planning process the learners go through, which is where the main learning takes place. There are web based tools such as www.screenr.com, which is free and easy to use (although some organisations may block it) or students could employ offline tools such as Camstudio or Jing.

4 Producing an instructional video

A variation of the previous idea is to ask the learners to create an instructional video by using a standard video camera (which could be the student's own mobile phone). The beauty of this idea is that it can be realised by a tutor with no IT skills or confidence, as you can rely

on the students to work it out. All the tutor has to do is identify the topics to be covered and provide the students with the props they will need, which may be just paper, pens, scissors etc.

5

Playing patience

This is a card-based game that converts 36 multiple choice questions into an excellent individual or team activity. The hard part is thinking up good, strong questions – so why not ask the learners to write one each, and then create the game as a revision activity for later in the term? A

template to help with this, including instructions to help the students start playing, is available at <http://tinyurl.com/9skqye3>.

6

Introducing countdown timers

When setting any sort of task, whether for a few seconds or a few minutes, using a countdown timer will help to keep the tutor and the learners on task and focused, and can

be employed to introduce a competitive element. Free timers that can be easily added to a PowerPoint presentation are available at <http://tinyurl.com/8qsbwgc>.

7 Making comic strips

Creating simple comic strips can be an excellent way to cover topics – for example, in language teaching to illustrate grammatical principles; or history, where significant events can be recreated this way; or teaching sports leadership and looking at way of dealing with conflict. There are various tools that can help, including websites such as toondoo.com or stripcreator.com, or of course, there is the option to use PowerPoint with its array of clipart and speech bubbles.

7



9 Generating a jigsaw

There are various jigsaw creation tools, such as jigsawplanet.com, where you can upload an image of anything and it turns it into an electronic puzzle. This could work with science diagrams, photos of a piece of equipment, or tables of information. You then have a web address that you can share with your learners or even embed into your VLE. With [jigsawplanet](http://jigsawplanet.com) there is no login required, so it's very easy to use, but it is important to remember the URLs of any jigsaw created, and not to use any images of students themselves, as everything on there is available to the public.

9

Involving audio files

Audio is grossly under used within education, even though many learners have mobile phones that incorporate audio recording devices. You could ask students to work in pairs to discuss a topic, or each record a revision monologue, which they then share with peers. The key

here is not the final quality of the recording, but the thought process that the learners go through when planning what they are going to say. For better quality, Audacity (free software) could be used to record and then edit the final product.

10

Sharing buzz word bingo

Create a series of bingo cards with the answers to questions in the boxes, then read out the questions, with students having to find the answers quickly. This is a simple but effective idea, that can work very well in languages, maths or science teaching. A tool to create such cards easily can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/9skqye3>.