



Let's Play School: Circle Time!

Children practice the important school readiness skills of taking turns, listening, and raising their hand as they participate in a kindergarten Circle Time.

START

- The goal of this activity is for children to practice some of the skills they'll need in kindergarten through participating in a kindergarten-style Circle Time.
- Set up a floor space with a "teacher's" chair, and a rug area for the children to sit on. Place the seating mats in a semicircle around the chair.
- Introduce the activity by asking Who would like to play school with me and pretend that you're in kindergarten? I'll be the pretend teacher and you can be the students! Then have the children each pick a mat and sit down on it.
- Sit in the teacher's chair and introduce yourself: Hello, girls and boys! My name is Ms. — and I will be your pretend teacher today in this pretend kindergarten classroom! My friend (puppet) would like to welcome you all today. (Let the puppet explain that it's her first day at school and she's a little nervous).

NEXT STEPS

- During Circle Time, the puppet can take over for the teacher if the children are very young or losing the connection with what's happening. The puppet, as a student in the class, is a very good point of connection for the children.
- The teacher can go to the whiteboard and write her name; at the same time, telling the children exactly what she's writing. She can even draw a picture of a person to illustrate what she is writing.
- The teacher explains that Circle Time starts with talking about the class rules, such as raising your hand before you speak, staying seated on your own mat, and not talking while someone else is speaking. You can support the children by saying something like I see everyone is sitting on their own mats. This is such a good start for our Circle Time!
- You can start with a name game, where each child holds the ball, or other object, says her or his name, then passes the ball to the child next to her or him. This is an important exercise for taking turns.
- Next you can ask the children to raise their hands for a series of questions, such as Who is in preschool? Kindergarten? Elementary school? How old are you? Who has had a Circle Time before?

(continued on side 2)

MATERIALS

- * Individual seat mat (construction paper, carpet squares, masking tape on the floor)
- * Whiteboard, easel with dry-erase markers
- * Rubber ball or other medium-sized object for passing around the circle
- * Animal or person puppet
- * *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* for read-aloud

Learning Guideline:

English Learning Acquisition: Observe and use appropriate ways of interacting in a group (taking turns in talking; listening to peers).

Tip Sheets:

Do It Yourself, Imagine



(continued from side 1)



- The next activity could be a read-aloud—*Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* works well for all ages—and learning about alphabet letters. Have the children join in whenever possible, especially on the repetitive Chicka Chicka Boom Boom. As follow-up to the reading, you can go around the circle and have each child name as many letters of their name as they can. If they are too young or shy to do that, any adult or other child can help them.
- At this point, kids would appreciate moving around. Ask the children to stand up and join in on a finger play: One little, two little, three little fingers, four little, five little, six little fingers, seven little, eight little, nine little fingers, ten little fingers in a row. For some children, this will be very challenging; for others, it will be easy. If the children still have some attention left, you can introduce any other music and movement activities, such as The Wheels on the Bus; Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes; or Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.
- For older children who are already comfortable with the skills, you can encourage them to be helpers and to coach or show others how to do the activities.

FINISH UP

- Let the children know that they did a good job in their Circle Time activity by saying things like Wow! It looks like you're all working hard to get ready for school! Nice job taking turns, singing along, and spelling your name!
- If any of the children are currently in school and they want to tell you or the other children about it, this is a great time to do some informal storytelling

EXPAND YOUR ACTIVITY

- Have the children take turns being the teacher, especially if some of them want to show how much they already know about school. It's great practice for them to teach and lead the younger children through the activities.
- A lot of other simple activities can be included in Circle Time. You can cover days of the week, the weather (have the children draw appropriate pictures on the whiteboard), and spelling simple words on the whiteboard or arranging the alphabet or numbers from 1–10 with magnetic props.

TAKE IT HOME

- Families can expand on the Let's Play School theme by creating an area for a classroom at home. It can be as simple as a chair and a cardboard–carton table. Adults and children can take turns being the teacher and making up activities.
- Sit down together in a cozy place and read books about getting ready for kindergarten. Make sure that you talk about any questions or fears they might have.

MATERIALS

- * Individual seat mat (construction paper, carpet squares, masking tape on the floor)
- * Whiteboard, easel with dry-erase markers
- * Rubber ball or other medium-sized object for passing around the circle
- * Animal or person puppet
- * *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* for read-aloud

Learning Guideline:

English Learning Acquisition: Observe and use appropriate ways of interacting in a group (taking turns in talking; listening to peers).

Tip Sheets:

Do It Yourself, Imagine



BOOKS

- *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault
- *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten* by Joseph Slate
- *First Day Jitters* by Julie Danneberg
- *Look Out Kindergarten, Here I Come!* by Nancy Carlson



Funded by:

Department of Early Education and Care

Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant