



B2S 5 - **ACTIVITIES FOR THE FIRST DAYS OF SCHOOL**

Here are some activities you can do with students on the first day back to school. Some are fun, some are valuable as learning tools, and some are both.



Introduce Yourself



Create a [Who Is Your Teacher?](#) bulletin board to use with your introduction.



Sometimes we often "know" the students in our class prior to them actually being in our class, and in turn they think they "know" us.

As an icebreaker/opening activity you may do a tried and true activity, **KWL**, with the topic being "Mrs. Honour"

For those unfamiliar with the activity, the students make a list of things they already "**K**"now about the topic, things they "**W**"ant to know about the topic and after the "lesson" the students list what they have "**L**"earned about the topic.

Students generally get a pretty good list going about what they know about the teacher (common knowledge) She drives a green mini-van, she shops at Disco, she has two children who go to this school.... Then we get a list of what they want to know... in the past, the students may want to know what she does for fun, what kinds of music she listens listen to, and if she has ever met anyone famous

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Now for the lesson... prepare a list of facts about yourself, ranging from where you were born to you manage my own fantasy football team, and other similarly "interesting" facts.. You fold each one and put them all in your fact jar. You have a large piece of white butcher paper taped to the board with your name circled in the centre. (this introduces the freeform concept mapping activity you may use regularly in class)

You ask for volunteers and one by one the students illustrate the fact and students guess what it is... when someone gets in right, they illustrate the next fact... Each class will produce a free form map of you!

The next day - leave all the classes maps of you up, and pass out a 20 question "quiz" in multiple choice format, and tell them to feel free to use the "visual resources" on the wall. Auughhhh a quiz on the second day, they groan.... good news for them is that after you "grade" the quizzes, you return them the next day with a coupon attached... You grade the quiz based on 10 questions and for every question they get right over the 10, they get a coupon worth that many extra credit points on a real quiz!

You all then go back to the **KWL** list and you have each class contribute 3 new things they know about you... So now, the mysterious teacher at the front of the class seems to be more like a real person to everyone, and for homework they are to create their own free-form concept of themselves (7-10 facts illustrated on a 20 x 28 piece of paper), and viola, You have great "stuff" for a bulletin board just in time for open house.



Student Introductions

- Have the students introduce themselves to you. Try to remember as many names as possible. Turn it into a game for yourself. During the first week, play "Name That Student" at the end of each class. You take a class roster with you and move around the classroom trying to guess each student's name. Work around the room as many times as time allows. On the last day of the week, put the class roster away and work from memory. Your goal is to know every student's name by the end of the first week, and this game usually allows you to accomplish that goal.



Icebreakers and Energizers

- Present some "**getting to know you**" activities for the students. They will get to know one another, and you will get to know them. You will also be able to see how they work together as a group so you can spot potential problems and work toward solutions. **Find examples at the end.**



Crossword Puzzle

- Create a crossword puzzle using classroom rules or policies as the clues. The [Criss-Cross Puzzle](#) at [Discovery School's Puzzlemaker](#) will make the puzzle for you; you just need to enter the information.



Policy and Rule Question and Answer Match

- Write questions that students might have about your policies and rules on index cards. Write the answers on cards of a different colour. Pass them out to the students and have them try to match questions to answers. You will accomplish three goals with this activity. First, your students will become familiar with your rules and policies. Second, your students will get to know each other. Third, you will be able to see which students are shy and which ones do not interact well with other students.



Preview the Textbook

- Pass out the textbooks and let the students preview them so they can see what to expect. Create a "worksheet" that requires the students look over the table of contents, index, and glossary. Ask general questions about the topics you will cover during the year. While the students are working on the assignment, you can

officially check out the books.



Pre-test

- Give a pre-test to determine the class's strengths and weaknesses. This will help you plan lessons throughout the year. You will know which areas to skim over and which ones to cover thoroughly.



Supply List

- Even if you posted the supply list before school began, go over the supply list with the students and explain why they need the uncommon items. **Give a deadline for having supplies at school.**



Organize Materials

- If you want the students to have a certain organizational method for their notebooks and materials, do this the first day. Be sure to have a supply on hand of simple materials such as dividers, paper, folders, spiral notebooks, etc. for those students who are not prepared the first day. They can then pay you back when they get their materials. Hopefully, most students will pay you back.



Student Made Bulletin Board

- Have the students create something for a student made bulletin board. For example, give each student a puzzle piece cut from poster-board or tag-board. Have each student decorate her puzzle piece to show her unique qualities. Items to include are name, hobbies, interests, and family. Provide magazines and clip art for the students to use if they are not artistic. Student can work on this while you are checking out materials, assigning lockers, etc.



Classroom Quilt

- At the beginning of the year it would be nice to have your students participate in an activity that will last the entire year. Each child receives a square made of material that they decorate according to a theme (such as Pollution - Football – music events - whatever is relevant in 2010) that includes their name. Those squares are then sewed together to make a curtain, room divider, or wall hanging for the entire year! Complete the quilted curtain by sewing all the pieces.



Student Information Card

- Use your computer to create student information cards. You can get four cards on each sheet. Run copies on cardstock and cut them apart. File this in a box for future reference. **Items to include are name, address, phone number, birthday, class schedule, parents' names, and parents' workplaces and phone numbers.** You will have the information on hand when you need to call parents or find the student when she isn't with you--no more running to the office and bothering the secretary.



Learning Styles Inventory

- Give your students the learning styles inventory to **determine how they learn best.** This will be beneficial to both you and your students. Links to assessments are below. Some assessments can be taken online while others will need to be printed and hand scored. Not all of the assessments look at the same traits, so please look at all of them before making a decision.

ICEBREAKERS

People Bingo

- Make a 5 x 5 grid, like a bingo grid. Write "FREE" in the centre space. In all the other spaces, write things such as "Born in another province," "Is the youngest child in family," or "Fito's fan." Fill in all the grids with items of interest to the students, which probably leaves Fito out. If you do this with adults, you can use the Fito Paez idea. Run a copy for each person.

The students are to get the signature of a person who meets the criteria for each section. You might want to implement a rule that a person can only sign another person's paper in two spots. The first person with a completed card wins.

Don't forget to include the teacher. Put in something to which only YOU can answer yes. For example, "married to a detective." or "adopted two children from Salta".



[Scavenger Hunt](#) -- Here's another printable example, but it's not in the **bingo format.** This one is from Teacher's Closet.



[Scavenger Match](#) -- Here's another one from Teacher's Closet. This time the **students have to find matches** for their own answers.



Venn Diagram of Students

- Divide students into groups of three or four. Give each group a large sheet of butcher paper and a different colour marker for each person. Have them draw a Venn diagram with an oval for each student. The students in each group are to discuss what their similarities and differences are. After the discussion, they are to fill in the diagram showing their similarities and differences.

If a group has a hard time getting started, give them some guidance by asking questions such as, "What is your favourite music?", "When is your birthday?", "What sports do you like?", or "Where were you born?"



Data Processing

- Divide the students into groups of 10 to 20, depending on the difficulty level you want. The more students in a group, the higher the level of difficulty. Give directions for the "data" groups are to use to "process" themselves. The more creative the "data" the more fun the "processing." Give prizes to the group who is the first to correctly processes their data. Several rounds can be played in a short amount of time, depending on the size of the groups.



Here's a list of our favourite "data" for this activity:

- ✎ Alphabetical by best friend's first name
- ✎ Alphabetical according to favourite food
- ✎ Length of hair
- ✎ Shoe size
- ✎ Birthdays
- ✎ Number of letters in last name
- ✎ Length of thumb
- ✎ For teachers, number of years taught



Criminal Dealings

- You may be reluctant to play this one because of the name. However, once you see how harmless it is, and more importantly how much fun the players are having, I won't resist.

Design a system for secretly identifying the "criminal" and the "cop." You may use a deck of cards. You only need enough cards so each player may have one card. One card needs to be a jack--the criminal, and one needs to be an ace--the cop. All of the other cards should be below ten in rank. Let each person draw and keep a card, without showing it to anyone.

The criminal needs to recruit other criminals by winking at them, but without getting caught by the cop. Any person who sees a wink is to wait a few seconds, so as not to be obvious, and then say, "I committed a crime." That person then turns in his card and is out of the game. Play continues until the criminal recruits all players without being caught by the cop, or the cop identifies the criminal. If the cop misidentifies the criminal, he loses the game.



Murder



This is a variation on the Criminal Dealings game. Same set up with a deck of cards. Choose the number of cards needed according to the number of players. Be certain that the Queen of Spades is in the deck. All players draw cards. The player who chooses the Queen of Spades is the murderer.

Throughout the other activities, the murderer kills victims by winking at them. When someone catches the eye of the killer and is winked at, they are killed and (here is the fun part) can die in any manner they want. Some die quietly by dropping over; others die in a dramatic finale.

The object of all other players is to a) not get killed and b) try to identify the murderer.

You can make a case for using this in Writing - about the experience, about fear and anticipation and how that clouds activities, about processing fear, relaxing, then being alert again, etc.



Name Tag Match Maker



Each group member will need a 12 x 18 card for a name tag. Then give the following directions:

1. Put your name in the centre of your card.
2. In the upper left corner, write four things that you like to do.
3. In the upper right corner, write your four favourite singers or groups.
4. In the lower left corner, write your four favourite movies.
5. In the lower right corner, write four adjectives that describe you.

When everyone finishes, have them mingle with the group for a few minutes. Without talking, they are to read the upper left corner of the other group members' cards. When time is up, they are to find one or two people who are most like them and visit for a few minutes. When time is up, they are to mingle again reading the upper right corner of the other group members' cards. They then find the one or two people most like them and visit. Repeat with the lower left corner and lower right corner information.

To make sure everyone visits with several people, you could implement a rule that no two people can be in the same group more than once.





Knots of People



Divide the group into teams of 8 to 12 members. Have each person join right hands with another person in the group, but it has to be someone who is NOT standing immediately to the left or right. Then have each person join left hands with another person in the group, but it has to be someone who is NOT standing immediately to the left or right and someone other than before.

Now the groups have to untangle themselves without letting go of hands. They may have to loosen their grips a little to allow for twisting and turning. They may have to step over or under other people. The first group to untangle their knot is the winner.

SPECIAL NOTE: There are four possible solutions to the knot.

1. One large circle with people facing either direction.
2. Two interlocking circles.
3. A figure eight.
4. A circle within a circle.



Who Am I?



For this activity you will need one sticky note per person. On each note write the name of a celebrity, political figure, cartoon character, book character, etc. You can choose one category or mix them up. Use a different person for each note.

Place a sticky note on the back (or forehead) of each participant. The participants are to figure out who they are, but can only do so in the following manner. Find a partner and read each other's sticky notes. You may ask the other person three questions to which there are yes or no answers.

Once your questions have been asked and answered, make a guess as to your identity. If you are correct, move the sticky note to your chest and you become a "consultant" who gives clues to those still trying to figure out their identities. If you are not correct, find a new partner and repeat the process.

SPECIAL NOTE: Be sure to choose characters that are appropriate to the age of the participants to avoid "generation gap frustration."



Other First-Day Ideas found on the Internet

Primary- and Intermediate- level teachers offer suggestions for first-day-of-school lesson planning

Time Capsule

During the first week of school my second graders make a time capsule. First I ask them to bring an empty paper-towel roll from home. We cover the rolls with construction paper, on which the children draw pictures and write their names. Capsule contents include a picture of the child, a hand tracing, and a completed questionnaire that asks about favorite books, TV shows, friends, and so on. It also asks them to write three things that they want to learn during the year. I measure each student's height with a piece of string, and the string is also put into the time capsule. Then I collect the capsules and hide them. On the last day of school we have a fun "reopening" ceremony, during which the children compare their earlier choices and goals (and height!) with how they feel now.

—*Alyson Grove Saieva, La Habra, CA*

Paper-Bag Sharing

About two weeks before school starts, I send my students a letter in which I introduce myself and describe some activities we will share. I also send them a paper bag and ask them to fill it with four or five items. On the first day of school we all sit together and open up our bags to show each other something about ourselves, myself included.

—*Amy Scalf, Winchester, KY*

Class-Created Puzzles

Using a large piece of tagboard, I draw as many puzzle pieces as I have students, plus one for myself. I number them on the back and cut them out. I have students decorate their pieces with their names, pictures, and words. We share these as a group and then reassemble the puzzle on a bulletin board to symbolize the importance of each individual's contribution to the class as a whole.

—*Ellaine Barthelemy, Apple Valley, MN*

Silly Name Game

On the first day, I gather the children in a circle. We go around the circle and have each child pick a word to go with his or her name (either rhyming or beginning with the same letter as the name). Each child must say his or her name and repeat the names that came before ("I am Marshmallow Megan and that was Willowy Wendy and Soccer Sally and Jumping Jimmy..."). It's a fun way to get to know one another and learn everybody's names.

—*Megan Law, Falls Church, VA*

Mission Statement

My kindergarten class works together on the first day to come up with a mission that we strive to accomplish on each day of the school year. For example: "We will learn and use each other's names. Also, we will say 'Please' and 'thank you' at the appropriate times." We read the mission statement every day, and I include it in my newsletters home to parents. We adjust it as the year progresses.

—*Ashley Mehr, St. Petersburg, FL*

B-Kind! B-On Time!

My first bulletin board revolves around our nature-study unit on insects and helps children remember good behavior. We make bees out of paper, paper plates, and pipe cleaners. Each child thinks of a phrase to go with his or her bee (e.g., B-careful, B-

honest, B-kind). Then we hang the bees and accompanying phrases on the bulletin board.

—*Andrea Benedett, Jamestown, NY*

Bulletin Board Layers

My primary-grade children arrive on the first day to see a bulletin board with special spaces reserved and labeled for each of them. By the end of the first day, the board is filled with their drawings. Throughout the year new pictures are added on top of the old ones; these usually relate to the theme currently being studied. At the end of the year, each collection of pictures is taken down, and students bind them together with a cover to make a book.

—*Janet R. Janke, Belle Glade, FL*

Intermediate Write About You!

At the start of each year I ask my students to write their autobiographies. We talk about the genre of autobiography, sentence structure, paragraphing, writing steps, and detailed writing. I learn a lot about the students, and they learn about each other. This is a good topic to start the year with, because they are already experts on the subject.

—*Kristen Wagner, Durham, NC*

All-About-Me Class Quilts

This year I plan to have my fifth-grade students draw silhouettes of themselves. These will then be mounted on white paper and made into a class quilt. The companion exercise will be for students to write a one-page autobiography for a second quilt that is laid out like the first one. The two quilts will be displayed next to each other.

—*Yelena Siwinski, Brooklyn, NY*

Guess Who?

By upper elementary school, many students already know the names of their classmates. On the first day, I have students write three unique facts about themselves (a pet's name, favorite sport, talents, and so on). I collect the papers and read a description aloud to the class. The students then guess to whom I'm referring. I continue until all descriptions have been read. I include myself, too!

—*Anna Hallock, Elgin, IL*

Make A Pattern Book

After discussing books that have predictable language patterns with my fifth-grade class, I read to them the book *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* We then make our own book, titled *Fifth Grade, Fifth Grade, Ffth Grade, What Do You See?* Students write and illustrate a page about their new classroom and classmates. The students enjoy reading the book later in the year to their kindergarten book buddies.

—*Lisa Mosco, Jonestown, PA*