

Twenty

Aim

To rouse curiosity and develop a positive attitude to problem solving.

Procedure

Say that you have a little game called ‘Twenty’ and that you would like someone in the class to challenge you in it. Tell them, if they’ve seen it before and know how to win, not to tell anyone, but just to prove it by coming and beating you. Tell them that all they need to be able to do is to count to 20.

When you have a volunteer, explain to them and the class that you and the volunteer are going to count to 20 between you. That you are going to take turns and that each turn will consist of counting then next number or the next two numbers. The winner is the person who says 20.

Ask the volunteer if they would like to start or if they would prefer for you to start.

The game might proceed like this:

Teacher: 1, 2

Student: 3

Teacher: 4

Student 5, 6

Teacher: 7

And so on.

If you haven’t played this game before, you will need to work out how to win. You can do this by playing with someone and using a bit of trial and error. To guarantee winning you need to be able to choose whether to go first or second.

Once several people have played you and lost, ask the class to find a partner to play with and try to work out how to win.

You might spend 15 minutes on this activity initially, then a few minutes in each of a few subsequent lessons until everyone has worked it out. Those who have worked it out can accept challenges from those who are still working on it. Also students can be encouraged to try it on family members at home.

Tips

As with the mind reading activity, students tend to be very motivated by this.