

Exploring Water: Learning Activities

Water is a fascinating subject which links in with many different areas of the curriculum, including geography, science and PSHE. It also links to many themes that will exercise young minds, including women's rights, injustice and poverty. These activities are intended as a general introduction to water, to help students appreciate the importance of clean water in their own lives and learn about the difficulties facing people who don't have access to it. Adapt these ideas to suit the age and maturity of your pupils.

Learning outcomes:

By the end of the session, children will:

- Understand the impact of not having clean water on other people's lives
- Understand that a simple action like hand-washing can prevent people from getting ill
- Recognise the positive impacts of having access to clean water
- Be more aware of how they use water in their own lives
- Be challenged as to how they might help others who do not have clean water

Get thinking!

Have an interactive discussion about water and sanitation

You will need:

Pieces of red paper and green paper

Instructions:

1. Give everyone a red and a green sheet.
2. Choose five statements from the list (right) suited to the age and maturity of the group.
3. Reading one statement at a time, invite children to choose if they agree with the statement/think it's true, or disagree with it/ think it's false.
4. Give them 30 seconds after each statement, then ask them to hold up just one piece of paper: green for true/ agree, red for false/disagree.
5. Discuss people's responses, and give the correct answers.

Statements

- a. Water is a basic human right. (*True*)
- b. The average person in the UK uses 150 litres of water a day. In Australia it's about 500 litres and in the USA, more than 570 litres. (*True- many people in the world have to live on 10 litres a day*)
- c. A lack of toilets contributes to girls dropping out of school early. (*True*)
- d. 2.4 billion people (or one in three people) do not have access to adequate sanitation. (*True*)
- e. About 10% of the world's population (663 million people) live without safe water. (*True*)
- f. 1.1 billion people still defecate in the open. (*True*)
- g. I have a personal responsibility to make sure people have access to clean water.
- h. Diarrhoea is the second-biggest killer of children under five years old worldwide. (*True*)
- i. Practices such as washing your hands with soap can halve the risk of getting diarrhoea. (*True?*)

Get sparkly!

Getting rid of germs: not so easy.

Use glitter to demonstrate the importance of washing hands.

You will need:

- Preferably an outdoor space (*glitter can be a nightmare to clean up*)
- Glitter
- Soap
- Access to sinks or buckets of water

Instructions

1. Ask children to think about germs: what are they, where do we find them and how we share them? Ask them what happens to people if they get germs in their mouth.
2. Using glitter to represent germs, show children how easily they spread:
 - Put the glitter on your hands and then touch things around you eg, furniture, door handles etc.
 - Pick something up and pass the object between you all.
 - Point out how, like germs, the glitter is easily transferred from one person or object to another.
3. Discuss the importance of washing our hands to prevent the spread of germs.
4. Now pour 'glitter germs' on each child's hands and ask them to imagine each tiny sparkle is a germ.
5. Divide the children into two groups: soap-and-water users and plain water users.
6. Instruct both groups of children to wash their hands. Compare the results between each group. Point out how using soap and water is more effective in removing the glitter germs than water alone.
7. Explain that many children around the world will not have access to water, let alone soap.

The best way to kill germs is to wash your hands often with soap and warm water. But you need to be a good hand washer to help protect yourself from bad germs. *See our 'Handwashing' resource for helpful hints.*

Get arty!**Water: luxury or lifesaver?**

Explore together the different ways we use water each day – and create a poster about the wonders of the wet stuff. Reinforce the point that many children in the world don't have enough water to survive.

You will need:

- Flipchart paper
- Markers

Instructions:

1. Ask children to think about the different ways they use water every day. Encourage them to think about water uses at home, school and in the wider world.
2. You might want to give them some examples to start them thinking, eg showering, washing the car or pets, drinking, cooking, cleaning, swimming, etc.
3. Organise the children into small groups. Give each group a sheet of flipchart paper with 'What do we use water for?' written at the top. Invite them to create a poster, allowing 10–15 minutes for this activity.
4. Ask each group to present their poster and water uses to the rest of the class. Either they could move around each other's tables or take turns to explain their posters to the whole class.
5. Then, invite children to return to their group and work together to sort the water uses into two categories: essential and non-essential. Using two different colour marker pens, children could draw circles around the essential and non-essential uses. Then invite the groups to share their ideas to the whole class.
6. Explain that many children around the world don't have any access to water that is clean and safe. Explain that they don't have safe water to drink, let alone swim in. So, for them, water is a life-saver, not a luxury. Stress that water is precious and we need it to keep alive and healthy. Ask the children how they would feel if they didn't have clean water and how it might affect their lives. **Please see the Uganda case study for an example.*
7. As an optional extra, invite children to design posters to display in their own toilets, about turning off taps and saving water.

Get moving!**Water is precious: a relay race**

Ebinda, from the Democratic Republic of Congo spends an average of 4.5 hours a day walking for water because her family can only afford one jerry can. A 10 litre jerry can when filled weighs almost 10kg. She has to do several trips to collect enough water for the family. After each trip she empties the jerry can in a bowl at home, and then sets off straight away on the next trip, to get another jerry can filled.

This game offers a fun way to visualise 10 litres of water, the amount that many people in the world survive on each a day. It also underlines how precious water is!

You will need:

- Tables
- 10-litre buckets
- Water
- Preferably an outside area or a large, non-carpeted hall

Instructions:

1. Split the group into teams.
2. At one end of the room, invite the teams to form a queue behind a table with an empty bucket on it.
3. Give each team a plastic cup. To make the task harder for older students, you could make a small hole in the bottom of the cup (*optional*).
4. At the other end of the room, put a bucket filled with water.
5. This is a relay race to see which team can get the most water from one bucket to the other, taking it in turns and using the cup provided, within a time limit of your choice.

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