

3.6.2 Abracadabra – Object Magic

Brief description, and rules of the implementation of the learning activity

During the activity, children use their imagination and creativity to transform an everyday object (e.g., a pencil) into something completely new and different. After saying the magic words (“Abracadabra, this pencil is no longer a pencil, but a...”), they present it as a new object and demonstrate how it can be used and how it works. In doing so, they try to convince the other pupils to see the object in the same new way.

This process focuses especially on situations in which another pupil does not yet grasp the new idea. The aim is to help that pupil shift their perspective, showing that they can flexibly adjust their thinking and adopt a new way of seeing the object.

Skill focus

- **Primary Skill Focus**
 - Flexibility
- **Complementary/Secondary Skill Focus**
 - Creativity
 - Curiosity, sense of wonder and openness

Age group	Student number	Duration
6 + years old	whole class	15 minutes

Proposed step by step implementation of the learning activity

1. **Circle setup:** The children sit in a circle, and the teacher joins the circle as well.
2. **Introduction of the object:** The teacher presents a simple object (for example, a pencil) and says: “Abracadabra, this pencil is no longer a pencil, but a...”
3. **Transforming the object:** A randomly chosen student finishes the sentence and presents the object as something completely new (e.g., “a sword”) and acts out how it could be used.
4. **Passing the object:** The student then passes the object to another randomly chosen child, who again says the magic words, names a new transformation, and acts out its function.
5. **Flexible thinking phase:** If a child does not yet see a new idea or cannot think of one, they may pass their turn.
 - The teacher gently invites them to stay open and flexible, encouraging them to join later when a new idea starts to form.
 - The goal of this moment is to help pupils shift their perspective: by watching other children’s ideas, they gradually learn to adapt their thinking and become more flexible in imagining new possibilities.
 - Often, another child’s creative transformation sparks the imagination of those who initially struggled.

6. **Supportive guidance:** The teacher encourages participation without pressure, making sure pupils feel safe to explore, experiment, and return to the activity when ready.
7. **Ending the activity:** The activity continues until the teacher decides to end it (ideally within 10 minutes). To close, the teacher “transforms” the object back by saying: “Abracadabra, this pencil is a pencil again.”

It is worth using more than one object at the same time to encourage those children who have no ideas for the first object to engage in creative thinking.

Indoor/Outdoor Classroom layout notes

The students sit in a circle (optionally with a small table in the centre of the classroom).

It can also be done outdoors/in nature, in which case objects found in nature can be used. Or vice versa: objects can be searched for in nature in order to perform a given activity.

How does this learning activity develop this particular skill?

This activity develops students’ cognitive and emotional flexibility by:

- develops divergent and lateral thinking, which helps children find a variety of original solutions to a situation and enables them to discover new, unexpected, logical connections and apply unconventional approaches.
- it helps develop flexible/creative thinking, enabling them to cope effectively with unpredictable situations.
- repeatedly requiring them to reinterpret a familiar object, giving it new roles and meanings, which activates cognitive flexibility;
- helps them to move away from their routine functions and be open to unusual ideas;
- allowing them to pass and return to the game later, helping them realize that their thinking can change and evolve;
- teaching them to accept and use others’ ideas as inspiration, thereby improving their adaptability and cooperation skills;
- encourages multi-sensory thinking and creative connections
- a safe and playful environment provides a secure framework for self-exploration and free change of perspective, which is the key to flexibility.

What do we want to achieve regarding primary skill development (student understanding and/or behaviour)?

The aim of this activity is to help children think flexibly and quickly shift perspectives in a given situation. As a result of completing this task, students will:

- be able to detach from the concrete form and typical use of an object, thereby developing their associative abilities,
- become more open to unusual or initially “strange” ideas,
- be able to avoid rigidly clinging to their first thought and instead seek alternatives,
- understand that there is no single best solution;
- be able to accept that the same thing can be seen and understood in many different ways;
- be able to gain confidence in their ability to see things creatively and in many different ways;

- be aware that their thinking can change over time (for example, if they initially pass but later decide to participate),
- become more confident in presenting their own ideas in front of the group, thereby inspiring others.

At the behavioural level, the goal is for children to be less afraid of making mistakes, dare to be creative, listen openly to their peers' ideas, and adapt to the evolving group situation.

Suggested use, and practical subject-related examples

This activity can be integrated into the learning environment anytime when we want to warm up and stimulate the children's thinking. It is especially useful in the following situations:

- during lessons aimed at developing creative thinking (e.g., literature, drama, visual arts);
- developing vocabulary during language lessons
- using a piece of artwork as a starting point during the art lessons
- during the science lesson in nature - find an object that is suitable for making music.
- for social and group dynamic purposes, when we want to strengthen acceptance and openness within the community.

At first, the activity may take longer because children are still getting familiar with the situation and role-play style thinking. However, experience shows that as they gain practice, their participation becomes smoother and more natural.

Materials and tools needed for implementation

An everyday object, for example: a pencil, stick, hoop, or hat.

Guiding questions

- What else could you imagine this object to be?
- If you continued another child's idea, what would you transform the object into?
- Could you use it in a completely different way than you showed just now?
- Imagine you are in another world. What could this object be there?
- What if this object suddenly came to life? What would it do?
- What if this object had magical powers? How would you use it?

Tips and Tricks for dealing with challenges

- **Challenge:** The child freezes up, feels anxious, and can't think of anything when they receive the object.
Tip: Allow them to pass it on without putting pressure on them. Introduce the phrase "I'm still thinking." When the circle has gone all the way around, the teacher should return to the child in a friendly manner. We can also help with a physical prompt: *"If you were to put it on your head, what could it be?"* or *"If it were very heavy, how would you lift it up?"*
- **Challenge:** The children repeat the previous ideas (e.g., four children have already said that the pencil is a sword or a magic wand).
Tip: Gently guide them toward flexible thinking. Introduce a magic rule: "What's already been said disappears in the magic hat!" If someone does repeat an idea, ask a narrowing question: "A super sword! And if this sword were to turn into something you could eat, what would it be?"

- **Challenge:** Over-excitement. The activity (e.g., shooting, slapping) becomes too intense; the children stand up, run around the room, or accidentally hit someone with the object.
Tip: Set up a "magic stage" (a small carpet or a square marked off with tape) in the middle of the circle. Only the person who has the object can step onto it, and the presentation must remain within the stage. As a basic rule, establish: "The magic is broken immediately if you touch someone with the object."
- **Challenge:** The child can only imagine the pencil as a "writing tool" and the hat as "winter clothing"; they cannot break away from the original function (cognitive rigidity).
Tip: Add more objects with completely different textures and shapes to the circle (e.g., a scarf, a sponge, or an empty paper roll) . Ask the child to close their eyes, feel the object, and describe how it feels (e.g., soft, round, cold). Focusing on the senses helps break away from the original, ingrained function.

Difficulty level tailoring

Teachers can tailor this learning activity to three difficulty levels to meet students' needs.

- **Beginners (6-7 years old):** – Learners with low flexibility: Use simple and familiar objects (e.g., a pencil, a hat) so children can easily come up with new ideas. Work in one large circle, allowing children to get inspiration from one another. Keep the task open and simple, without extra constraints.
- **Advanced learners (8-9 years old):** – Learners with moderate flexibility: Introduce more complex objects (e.g., a glove, a key) that require more imagination. Let children work in smaller groups to increase participation and interaction. Add a thematic constraint, such as "in the forest," "at school," or "in space," to increase the challenge.
- **Experts (9-10 years old):** – Learners with high flexibility: Allow children to bring their own object and provide time for exploration and brainstorming. Combine several challenges, such as a theme + movement requirement (e.g., "the object must be something that can fly in space"). Encourage pupils to develop their ideas further, for example in a short scene or duo presentation. Have groups reflect on each other's flexibility and creativity, explaining how they adapted their ideas.

Debriefing and Reflection questions

- What was the most memorable idea you heard? Why did you like it?
- How did it feel to take part in this activity?
- Were you surprised by anything you hadn't expected beforehand?
- How did your thinking change during or after the activity?
- What did you learn from others in this group?