



Ten Minutes, Something Good

Five small classroom activities | Suggested starting point: grades 3-5

A little time. Something worth trying.

A lesson wraps up early, the schedule shifts, or you have a few minutes before the next thing. Here are five small activities you can borrow without building a whole new lesson. Pick one that fits the moment, and leave the rest for another day.

READY WHEN YOU ARE

Each activity has a student page, materials, a simple ten-minute rhythm, and two variations. Timings are flexible and assume materials are ready. Read the prompts aloud or display a page if you would rather skip printing.

2 | The two-sheet tower

Build, test, and change a freestanding paper tower. Two sheets of scrap paper per pair; no tape needed.

3 | A mystery in the lines

Turn an ordinary object into clues and a drawing. Pencil, paper, and one familiar classroom object.

4 | Pattern detective

Explore three patterns and explain a possible rule. Pencil and the student page, or copy the patterns onto the board.

5 | Invent a little helper

Sketch a useful invention for an everyday classroom annoyance. Pencil and paper; building is optional for another day.

6 | The unexpected delivery

Make a short story together, one sentence at a time. Pencil and paper, or tell the story aloud.

Page 7 has sample responses and teacher notes. Drawing, speaking, pointing, and familiar supports are welcome throughout.



The two-sheet tower

Build a tower that stands by itself | Work with a partner, or try it on your own

WHAT YOU HAVE

Two sheets of scrap paper. A clear tabletop. No tape, glue, scissors, or extra supports.

Your challenge: Fold, curl, or crumple the paper into a tower that stands on its own for a slow count of ten. Keep the paper in two pieces.

Our ten minutes

1 minute: Talk or sketch a first idea.

4 minutes: Make it and test it with hands off.

3 minutes: Change one thing and test again.

2 minutes: Show what changed and put the paper aside for reuse or recycling.

Sketch your first design and your changed design.

We changed _____

On our second test, we noticed _____

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

A little support: Try a wide folded base first, or build together with a partner.

Another challenge: If the tower stands, try making it taller while keeping it freestanding.



A mystery in the lines

Describe, draw, and guess | Choose a pencil, eraser, ruler, or another familiar object

A SMALL CLASSROOM MYSTERY

Choose an ordinary classroom object. Keep it safely at your workspace. Write or tell three clues without saying its name. You can describe its shape, material, or job. No touching or tasting is needed to guess.

Our ten minutes

1 minute: Choose your object.

3 minutes: Make three clues.

3 minutes: Share clues with a partner; they sketch a guess.

3 minutes: Reveal, compare, and name the clue that helped most.

Clue 1: _____

Clue 2: _____

Clue 3: _____

My partner's sketch or guess:

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

A little support: Show two possible objects and invite your partner to choose.

Another challenge: Add a clue that helps distinguish your object from a similar one.



Pattern detective

What could come next? | A rule matters as much as an answer

LOOK FOR A RULE

For each pattern, add two terms and explain a rule that fits every term shown. More than one rule may fit. Compare ideas with a partner, or explain yours aloud.

Our ten minutes: 1 to notice, 4 to try, 3 to compare, 2 to share.

1. 4, 7, 10, 13, _____, _____

My rule: _____

2. A, B, B, A, B, B, A, _____, _____

My rule: _____

3. 1, 2, 4, 7, 11, _____, _____

My rule: _____

My own pattern: _____

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

A little support: Start with pattern 2. Use two marks, colors, or sounds for A and B.

Another challenge: Explain the changing gaps in pattern 3, then add a third new term.



Invent a little helper

A sketch is enough | No building or buying needed

PICK ONE SMALL PROBLEM

Pencils roll off a desk. A bookmark slips out. A drawing keeps curling up.

Choose one of these, or another everyday classroom problem. Sketch an invention that could help. Give it a name and label how it works.

Our ten minutes: 1 to choose, 5 to sketch, 2 to explain, 2 to improve.

My little problem: _____

My invention, with labels:

Its name: _____

One change after sharing: _____

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

A little support: Choose the rolling-pencil problem. Draw or explain a way to keep it in place.

Another challenge: Add a constraint: your idea must use only paper and be easy to reuse.



The unexpected delivery

Build a tiny story together | Partners or groups of three

YOUR STORY STARTER

“A small box appeared on the classroom shelf. On top was a note: Please return this before the bell.”
What is inside? Who needs it back? What happens next?

Our ten minutes

1 minute: Read the starter and choose how to take turns.

5 minutes: Add one sentence each, then keep going.

2 minutes: Give the story an ending.

2 minutes: Share a favorite line or picture.

Our story title: _____

MAKE IT YOUR OWN

A little support: Tell the story aloud, or draw a beginning, middle, and end.

Another challenge: Work these three words naturally into the story: ribbon, whisper, umbrella.



A few notes to keep handy

Examples and options | Borrow what suits your class

Two-sheet tower

A wide folded base with a narrower folded sheet above it is one possible design. It may need adjustment. Compare each design with its own earlier test; height does not need to be a class competition.

Mystery in the lines

For an eraser: "I fit in your hand. I can feel a little rubbery. I help change a pencil mark." If two guesses fit the clues, invite one more clue instead of marking the guess wrong.

Pattern detective

Possible continuations: 1) 16, 19, adding 3 each time. 2) B, B, repeating A-B-B. 3) 16, 22, adding 1, then 2, then 3, and so on. The next term for that third rule is 29. Other answers can work if a consistent rule fits the terms shown.

Invent a little helper

A folded paper groove that holds a pencil is one possible idea. A student might label the flat base and the raised edges. The sketch can show an idea without proving that it will work.

The unexpected delivery

One possible ending: "Inside was the class puppet's missing scarf. We returned it just as the bell rang, and found a thank-you note tucked in the sleeve." Any ending that connects with the group's story can work.

MAKE THE TEN MINUTES FIT

Use a familiar response method and keep existing supports available. A student can contribute an idea, a sketch, a gesture, or a spoken line. If materials or settling in need longer, shorten the sharing round or save it for later.