

The background of the slide is a photograph of a woman in a light blue shirt and tan pants standing at the front of a room, gesturing while presenting to an audience. The audience members are seen from behind, seated at desks. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. On the left side, there is a vertical bar with a wavy edge, composed of horizontal stripes in shades of red, pink, purple, blue, green, and yellow. A large white arrow in the top right corner points diagonally upwards and to the right.

# The Young Ones Conference

*Nurturing young minds and  
empowering educators*



**ILC**  
**International House**  
Brno

# Learning Through Play

Martina Weissbergerová

*Educational Consultant*

# Spark



# Spark

***If you were a child in 2023,  
what would be the thing you would play with most?***



## In this session:



What is Learning through Play?



Benefits

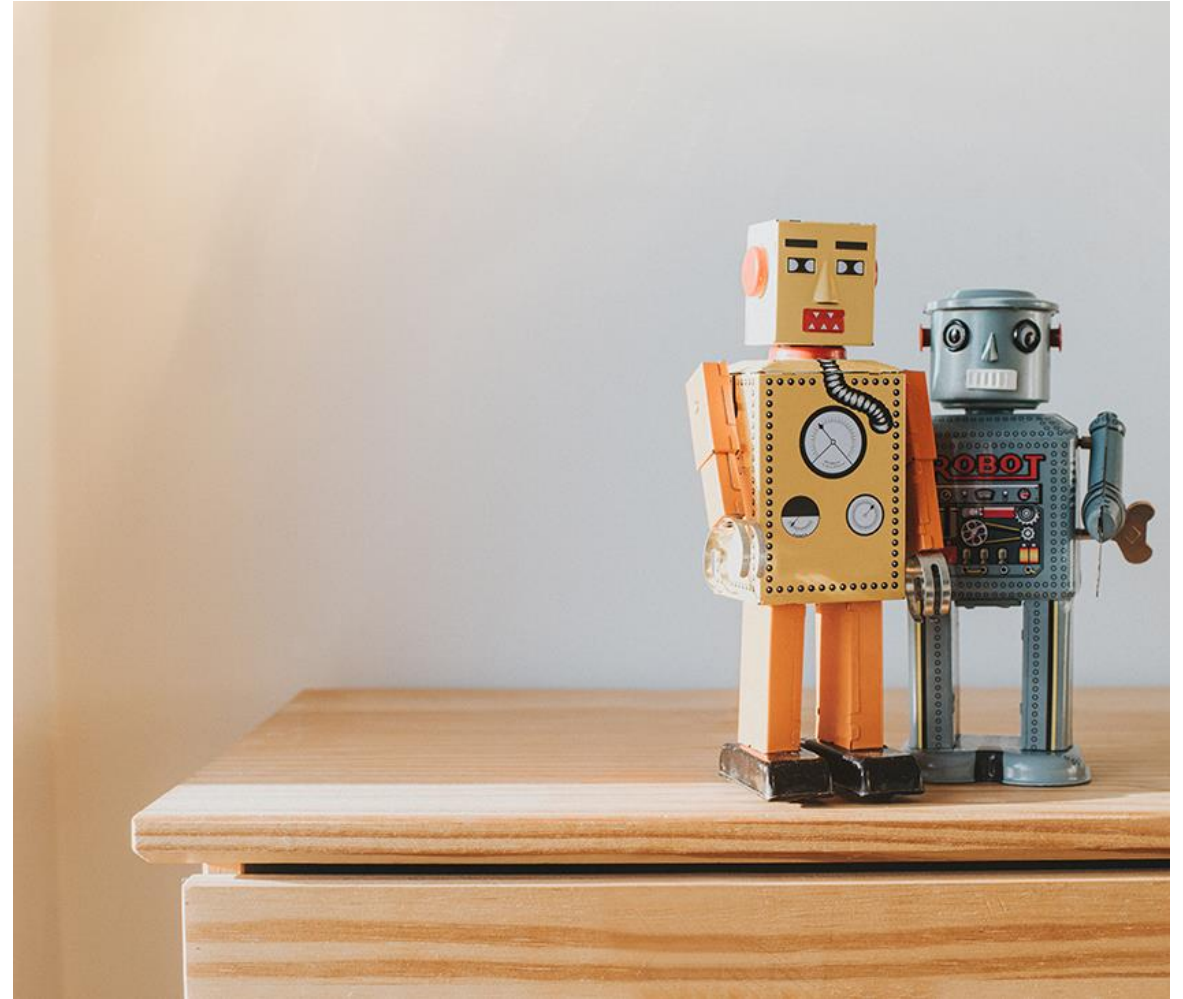


Possible Difficulties



Practical Ideas

What does play **look** like?





## Play looks like:



messy

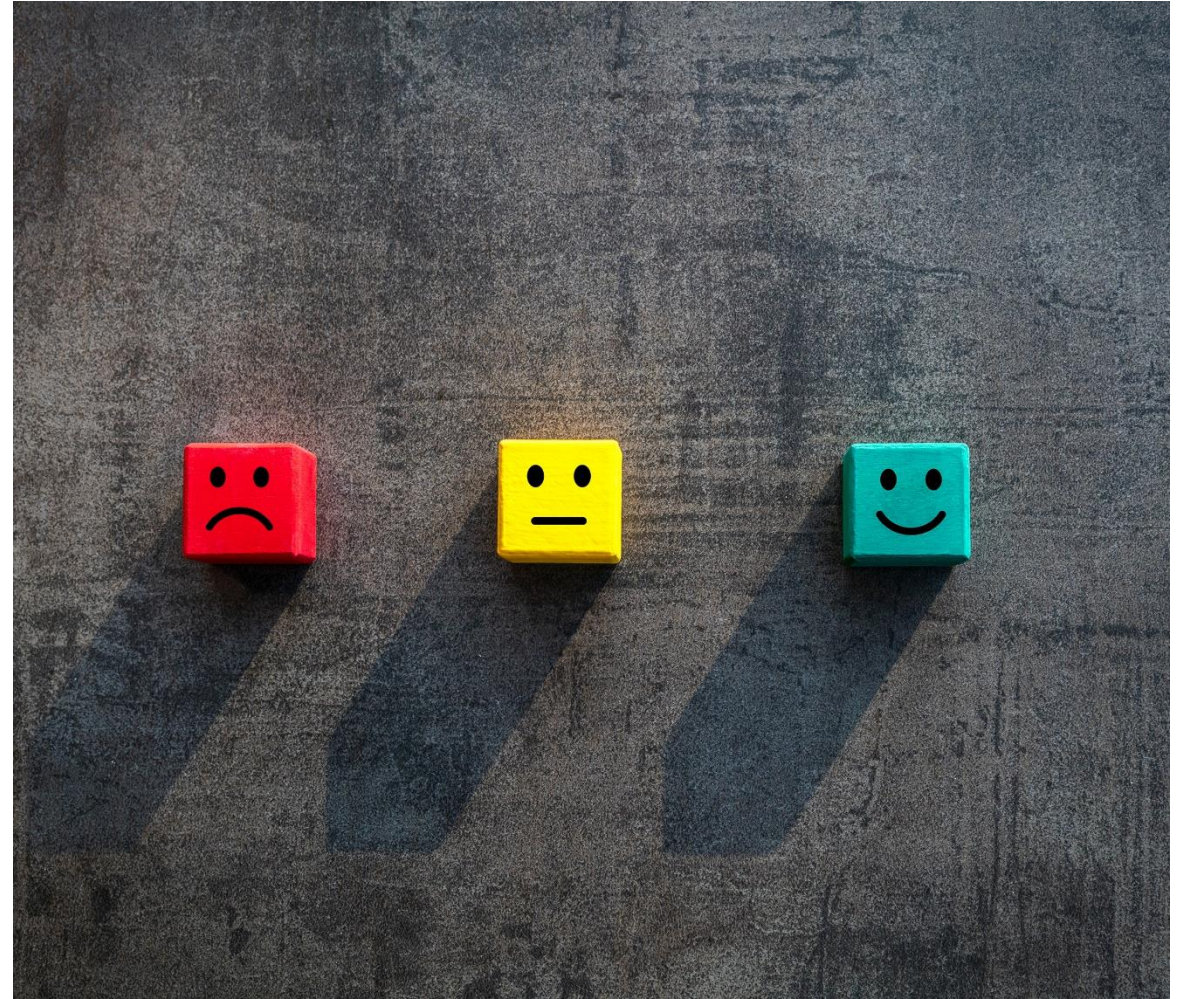


sociable



creative

What does play **feel** like?





## Play feels like:



fun



relaxing



silly

# What is Learning through Play?

# What is Learning through Play?



## Free play

- Unstructured
- Open-ended
- Learner-driven
- Associated with creativity, exploration & iteration



## Guided Play

- Structured or semi-structured
- Scaffolded by the teacher
- Linked to target learning objective

# What elements does learning-through-play involve?



# The 5 characteristics of Learning Through Play by the Lego Foundation



**Joyful**



**Socially  
Interactive**



**Actively  
Engaging**



**Meaningful**



**Iterative  
(Experi-  
menting)**





# Guess who I am?

**6 Animal Fun!**  
**Lesson 1**

**Competences**  
1 Listen and point. Say. 044 +

horse  
cow  
goat  
chicken  
pig  
duck

2 Chant. 045 +  
3 Listen again. 046 +  
Point in order. Say.

1 2 3 4 5 6

50 Vocabulary horse, cow, goat, pig, chicken, duck

Find it! 51

**6 Lesson 2**

1 Listen and read. Say. 047 +  
Learn with Lucy and Jack

A duck can swim. Can a cow swim? Yes, it can.  
Can it fly? No, it can't!

2 Listen and say the animal. 047 +

1 2 3 4 5 6

It's a ...  
It's a ...  
It's a ...

3 Sing. 048 + Video! Song!

4 Make your animal quiz machine! Play and say. 049 +

Can a pig dance? No, it can't!

52 Can a cow swim? Can it fly? Yes, it can. No, it can't.

Song Lyrics Workbook Page B5 53

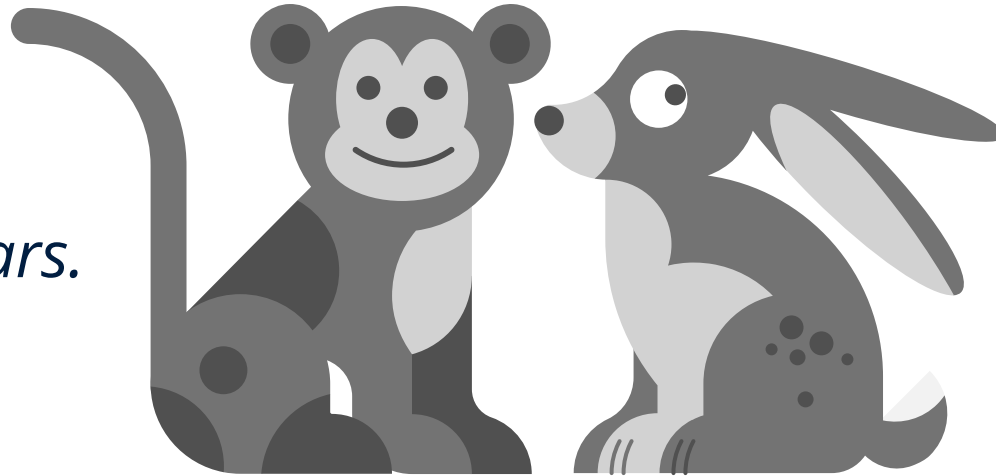




# All change

to practise listening for details, *It's got ...*, *It's + adjective*, *It lives in ...*, *It can ...*

- *It's grey.*
- *It's got two small ears.*
- *It likes bananas.*



- *It's grey.*
- *It's got big ears.*
- *It likes carrots.*

# Benefits of including Learning through Play into your English lessons

# Learning through Play supports learners' holistic development

**Social-emotional**  
(e.g., empathy,  
communication)



**Physical**  
(e.g., motor skills)

**Cognitive**  
(e.g., language,  
numeracy,  
problem-solving)

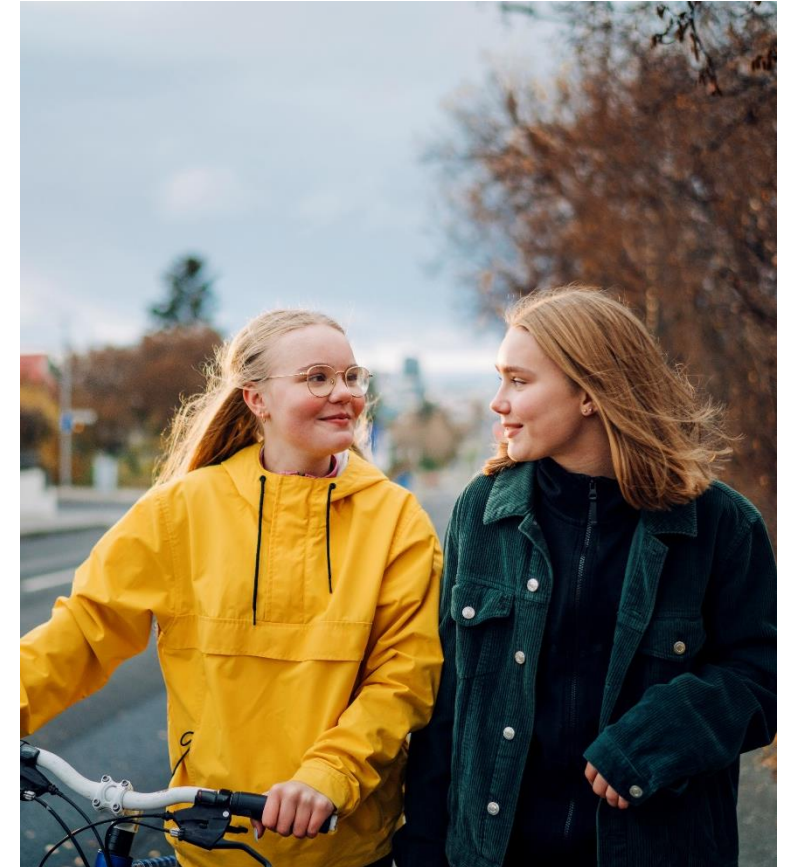
## Do you agree?

### Learning English

Language is meant  
for communicating

### Learning Through Play

Play is often  
interactive





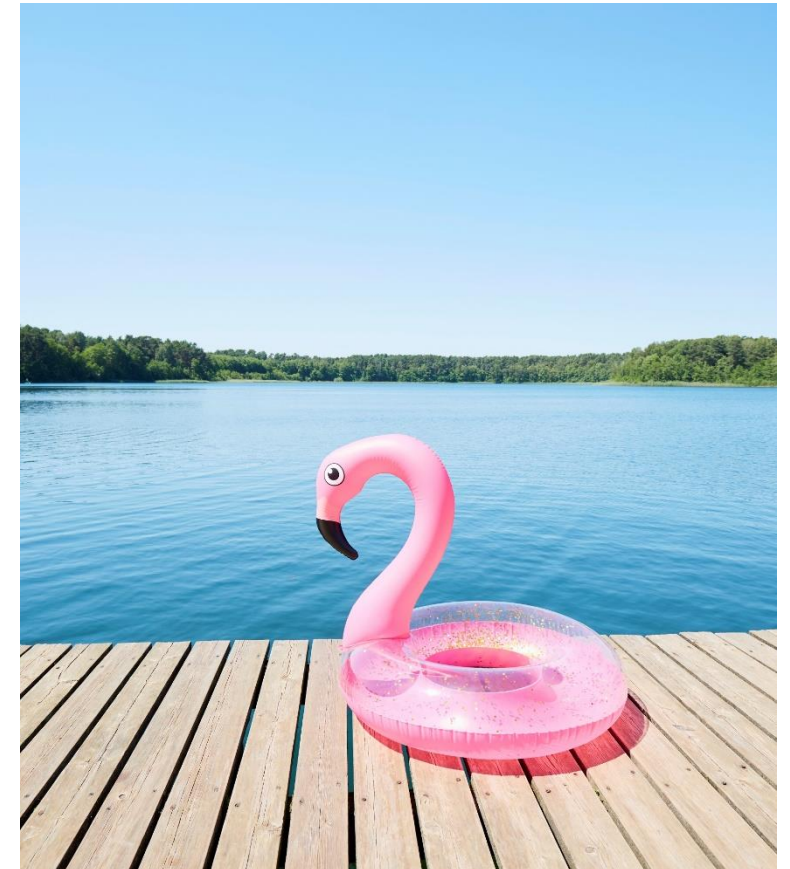
## Do you agree?

### Learning English

Making mistakes is normal and can actually be helpful

### Learning Through Play

Classroom becomes a safe place to make mistakes



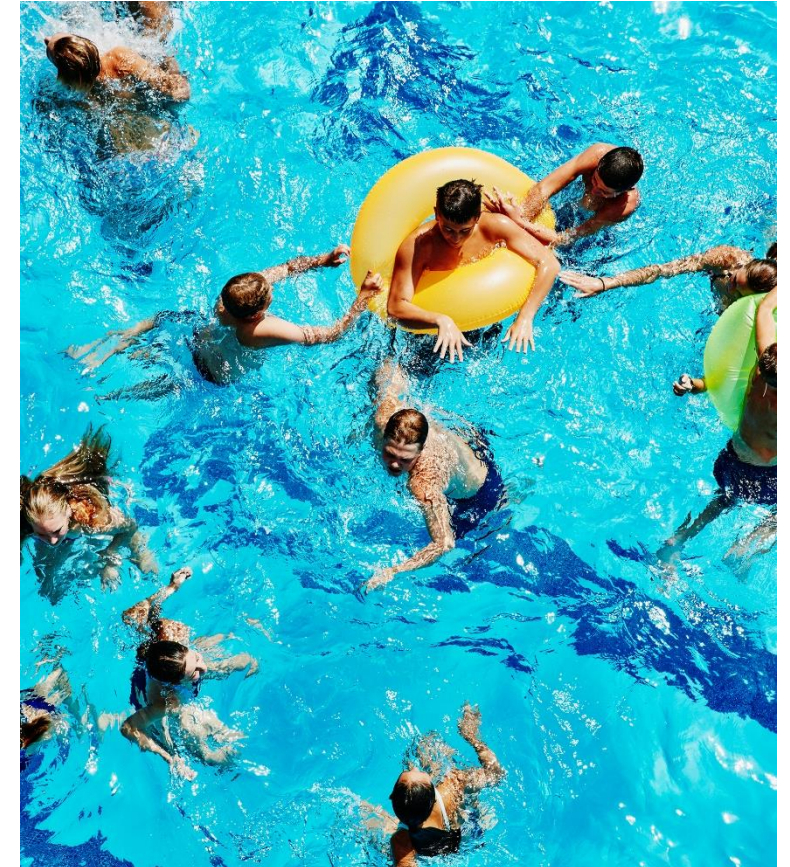
## Do you agree?

### Learning English

Students learn faster  
when enjoying lesson

### Learning Through Play

Play-based  
experiences are fun



## Do you agree?

### Learning English

Feeling successful  
helps students  
control emotions and  
gives confidence

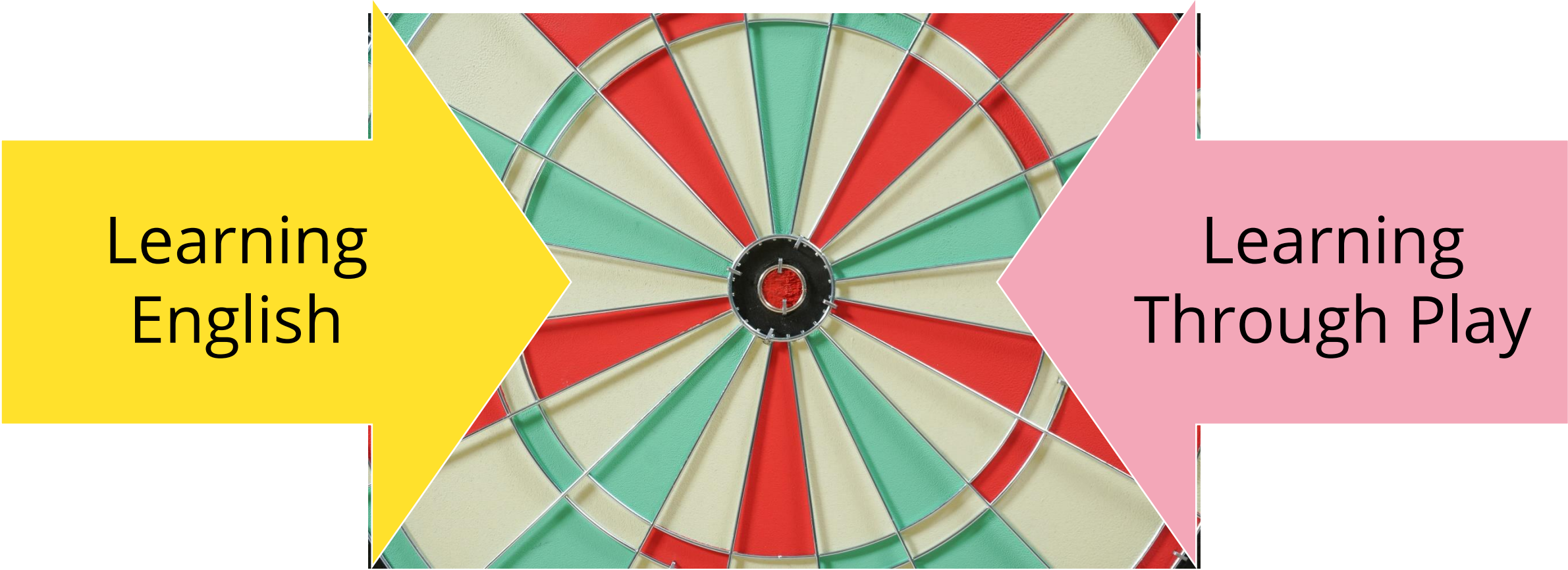
### Learning Through Play

Play helps with  
wellbeing





## Same goals



Learning  
English

Learning  
Through Play



# Possible Challenges

## Challenge #1: Instructions

### Teacher:

- 'Let's play a game!
- Take out a paper and cut a star, circle and square
- Fold the square four times
- On one side write a colour
- Then turn the paper over and write three adjectives
- Next glue a sentence about a frog
- Finally act it out to a friend
- And speak only English'



## Solution #1: Instructions

- ✓ Keep the instructions simple and clear
- ✓ Go step by step slowly
- ✓ Show your expectations
- ✓ Add in some ICQs



## Challenge #2: Playing with Mixed Abilities

Teacher: 'Let's have a debate!  
The shy students have been too quiet  
so let's have them start first.  
Come to the front of the room so  
everyone can watch.'





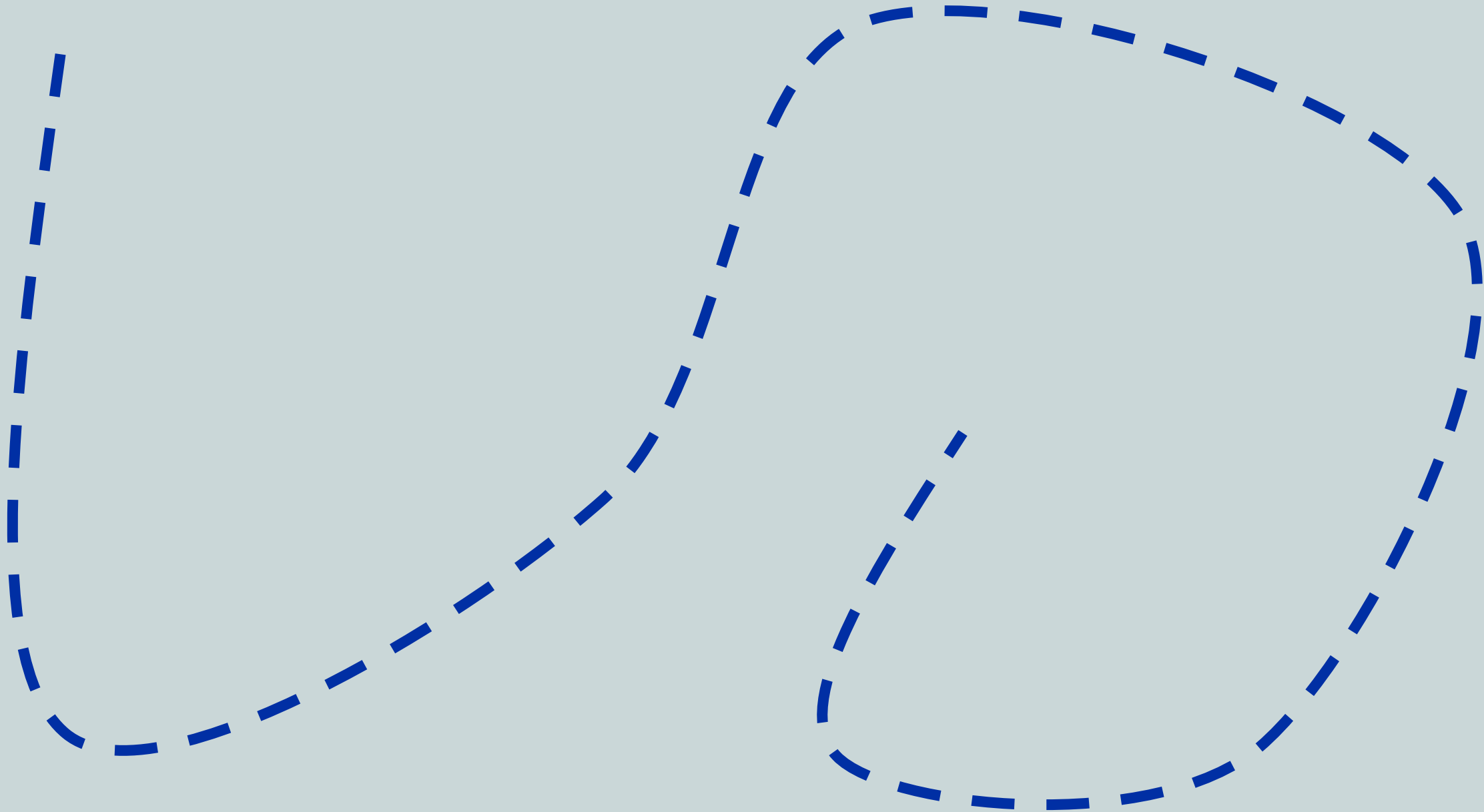
## Solution #2: Playing with Mixed Abilities

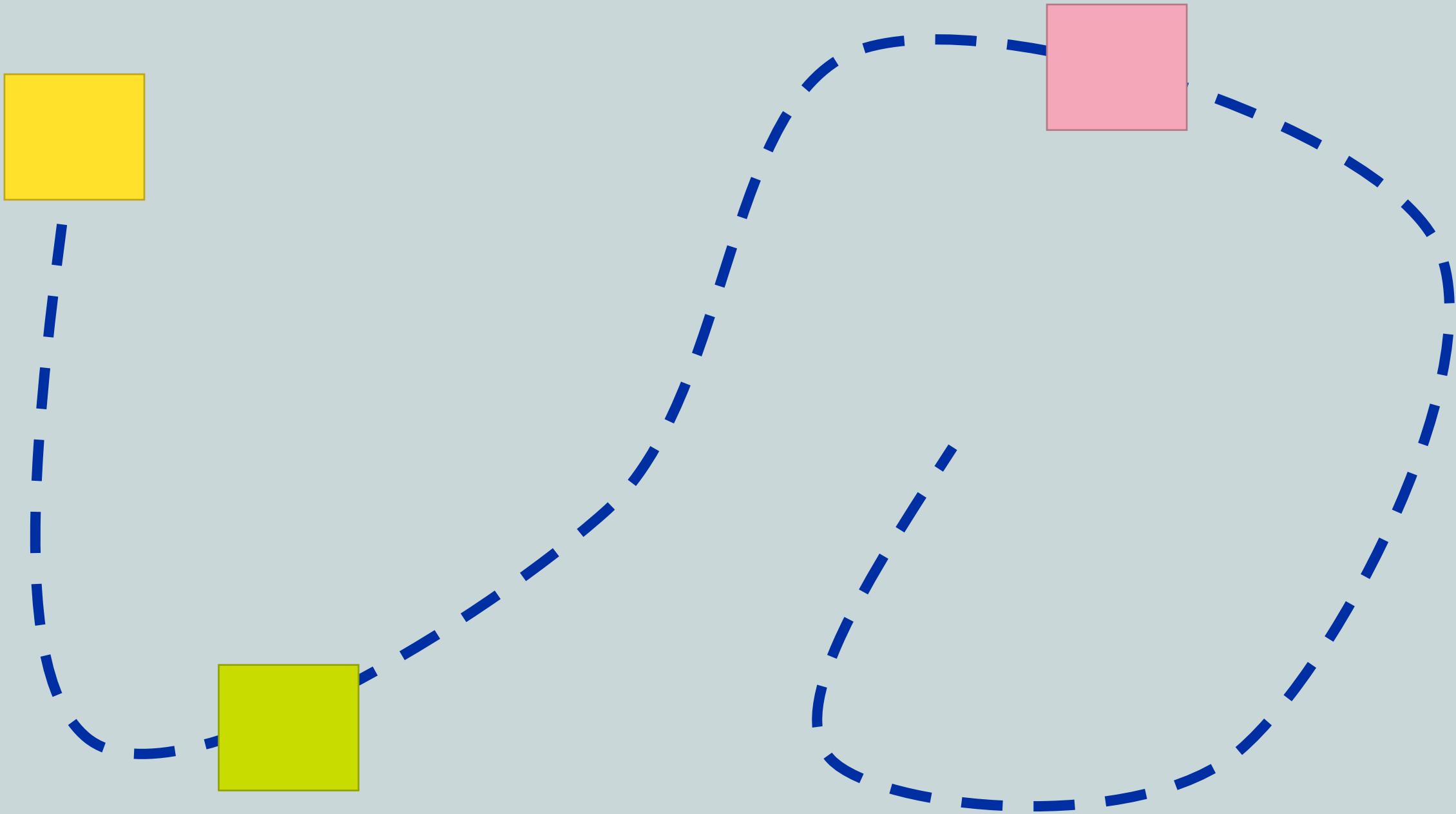
Teacher: 'Let's play a board game about this unit. Some of you can make your own board game. Some of you can use the board game I created. We will play in small groups.'

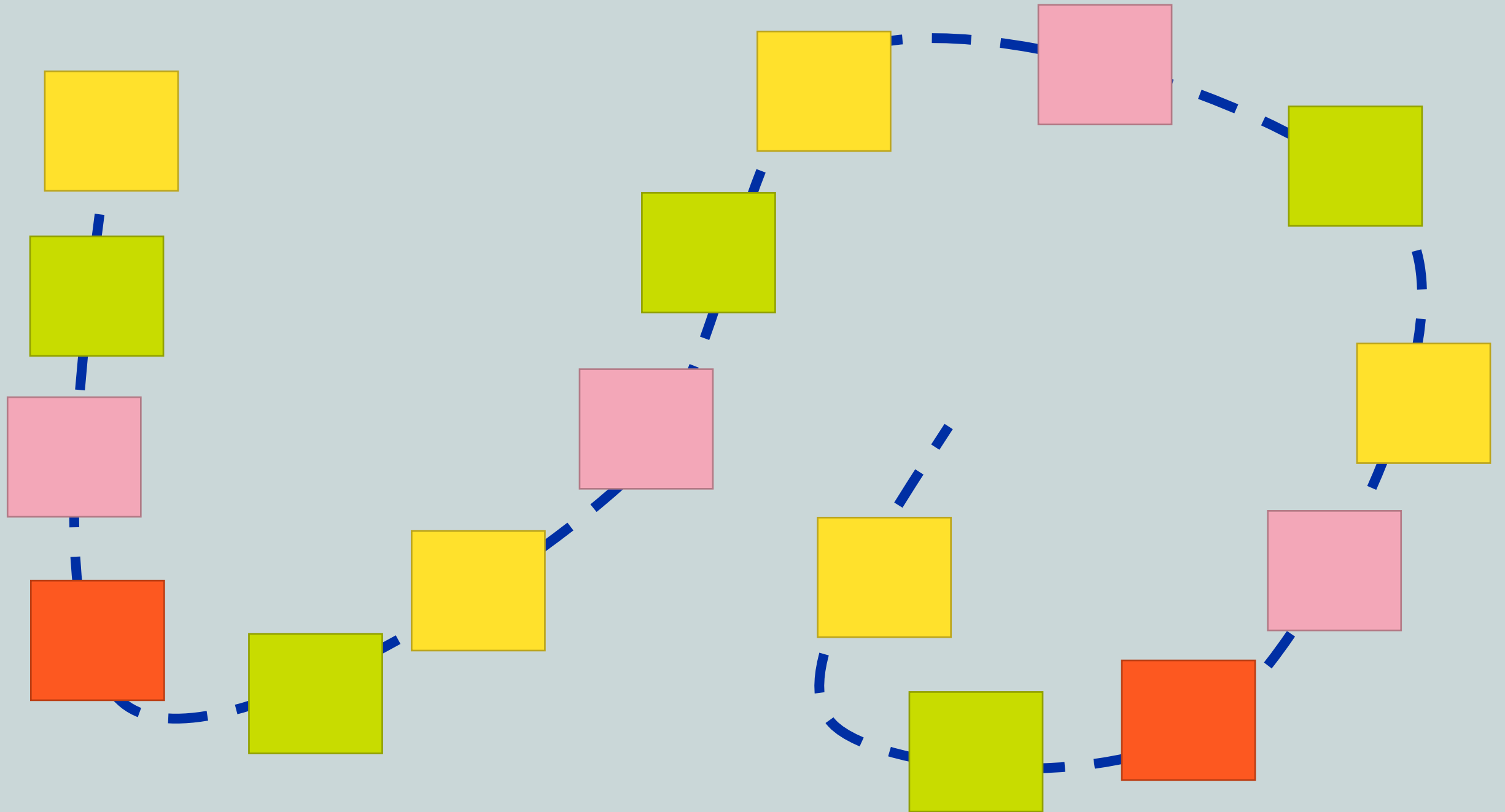




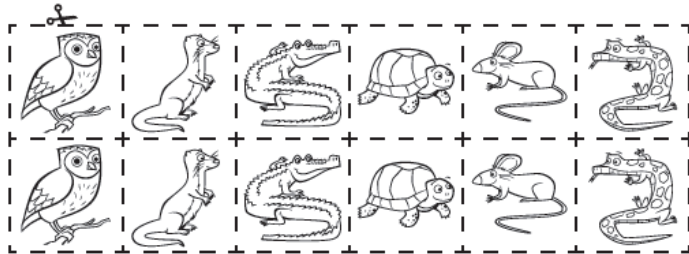
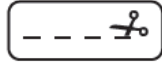
# Student Created Board Game







**2 Lesson 2**



Start			Miss a turn	
	Back 2	Forward 1		
	Back to start		Forward 2	
		Back 4		Finish

Craft

Shine On 1 Photocopiable © Oxford University Press

Shine On 1, Student's Book p. 29

**Use your coursebook instead**



## Challenge #3: Resources

Teacher: 'Let's spend lots of time colouring, cutting and gluing just to say two sentences in a dialogue!'



## Challenge #3: Resources

Teacher: 'Let's act and use the things in class to pretend we are pirates!'



# Practical Ideas



# Number group game

to practise numbers





**to practise English letters**

**to practise English letters, numbers**

**to practise English letters, numbers and colours**

# Complete a grid

to practise English letters, numbers, and colours

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A								
B								
C								
D								
E								
F								
G								
H								

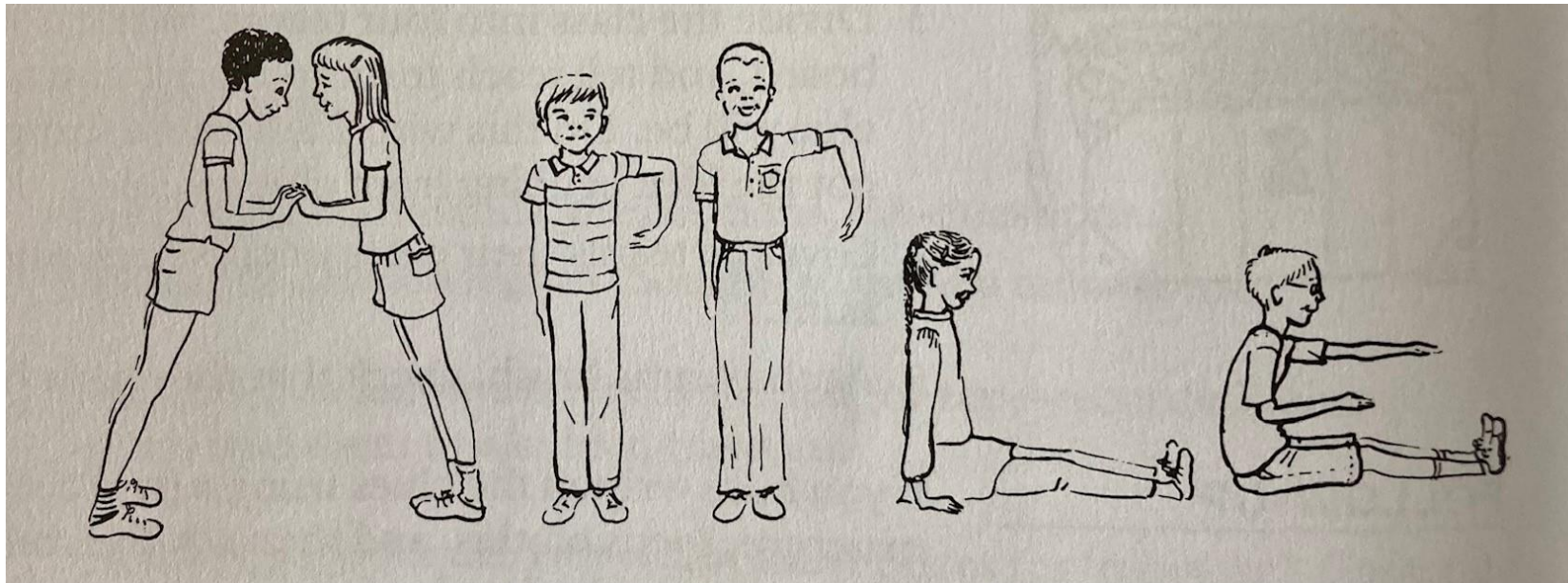
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A								
B								
C								
D								
E								
F								
G								
H								

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
A								
B								
C								
D								
E								
F								
G								
H								

# Body writing

to associate the spoken and written forms of letters/numbers/words & to build co/operation between members of the groups

In groups or individually, the children make shapes, letters, numbers or words with their bodies.





# True or False

to revise vocabulary while including some movement

TEAM A

TEAM B

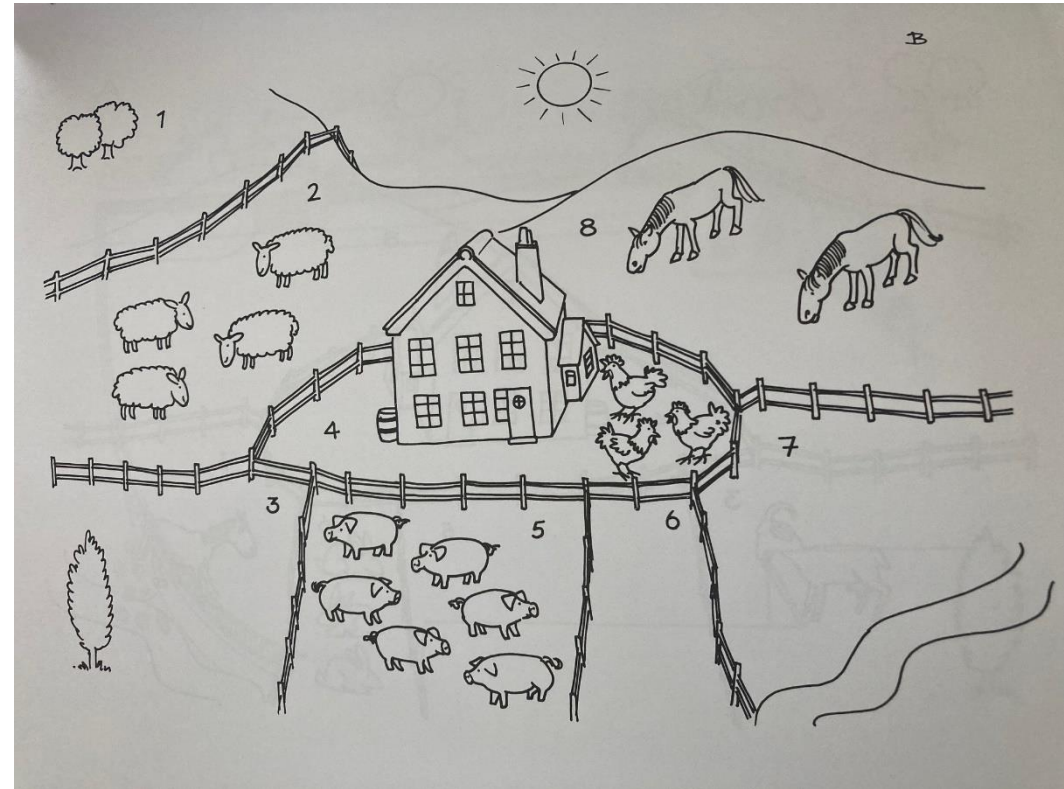
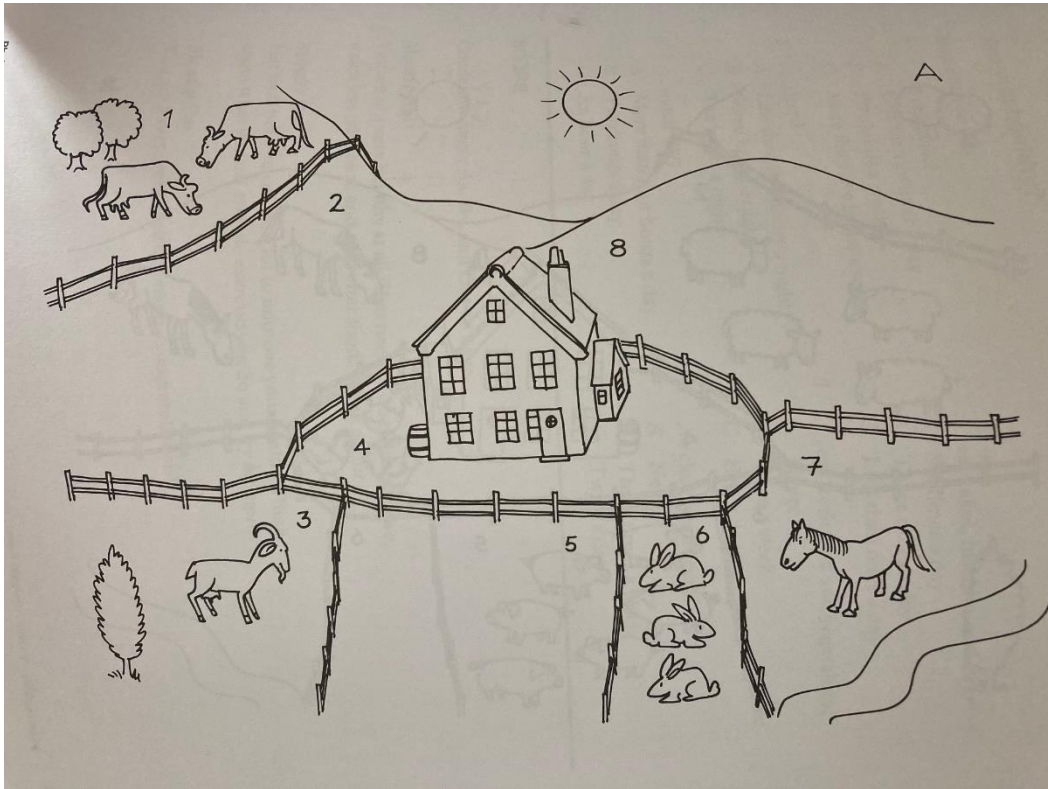


BLAD



# On the farm – an information gap activity

*There is/There are, it's + colour, it's in.*



**Game 1**

**Communication**

**Game 2**

**Student A**

**Units 1-3**  
**Spot the differences**  
1 Ask Student B and find 6 differences.  
Where's the lizard?  
It's on the shelf.  


**Units 4-6**  
**Describe your town**  
1 Describe your picture to Student B.  
I can see ...  
  
2 Listen, ask and say what's in Student B's picture.  
Can you see ...?  

A 

B 

C 

D 

**Use your coursebook instead**

Game 1

Communication

Game 2

Student B

**Units 1-3**  
Spot the differences

1 Ask Student A and find 6 differences.

Where's the lizard?

It's on the shelf.



**Units 4-6**  
Describe your town

1 Listen, ask and say what's in Student A's picture.

Can you see ...?

A 

B 

C 

D 

2 Describe your picture to Student A.

I can see ...



93

**Use your coursebook instead**



# 5 Is He a Chef?

## Lesson 1

1 Listen and point. Say. 014

2 Listen and say the word. 015

doctor 1

teacher 2

chef 3

bus driver 4

pilot 5

firefighter 6

Competences

3 Chant. 016

4 Play a game.

1 teacher

2 doctor

3 chef

4 pilot

5 firefighter

6 bus driver

Find it!

52 Vocabulary doctor, teacher, chef, bus driver, pilot, firefighter

53



# Professions

to practise questions with be/do + present simple

**Name:** John  
**Country:** England  
**Town:** London  
**Age:** 27  
**Hobbies:** books  
**YOU'RE LOOKING FOR:**  
LINDA (from Spain)



**Name:** John  
**Country:** Australia  
**Town:** Sydney  
**Age:** 19  
**Hobbies:** food  
**YOU'RE LOOKING FOR:**  
LINDA (19 years)



**Name:** Tom  
**Country:** Germany  
**Town:** Berlin  
**Age:** 26  
**Hobbies:** helicopters  
**YOU'RE LOOKING FOR:**  
LUCY (likes riding a bike)



**Name:** Linda  
**Country:** Spain  
**Town:** Madrid  
**Age:** 21  
**Hobbies:** nature  
**YOU'RE LOOKING FOR:**  
JOHN (likes reading)



**Name:** Linda  
**Country:** Portugal  
**Town:** Lisbon  
**Age:** 19  
**Hobbies:** ice cream  
**YOU'RE LOOKING FOR:**  
JOHN (from Australia)



**Name:** Lucy  
**Country:** Hungary  
**Town:** Budapest  
**Age:** 28  
**Hobbies:** bike  
**YOU'RE LOOKING FOR:**  
TOM (lives in Berlin)



## 5 At the Fashion Show

**Lesson 1**

- 1 Listen and repeat. 058
- 2 Listen and say the word. 059

### Fashion Week

**3** Write. Which clothes can you see in the classroom? Write Yes or No.

<p>1 </p> <p>3 </p> <p>5 </p> <p>7 </p>	<p>2 </p> <p>4 </p> <p>6 </p> <p>8 </p>
<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>

**Competences**

**4** Play a game. Who is it?

I can see a red dress.

Yes. Your turn!

It's Anna!

48 **Vocabulary** Clothes

49



# Statues

to practise present continuous (the original deals with past continuous)






COMB YOUR HAIR

DO YOUR MAKE-UP

# Variation on a gap

to practise vocabulary (adjectives, opposites) and word order + to stimulate imagination

## Picture gaps

This is my  \_\_\_\_\_. She eats  \_\_\_\_\_ and drinks  \_\_\_\_\_.



## Variation on a gap

to practise vocabulary (adjectives, opposites) and word order + to stimulate imagination

### Picture gaps

This is my  cat. She eats  fish and drinks  water.

### Opposites

And old witch lives in a \_\_\_\_\_ (big) house in a wood. She has a \_\_\_\_\_ (short) nose and \_\_\_\_\_ (black) hair.

## Variation on a gap

to practise vocabulary (adjectives, opposites) and word order + to stimulate imagination

### Picture gaps

This is my  cat. She eats  fish and drinks  water.

### Opposites

And old witch lives in a small (big) house in a wood. She has a long (short) nose and white (black) hair.

### Other words

Mrs Williams is a teacher. She is tall and thin and has fair hair. Her favourite food is fish and chips.

## Variation on a gap

to practise vocabulary (adjectives, opposites) and word order + to stimulate imagination

### Picture gaps

This is my  cat. She eats  fish and drinks  water.

### Opposites

And old witch lives in a small (big) house in a wood. She has a long (short) nose and white (black) hair.

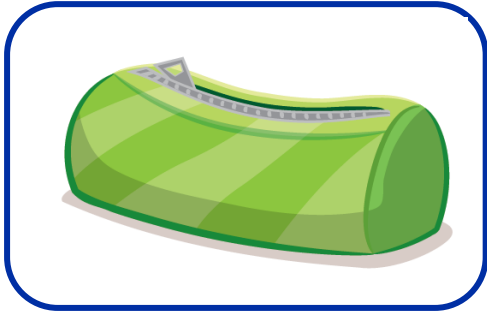
### Other words – as an animal

Mrs Williams is a hippopotamus. She is \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ and has \_\_\_\_\_.  
Her favourite food is \_\_\_\_\_.

# Pelmanism

to practise anything you want to 😊

## Vocabulary



**pencil case**



**book**



**crayon**

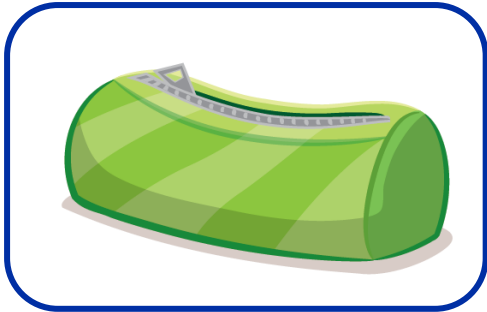
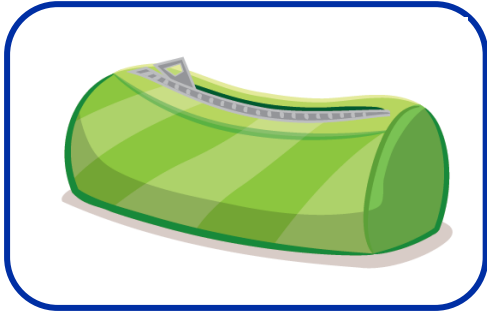


**pen**

# Pelmanism

to practise anything you want to 😊

## Vocabulary





# Pelmanism

to practise anything you want to 😊

## Sentences



**Emily and her  
daughter are  
riding a bike.**



**Lucy and Helen  
are having a  
picnic.**



**Emma can't  
Walk.**



**My grandma  
and grandpa  
love their dog.**

# Pelmanism

to practise anything you want to 😊

## Questions and Answers



**Where do you  
live?**

**What is your  
job?**

**Can you fly?**

**What are your  
favourite  
colours?**

**I live in  
Metropolis.**

**I am a reporter.**

**Yes, I can.**

**I like red and  
blue.**

# Pelmanism

to practise anything you want to 😊

## Opposites

**BIG**

l o n g

**tall**

**old**

small

short

short

**new**

# Pelmanism

to practise anything you want to 😊

## Verbs

**to eat**

**ate**

**to run**

**ran**

**eating**

**eaten**

**running**

**run**

# Prepositions treasure hunt

to practise prepositions of location and yes/no questions

**ABOVE**

**CLOSE  
TO**

**AT**

**IN**



**ON**

**NEXT TO**

**BEHIND**

**IN FRONT OF**




**5 Lesson 3**

**1** Listen and repeat. Which things have you got? Say *I've got ...*

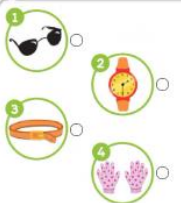


sunglasses gloves watch belt

**2** Listen and say the number.




**3** Look and match. Unscramble the letters. Say the item.



watch  
gloves  
sunglasses  
belt

**52 Vocabulary Accessories**


**Learn Grammar**



What's he wearing?  
He's wearing sunglasses.

**4** Listen and repeat.

**5** Listen and say the number. Play the game.



What's he wearing?  
A watch and sunglasses.

**6** Listen and sing. Video!

**Song!**

Look at Cassie on the cool catwalk.  
What's she wearing? She's wearing gloves.  
Look at Caspar on the cool catwalk.  
What's he wearing? He's wearing jeans.  
Look at Carla on the cool catwalk.  
What's she wearing? She's wearing a belt.  
Look at Conor on the cool catwalk.  
What's he wearing? He's wearing a watch.  
Look at us, we're on the cool catwalk!

**Grammar** What's he wearing? He's wearing sunglasses.

**53**

**Use your coursebook for ideas**

## Choose play-based activity that supports learning goal

### Learning goal:

Writing present cont.

Speaking about food

Listening to a story

Farm animal Vocab

### Play-based activity:



## Choose play-based activity that supports learning goal

### Learning goal:

Writing present cont.  
Speaking about food  
Listening to a story  
Farm animal vocab

### Play-based activity:

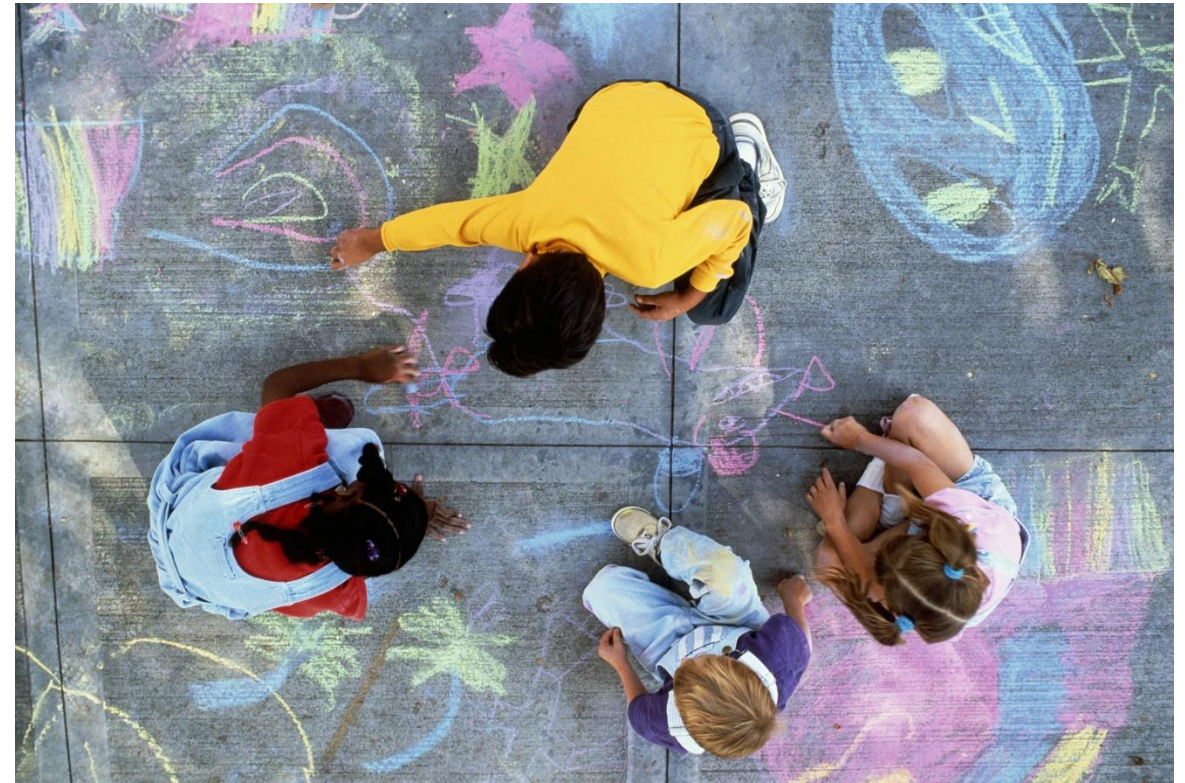
Writing to Peppa Pig  
Pretending to order food  
Learners do actions  
Design school farm





## Focus on two play characteristics, not all

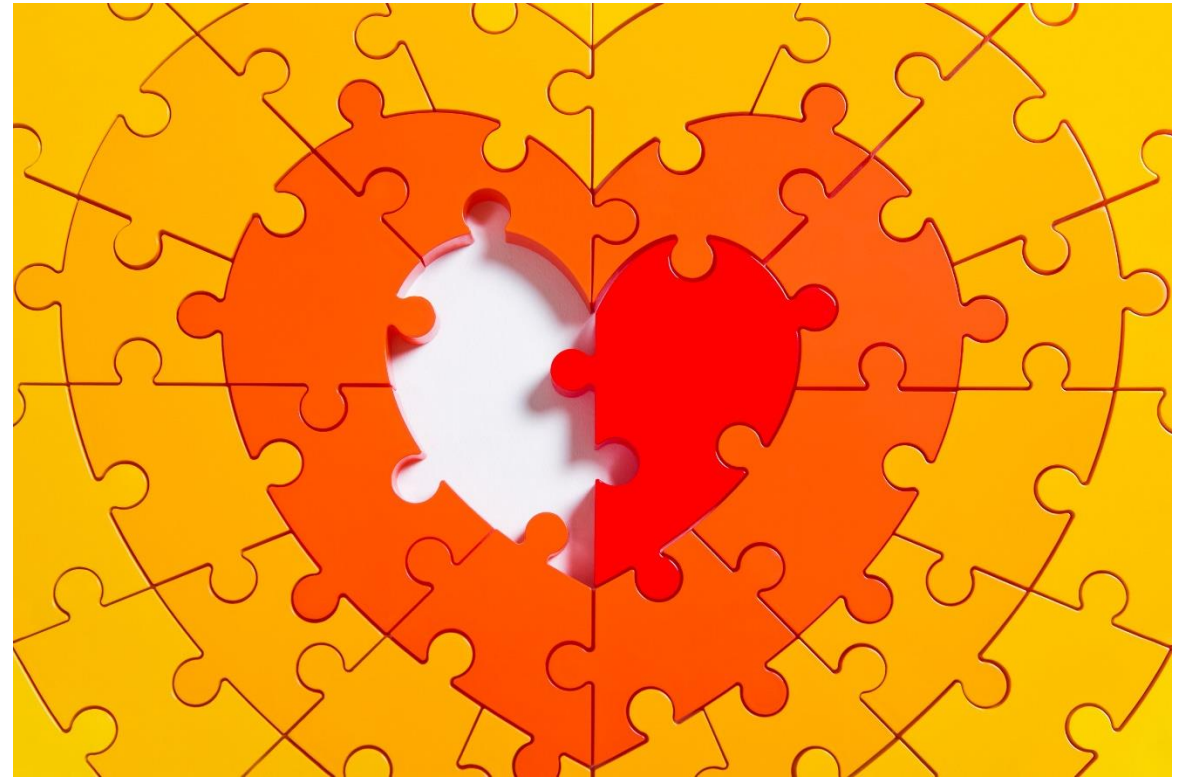
- ☐ Joyful
- ☐ Socially Interactive
- ☐ Actively Engaging
- ☐ Meaningful
- ☐ Iterative





## Wrap up

- Plan playful activities
- Use play to target learning goals
- Use the Building Blocks approach
- Create a friendly, supportive environment





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UNIVERSITY PRESS

**Focus on**

# LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

**1. What is it?**

Play and learning have not always been believed to go together. For a long time, learning and play were positioned as opposites. Learning was viewed as an important, serious, and focused process that required direct instruction from a teacher. Play, on the other hand, was seen as free and fun – a break from serious studying.

Today, plenty of evidence shows that children focus, think, and learn during play.<sup>1</sup> As a result, 'fun' and 'educational' now go hand in hand, and learning through play (LTP) is recognized as a highly effective pedagogical approach. For many, LTP offers youngsters the chance to engage their minds, use their bodies, and interact with others and the world around them. By encouraging children to fully engage with activities, play helps achieve learning goals.

In fact, playful learning methods are some of the most positive approaches known to support young children's development. However, play isn't just for children. People of all ages can learn effectively through play. Research has shown, for example, that using playful approaches to train adults in the workplace is more effective than traditional ways of training, and brings additional benefits such as increasing personal happiness and motivation.<sup>2</sup>

Learning-through-play experiences are widely considered to bring together several elements. Apart from the obvious element of fun, other play elements include learner-centredness, hands-on involvement, allowing a learner to create meaning, and often (but not always) social interaction. The LEGO Foundation funds research around play-based learning, and describes five characteristics of LTP<sup>3</sup>:

- *Joyful* – children have fun while they learn;
- *Interactive* – children get to socialize with peers;
- *Engaging* – children are focused, and engage their mind in the task or activity;
- *Meaningful* – children develop knowledge and skills that apply to their everyday lives;
- *Iterative* – children can explore new ideas, and have opportunities to try, fail, and try again.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Hannah Simmons** is an education specialist with over 8 years' experience working with governments, donor agencies, and NGOs in sub-Saharan Africa. Her work includes teacher training, development of teaching and learning materials, and design of educational assessments, with a focus on contextualization for multilingual and low-resource settings.

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**Thank you!**