

Cognitive Thinking Activities Set 1

Making Critical Thinking Fun

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What If...

Cognitive Thinking Strategies: Prediction, Convergent Thinking, Divergent Thinking, Association

The **What If...** game is a cognitive activity that requires students to consider alternate possibilities. Pose the question and then have students give simple verbal responses, share with a partner, write a response in a journal or act out the response. As students become comfortable with the game, have them come up with their own What If... statements.

Here is a list of some possibilities:

What If...

- your teacher accused you of cheating, but it was actually your neighbor who copied your paper?
- the magnetic poles of Earth switched places?
- the earth was flat?
- you found a pirate's treasure?
- you discovered that an ogre lived under your bed?
- your brother became a pro basketball player?
- your mom invented a flying car?
- you were the teacher for the day?
- you didn't have any legs?
- you could switch places with anyone on Earth?
- humans decided to hibernate?
- your television didn't work for an entire month?
- you lost power at your house for an entire week?
- you were the President of the United States?
- your best friend became a famous movie star?



I Spy

Cognitive Thinking Strategies: Prediction, Convergent Thinking

Most people have played **I Spy**. Not only is this game familiar to students, but it also reinforces cognitive thinking strategies and academic concepts.

To play the game, choose an object in your view and state, “I spy something _____.” Fill in the blank with a description of the object. For example, while waiting for the bus, you could say, “I spy something black,” referring to a bird in the trees. Reinforce to students that the object chosen has to be something that they can see. Students should try to guess the object you’ve described, guessing until someone is correct. For younger children, repeat “I spy something black” to refocus them on the correct attribute after incorrect answers.

You can employ the **I Spy** game with a variety of curriculum topics. For example, you could use shapes, numbers, letters, animals, plants or colors. Choose attributes that reinforce the curriculum. As students become comfortable with the game, allow them to spy their own objects and join the other students in guessing the answer.



Think Fast!

Cognitive Thinking Strategies: Divergent Thinking, Categorization

Think Fast! is a game that can be played anywhere. The objective is for the student(s) to give the correct number of responses as quickly as possible. When in the classroom, you may want to have a timer available and elect a student to be the official timekeeper. You can tailor the game to make it a little easier for younger students or more difficult for older students. For an extra challenge, ask older students to perform additional steps. For example, list four words that rhyme with *sad* and then create a poem using them.

Be creative with your question prompts and use them to reinforce curriculum topics.

Here is a list of possible **Think Fast!** prompts:

Think Fast and Name...

- three blue, circular objects
- two yellow, square objects
- four red, rectangular objects
- five green, triangular objects
- the six elements of a story
- the name of a bird that lives in the Amazon jungle
- three words that rhyme with *funny*
- two words that start with the letter *s* and end with the letter *e*
- three words that contain a double consonant
- one geometrical shape that has at least four straight lines
- four carnivorous animals
- five signers of the Constitution
- the three primary colors
- the notes in a musical scale
- the planets of our solar system from closest to the sun to the farthest away
- the parts of a plant
- the seven colors of the rainbow
- the first five presidents of the United States
- five professional football teams

