

February Sub Suggestion: Adaptable Games and Activities

Being a substitute teacher means your responsibilities and the curriculum you teach can change on a daily basis. You're a second grade teacher one day, a seventh grade social studies teacher the next, and will be a computer specialist three days next week. One of the ways you can cope with the diversity of your job is to prepare and keep in your SubPack some adaptable activities that can be easily customized for various grade levels, different subjects, months of the year, or upcoming holidays. The following are a few suggestions:

1. Write a Poem. Individual students or the entire class can write a poem about any topic using one of the following poetry formats. It is helpful to share an example and model the poem writing pattern with students, especially in younger grades.

Diamente Poem Format

Line 1 Subject

Line 2 Two words or adjectives that describe the subject

Line 3 Three words that show action, usually "ing" words

Line 4 Two words associated with the subject

Line 5 A synonym (other name) for the subject

Example of a Diamente Poem

History

People, Places

Fighting, Working, Dying

Dates, Events

Things of the Past

Last Link Poem Format

A single sentence poem where each word must begin with the same letter that ended the word before it. (It's more challenging than it appears.)

Example of a Last Link Poem

Reading goes swiftly, yawns stop.

Tanke Poem Format and Example

Five-line poem that describes a single subject, doesn't rhyme, and each line has a certain number of words.

Title	Geometry
2 words	Math Topic
3 words	Study of shapes
2 words	Need protractor
3 words	Uses many formulas
3 words	Challenging but fun

2. Bingo Game. As a class, brainstorm a list of 24 words associated with a particular subject, month, or holiday, then have students randomly write them on a blank 5 by 5 bingo sheet with a free square in the center. Play a couple rounds of the game with the teacher choosing a word and giving students clues to what it is. This can be an excellent review activity and the opportunity to play the game is usually something students will work hard for all day long. Allow at least thirty minutes for the activity.
3. Letter Challenge. Choose a subject word (ex. February, Computers, Shamrock, Independence, Music, etc.) and have students write it vertically down the left hand side of their paper. Across the top of the paper write various categories such as foods, books, sports, names, adjectives, movies, animals, etc. (it is helpful to model this on the board). Challenge students to write down one word for each category that begins with each letter in the subject word. To turn this activity into a game and make it a little more challenging you can award points for the words students come up with. One point if they wrote down a word, two points if no one else in the class wrote down the same word.
4. Write a Letter. Have students write a letter to someone. It could be to a fictitious pen pal about what they are studying in class, it could be to the principal with an idea for improving the school, or it could be to an author telling what they liked best about a book they just read. Students can also write to a classmate explaining how to solve a math problem or suggestions of what to study for an upcoming test. According to the age and ability of the students the activity can be structured to include a certain number of sentences, paragraphs, or topics.
5. Brainteasers and Riddles. A book of brainteasers and riddles is an excellent resource to keep in your SubPack. You can read them aloud to the class or copy them on the board for students to try and solve throughout the day.

Remember that first and foremost you should carry out the plans left by the permanent teacher. The activities suggested here should only be used when there is extra class time or when the permanent teacher's plans are missing or can't be completed. When you do use fill-in activities always remember to include a summary of what you did in your Substitute Report.