# Do Now Activities for Trainees

This resource provides a comprehensive list of 'Do Now' activities that trainees can use at the beginning of their lessons. Each activity is designed to engage pupils from the outset, promote focus, and support retrieval, relationships, and readiness for learning.

**Relationship-Building Do Nows**

Activities that help establish positive classroom culture and build relationships early in the lesson:

* **Tell Me a Fact:** Pupils share an interesting fact about themselves to foster connection and communication.
* **Introduce Me:** A pupil introduces themselves and then another, practising speaking and active listening.
* **Link Letters:** *“My name is Sam; I like music”* - the interest starts with the last letter of their name. Encourages creativity and linguistic play.
* **Guess Who?** Pupils read short, anonymous descriptions and guess who’s being described - builds class cohesion and inference skills.
* **It Means a Lot to Me:** Pupils bring or describe an item meaningful to them; develops empathy and self-expression.
* **Find a Strength:** Start by identifying or celebrating a personal or peer strength - promotes confidence and a growth mindset.
* **Empathy Time:** Pupils share one thing they are grateful for and one kind comment about another member of the class.

**Discussion & Thinking Do Nows**

Used to spark curiosity or activate prior knowledge.

* **Agree or Disagree:** *“Violence is sometimes necessary for progress.”* Pupils justify their stance - supports evaluation and respectful argumentation.
* **Prediction Prompt:** *“What do you think will happen if we double the force but halve the mass?”* Encourages application of scientific principles.
* **Image or Quote Analysis:** Display an image or quote linked to the topic and ask: *“Tell me everything you know or associate with this.”* Develops analysis, connection-making, and interpretation.
* **What Would You Do?:** Moral or scenario-based problem solving - builds evaluation and ethical reasoning.
* **Continuum:** Pupils position themselves along an opinion line and justify - supports **critical thinking** and perspective-taking.
* **Decision Time:** Offer two or three statements or options; pupils justify their choice - evaluation and justification.
* **There’s a Hole in My Bucket:** Brainstorm uses for a “flawed” item - cultivates creativity and divergent thinking.
* **Confused Teacher:** Present a deliberate misunderstanding; pupils analyse and correct misconceptions.
* **Create an Advert:** Show pupils an object or a picture of an object. Challenge them to create a short advert for it in 3 minutes - this could be a slogan, sketch, mini pitch, or storyboard.Add constraints (e.g., target audience = teenagers / luxury market / eco-conscious buyers) and include persuasive techniques or rhetorical devices (English), design elements (Art/DT), or scientific features (science).
* **Mystery Number/Game:** Pupils ask yes/no questions to deduce the answer - promotes inquiry and logical reasoning.
* **Call My Bluff:** Three possible definitions; pupils decide which is true - application and vocabulary recall.

**Review & Retrieval Do Nows**

These reinforce prior knowledge and build fluency.

* **Quick Recall Quiz:** 4-5 short questions revisiting recent content. (e.g., 'List three causes of the Industrial Revolution.').
* **Vocabulary Match:** Match key terms to definitions. Explain your decisions - builds conceptual fluency and understanding.
* **Spot the Error:** Present a worked example with some mistakes and ask students to find and correct them - application and analysis.
* **Explain the Concept:** 'In your own words, explain what “photosynthesis” means.' Promotes understanding and paraphrasing.
* **Ask Me:** Pupils write two questions they’d like answered about the previous lesson -metacognition and questioning.
* **What Was It?:** Write three answers on the board; pupils create the corresponding questions - engages analysis, application, and creativity.
* **Beat the Teacher:** Pupils and teacher solve a problem simultaneously on mini whiteboards - reinforces **procedural fluency**.
* **Unscramble:** Display key vocabulary jumbled; pupils work to reorder the letters - recall and spelling accuracy.
* **Show Me:** Ask a question; all pupils write answers on whiteboards and reveal together - instant feedback loop for retrieval practice.
* **Bingo:** Pupils play using words, numbers, or pictures related to the current topic - recall and engagement.
* **Number Fans:** Great for mental maths and instant feedback.

**Fluency & Skill-Building Do Nows**

These warm up procedural or analytical thinking.

* **Maths Warm-Up:** 5 arithmetic problems increasing in complexity - supports automation and progressive challenge.
* **Grammar Drill:** Correct punctuation or identify word classes in a short sentence strengthens language precision.
* **Reading Snapshot:** A 50-word passage with a question on inference or tone - analysis and evaluation.

**Creative & Visual Do Nows**

For engaging multiple learning styles and visual thinking:

* **Draw It:** Pupils visually represent something from the last lesson or topic - supports visual recall and conceptual linking.
* **Eyes Closed:** Describe an object or shape; pupils draw it with eyes closed - develops **listening accuracy** and interpretation.
* **KWL Chart:** Pupils note what they Know, Want to know, and later what they Learned - encourages metacognitive reflection.
* **My Flag:** Pupils design a personal flag with symbols representing themselves - creative self-expression.
* **Learning Wall Contribution:** Add a key word, fact, or question from previous learning - consolidatesandbuildslearning.

**Connection & Transition Do Nows**

These help link previous learning to today’s objectives.

* **Last Lesson Recap:** 'Write down three things we learned yesterday that might help with today’s topic.'
* **Keyword Continuum:** Students rank key terms from least to most relevant to the upcoming lesson - promotes categorisation and prioritisation.
* **Concept Map Start:** Provide a blank concept map with a few nodes; students fill in connections they recall. supports schema building.

**SEL / Readiness Do Nows**

For settling and emotional readiness (especially with younger or high-need groups).

* **Mindful Minute:** Breathing or focus exercise to regulate attention.
* **Positive Start:** *“Write one thing you’re proud of from this week.”*
* **Goal-Setting:** *“What’s one target for your learning today?”* Encourages self-management and reflection.
* **Mindfulness Yoga or exercise:** Promotes self-regulation, focus, and wellbeing.
* **Body Alphabet:** Pupils spell out today’s keyword (e.g., *FITNESS* or *BALANCE*) using body shapes or small group formations. Combines kinaesthetic creativity and subject recall.

**PE / Practical Subjects - Creative Do Nows**

* **Tactical Thinkers:** Present a quick tactical scenario (e.g., *“You’re 2-1 down with 3 minutes left - what’s your team strategy?”*). Pupils discuss or demonstrate options - promotes application and evaluation.
* **Mirror Moves:** In pairs, one student leads a short warm-up routine while the other mirrors them. Builds observation, coordination, and leadership.
* **Coach’s Eye:** Show a short GIF/video (or teacher demo) of a technique with one deliberate mistake. Pupils identify and correct it - analysis and evaluation in motion.
* **Reaction Chain:** Call out movement cues (e.g., “jump–turn–clap–squat”) that pupils perform in sequence. Then challenge them to create their own 4-step chain - recall → apply → create.
* **Equipment Challenge:** Give each small group a piece of equipment (e.g., cone, skipping rope, beanbag). Task: *“Invent three exercises using this item.”* Encourages creativity, teamwork, and adaptability.
* **Silent Start:** Pupils complete a nonverbal warm-up where they must cooperate using only gestures. Emphasises communication, team awareness, and self-regulation.
* **Mini Referee:** Begin with a common rule misconception (e.g., *“A handball must always be deliberate - true or false?”).* Pupils justify their answers, reinforcing rule knowledge and evaluation.

**Art / Visual Arts Do Nows**

* **Visual Warm-Up:** Display an unfamiliar artwork for 60 seconds. Pupils sketch or jot down *everything that they notice*. Follow with: *“What mood or message do you think the artist intended?”*  
  Builds observation, interpretation, and evaluation.
* **One-Line Drawing:** Pupils draw a chosen object (or their hand) without lifting the pencil. Encourages focus, coordination, and creative constraint.
* **Mood Palette:** Provide a word (e.g., *loneliness*, *energy*, *mystery*) and ask pupils to create a mini colour palette that captures that emotion.  
  Develops emotional association, application of colour theory, and creative thinking.
* **Art Detective:** Show a cropped section of a famous artwork. Pupils guess the artist, period, or medium - then justify their reasoning.  
  Promotes analysis and evaluation through visual clues.
* **Symbol Starter:** Pupils draw a quick symbol that represents how they feel today or the theme of the lesson.  
  Integrates self-expression with visual communication.
* **Copy, Twist, Create:** Pupils copy a simple shape, then transform it into something new in 60 seconds (e.g., *“Turn this triangle into a scene or character”).*  
  Builds creative fluency and visual imagination.
* **Mini Critique:** Display two contrasting artworks (e.g., abstract vs. realistic). Pupils write one *strength* and one *area for improvement* for each.  
  Encourages evaluative thinking and art vocabulary.
* **Texture Hunt:** Pupils find and sketch two textures from their surroundings (e.g., jumper fabric, chair surface). Enhances observational drawing and attention to detail.
* **Five Line Faces:** Pupils must draw a face using only five lines - no shading, no erasing. Develops problem-solving within creative constraints.

**Diversity & Open-Mindedness Do Nows**

* **Perspective Switch**: *“Choose one of the people or groups affected by today’s topic. Write one sentence from their point of view.”* Encourages empathy and multiple perspectives.
* **Same or Different?** *“List three ways you are similar to the person next to you - and one way you are different but can still work together.”* Fosters inclusivity and team cohesion.
* **Cultural Connection*:*** *“Name one tradition, food, or celebration from your family or culture - and one thing you’ve learned from another culture.”* Encourages sharing, curiosity, and respect for difference. Can be verbal, written, or visual (quick sketch).
* **The World in One Room:** *“If our classroom represented the world, what different ideas, skills, or experiences would we have?”* Encourages appreciation of diversity and community identity.
* **Blind Spot:** *“Think of a time when you changed your mind about something after learning more. What helped you change your view?”* Develops metacognitive awareness and open-minded reflection.
* **See It Differently:** Show an ambiguous image (optical illusion, abstract art, cultural symbol) and ask: “What do you see? What might someone else see?” Promotes analysis, empathy, and understanding that perception varies.
* **Global Headlines:** Show two contrasting news headlines about the same global event. Then, ask pupils to identify bias, tone, or perspective. Builds media literacy, evaluation, and critical awareness.

**Science Do Nows**

* **Quick Recall Recap:** *“List three key facts about photosynthesis / states of matter / the particle model.”* Strengthens retrieval practice and foundational knowledge. Works well at the start of any topic.
* **Spot the Mistake:** *“Energy can be created by burning fuels.”* Pupils identify and correct the misconception. Promotes analysis and conceptual clarity.
* **Science in the News:** Show a short headline or image of a current scientific event (e.g., climate change breakthrough, Mars mission). Ask*: “What do you think this story is about, and which branch of science does it link to?”* Encourages application, real-world connection, and curiosity.
* **Guess the Process:** Show a simple diagram (e.g., a cell dividing, a circuit, the water cycle) and ask:  
  *“What process is this showing? How do you know?”* Develops visual literacy and analytical reasoning.
* **Confused Teacher:** Teacher writes an intentionally incorrect definition on the board (e.g., *“An element is made up of different types of atoms”*). Pupils correct and explain the error. Engages analysis, explanation, and peer teaching.
* **Hypothesis Starter:** Pose a mini scenario*: “If we double the length of a pendulum, what might happen to its swing time? Why?”* Promotes application and prediction, key to scientific method.
* **Graph Grab:** Display a simple graph or results table. Pupils write one thing it shows and one question it raises. Develops data interpretation and inquiry skills.
* **Definition Dominoes:** Provide 5 - 6 key terms from the current topic (e.g., *osmosis, diffusion, active transport, concentration gradient*). Pupils link them logically in a sentence chain. Encourages understanding, connections, and vocabulary fluency.
* **Everyday Science:** Ask: *“Where do you use science in your life this morning?”*Examples might include cooking (chemistry), phone use (physics), or walking the dog (biology). Builds relevance, application, and open-mindedness about science’s role in daily life.
* **Predict the Outcome:** Show a short demo or image (e.g., balloon over flame, metal in acid, plant in dark). Ask: *“What do you think will happen next - and why?”* Encourages hypothesis-building, critical thinking, and evaluation.
* **Keyword Detective:** Display a short paragraph with key words missing (a cloze exercise). Pupils fill in the blanks using vocabulary recall. Supports retrieval and spelling of scientific terms.
* **Science Sketch:** Pupils draw a quick labelled sketch of a process (e.g., the digestive system or a simple circuit). Encourages visual memory and understanding through creative expression.
* **Debate the Claim:** *“Humans should stop using all fossil fuels immediately.”*Pupils write one argument for and one against. Promotes evaluation, evidence use, and discussion of ethics in science.
* **Concept Connection:** *“Explain how these two ideas are linked: energy and temperature/cells and organs.”* Strengthens deep understanding and systems thinking.
* **Scientist of the Day:** Show an image or name of a scientist (past or present) - diverse representation encouraged. Ask: *“What might they have discovered or researched?”* Promotes curiosity, representation, and cultural capital.