

Paper Bag Skits

Goal: Perform a skit using props in a bag

Grades: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

Group size: 3 to 6

Time: 20 or more minutes



Spotlight: Math in everyday situations

Materials:

Paper bag (1 per group)

Index cards (3 per group)

Objects for the bags (3 per group)

Clock or watch

Prerequisites:

Reading

Preparation

Prepare a paper bag for each group of 3–6 children. Each bag needs three objects (e.g., penny, ticket, and hat) and three index cards on which you have written

- **an amount** (e.g., \$10,000, 1/10, 75%)
- **a measurement, shape, or ratio** (e.g., 12 feet wide, rectangle, 7 out of 10)
- **a place** (e.g., ski slope, toy store)
No two bags should be identical, but some overlap is OK.

1. Plan skits

Children get into groups. Explain the rules:

- Each group gets a bag. Groups will have exactly 5 minutes to plan a short skit using everything in the bag.
- Everyone in the group must be in the skit.
- Use your imagination. A hat could be a hat, a nest, or a bicycle.



Distribute bags and announce the starting time so that everyone opens their bags at once.

Watch the clock, and let children know when they have just 1 minute left.

2. Perform

Groups take turns performing. If needed, set a limit of 5 minutes per skit.

3. Debrief

Volunteers explain how they thought up ways to use the numbers, measurements, or shapes on their cards. Look for opportunities to draw out the math that came up in their skits. For instance, if someone in a skit was 17 inches high, ask if anyone could show just how high that is.



Variations



Make Your Own (Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)

Children gather items and prepare index cards, using the same criteria for the six objects. Then, they trade bags with another group.



Headline News (Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)

Children look through newspapers or magazines and cut out three numbers, shapes, or charts, and three headlines or movie titles. They glue these on index cards, put them in a bag, exchange bags with another group, and then make up a skit using the information on the cards.

Books//Other resources



Math Curse (Grades 2, 3, 4, 5)

Scieszka, Jon. Viking, 1995.

Stories on Stage: Children's Plays For Reader's Theater (Grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)

Shepard, Aaron. Shepard Pub, 2005.



Spotlight



Math in everyday situations

As children make up skits using mathematical information, they explore the role that numbers, shapes, and measurements play in daily life. The debriefing discussion provides an opportunity for children to discuss this. For instance, if a group makes up a skit about a \$50 monthly rent on an apartment, ask children to consider if this is realistic: *What do apartments in this neighborhood rent for? How can we find out?*



Making sense of everyday numbers

Adults encounter numbers, measurements, percents, and ratios in newspapers, in grocery stores, on TV, and in everyday conversation. In order to make sense of such numbers, we relate them to our experiences: \$75 is suspiciously low for a used car—what's wrong with it? A baby born at 12 pounds 4 ounces is unusually large; a gas price increase of 100% in the past year means car trips are twice as expensive. In this activity, children learn to make sense of everyday numbers as they weave them into their dramatic play.