

## KS3 Framework for Teaching English: Using Starter Activities in a Busy Department

It soon became clear to schools piloting the Framework that starter activities brought a huge change in teaching methodology. Starters give a boost to a lesson - in motivation, in the pace of learning, and in kick-starting thinking. Students gain confidence from achieving success early in the lesson, and activities cater for all types of learners: kinaesthetic, aural or visual. An element of competition can be included (great for boys) and the pace of learning does not allow for boredom.

Teachers can make on-the-spot assessments – ‘show-me’ activities give instant feedback. All objectives can be covered, and revisited if necessary, and complex topics can be introduced in stages to build confidence. High ability students revel in the chance to grasp something quickly; lower ability students experience success early in a lesson. Younger students love the active nature of starters, and all students (even in KS4) benefit from the fast pace of learning.

Despite all these advantages, the use of starter activities brought many challenges. The biggest problem was resourcing. Starters can be effective with little or no equipment, but students benefit from the variety involved in using different methods. Investigative work needs many resources, which are often time-consuming to make. And it can be a mammoth task to think of new ways of teaching the same objective, or even to think of the word examples: how quickly can you think up 20 words that match the ‘long a’ spelling rule?

We found that the key to success was to make re-usable, hard-wearing resources *once* – we spent a whole Saturday making 42 sets - and keep them in an organized central bank. You can then go to the bank if you need to teach a specific objective and materials will be there, with resources and instructions. Other ideas and instructions can be included for making more materials and replacing those that are used. One member of staff keeps the bank in order, making sure sets of materials are replaced complete, and updating them regularly.

The *New Literacy Kit Lesson Starters* books and CDs do a lot of this work for you. I’ve used them at Minsthorpe by splitting them up into our central bank, to add over a hundred activities, many of them ready made. Each objective is directly and specifically explored, rules and word lists are given, and there are ideas for follow-up. Also, every activity is differentiated.

Starter activities help students to become more engaged with their learning, but they are an added pressure on teachers’ workload. If you want to ease that pressure, then *The New Literacy Kit Lesson Starters* books and are a big step in the right direction.

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