

Check-in Activity Ideas

A collection of check-in activities for children of all ages!

What's in this resource

This resource is a collection of some of our favourite check-in activities.

There are a range of different styles of check-in activity in the resource so you can pick the one/s that work best for you.

Best Practice

- Check-in with children at least once a day.
- Gather children together in a circle.
- Join in with all activities.
- Follow up with any children who may need a bit of extra support.

Who's it for?

With small adaptations to language and tone these activities can be used with children from P1-P7.

Check-in

At Children's Parliament we start every session with a check-in. Children love these short activities and they are a vital piece of our rights-based practice.

Checking in with children at the start of any session gives you the chance to get a feel for how everyone in the room is feeling. It can also give you a wee heads up if someone might need a bit of extra support or some space. Checking in regularly with children also establishes trust, opens lines of communication and shows children that you're interested in them and how they're feeling.

We've pulled together some of our favourite check-in activities from across our team into this resource. Most take around five minutes. We would recommend running a check-in activity at the start of every day to establish a routine for children. We would also suggest checking in before any work that might be challenging or triggering for children.



Animal Check in

5 minutes in a circle
Any age group

Collect together a series of animal photos, these can either be displayed on your white board or as physical cards that children can choose from. Choose animals with a range of emotions to allow children to express themselves fully.

We recommend sitting together in a circle so that everyone is equal and everyone can see each other. Ask each child which animal they feel like today and why, if they're comfortable to.

Remember to join the circle and say which animal you feel like today. This builds trust and shows that you are equal with the children and share their feelings.

As well as being fun and finding out about children's favourite animals, this activity is also great for letting you know if anyone is feeling tired, grumpy, or anxious. Those children might need a little bit more support during the day.

Emojis

Check in

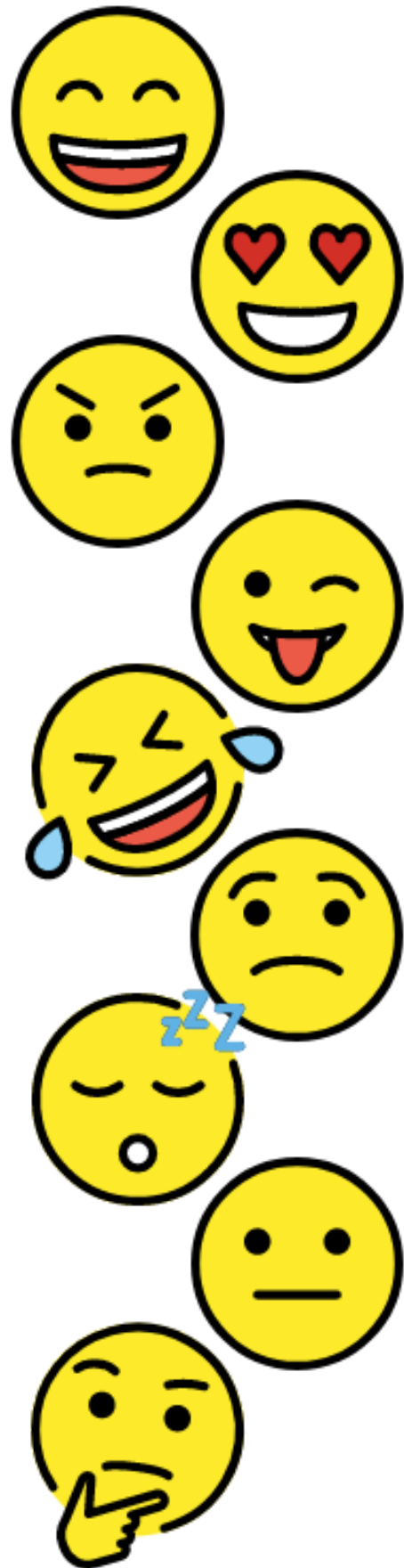
5 minute activity
Any age group

This activity is very similar to the Animal Check in above. Start by gathering your emojis in. You could use stock images such as those on this page. However, we find that making your own emojis with children can be more impactful.

In your first session ask children to draw their own emoji, it can be of any emotion they want, and any design. Try to encourage children to think of different emotions to capture so you end up with a range, but don't restrict them too much, you can always fill any gaps afterwards.

As with the Animal Check In, sit in a circle together, go round and ask everyone which emoji they're feeling like today and why. Remember to include yourself in the circle.

If a child identifies with an emotion such as tired/hungry/anxious/angry emotion, try to make time to check in with them later and make sure they're ok.





Through Their Eyes

5 minute activity
Any age group

In your circle ask children to think about how someone or something in their lives might see them.

Ask children to think about someone/something special to them, this could be a person, a pet, a favourite toy, even a favourite piece of clothing!

Get them to think about how that person or thing might describe them in three words. For example, 'How would your cat describe you in three words?' They might answer 'cuddly, warm, pillow' or 'human with food'.

They can use any example they want; don't be afraid of this getting a bit silly!

This is a great way of getting children to think about different perspectives and what makes them special to the people around them. It also gives you a great insight into their hobbies and who or what is important to them at home.



What are you proud of this week

5 minute activity Any age group

Children have told us how important it is to them when adults and other children recognise and celebrate their achievements. This is a great feel-good check-in you can do to make every child feel special!

In your circle ask children to think about something that they're proud of this week. Don't forget to say what you're proud of as well.

Encourage them to think beyond the things that we usually celebrate. They don't have to have won a trophy or first place in a competition to be proud of themselves. This exercise is about finding room for all children to feel important and special and be proud of their every-day achievements.

Examples could be - 'I helped Dad bake last night', 'I made a new friend at football training', 'I jumped in the deep end' or 'I played a new game on Roblox'. As you go round the circle encourage children to celebrate all achievements equally and recognise that everyone is interested in different things.

If you want to take things a step further you can make a weekly display of everything the children are proud of.





Nature Hunt

15 minute activity
Any age group

This activity is a wee bit more involved! You'll need at least 15 minutes and access to some outdoor space.

Ask children to go for a wee hunt around the playground for five minutes before the session. Children can find anything that they find interesting or sums up how they're feeling today. This could be a happy leaf, an angry twig, even just a pebble they liked, whatever they fancy. The idea is to get them outside, engaging with nature and thinking about their feelings.

As everyone heads off in their own direction you might find that some children are more comfortable coming to you and sharing their feelings privately, rather than in front of the group.

When you come back to class, ask children to share what they've brought in, if they're comfortable to. They can display their object in the centre of the circle and let everyone know why they chose it, why it was interesting to them, or how it represents how they're feeling today.

Don't forget to share your own item as well.



Nature Box

5 minute activity Any age group

If you don't have the time or space to take children on a nature hunt before class, a nature box can work just as well.

Prior to this activity you'll need to collect a few items from out and about. Try to gather objects that have different textures and colours, think about smooth pebbles and spiky plants, a colourful flower or a knobbly stick. Once you've assembled a wee collection you can bring them into class for the activity.

Sit in a circle with your children and explain that you've brought in some objects from nature. Ask them each to pick the object that most represents how they're feeling right now. Remember to pick your own as well.

Go round the circle and ask children to share what they picked and, if they're comfortable, why. It can be quite insightful to see which objects children gravitate to.

As a follow up you can encourage children to find their own objects, either at playtime, or at home, to bring in and share with the class.

As always, follow up with anyone who may need a bit of extra support.



Dance Moves

5 minute activity Any age group

This is a great check-in activity if you have children with a little bit of excess energy to burn off before they need to concentrate. It can also be a good activity for children who struggle to verbalise how they're feeling. It's also fun and energetic for everyone.

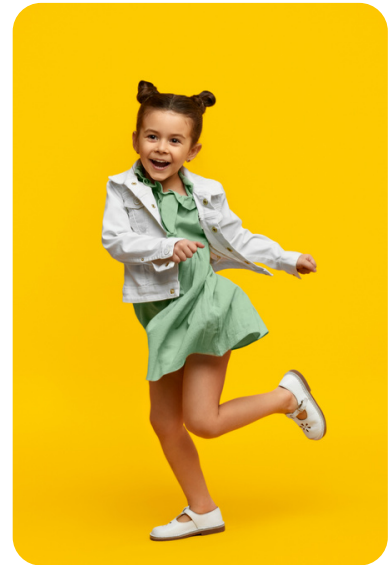
Standing in a circle ask children to create a dance move that expresses how they're feeling just now. If they're excited it might be quite high energy/bouncy, if they're tired it might be in slow motion. Give them some examples and let them know that it's ok to feel any emotion.

Start with some basic stretches to get everyone warmed up and comfortable moving in the space together. You can put some music on for extra fun!

Ask for a volunteer to go first. They need to make up their dance move, demonstrate it, then everyone else copies it until the next person shares theirs. Go round the circle so that every child (who wants to) has a chance to share their dance move.

Remember to share your own moves as well!

If a child looks uncomfortable or doesn't want to join in, that's fine. Remember to check-in with them to make sure they're ok.





Choose your own ...

5 minute activity
Any age group

Remember that your best resource when it comes to creativity is the children you're working with everyday.

Once you've got a couple of check-ins under your belt as a class, start asking the children how they would like to check-in. What works for them, what would they find fun or exciting or useful?

We've done hundreds of amazing check-in activities over the years chosen by children. Here are a few examples of popular ones from our work:

- Character check-ins - spongebob, Marvel, Dory
- Specific animal check-ins - which cow/dog/cat are you today?
- Giving feelings to objects - which feet sum up your feelings?
- Physical check-ins - in the playground or in class

Photo check-ins are really easy to organise, a quick search will often turn up pre-made sheets for you to use.

