

SPONGES

Sponge -- a learning device which involves students in some academically and or cognitively relevant activity for a short period of time. It may or may not have a direct relationship to some present lesson or unit, but it does require the application of thinking and/or problem-solving skills which are broadly transferable.

When are sponges useful?

After a test or any learning activity when some students are finished, but others are not.

At the beginning of a class.

During shortened class periods.

Towards the end of class on days before vacations

EXAMPLES

Mini Mysteries

The window is open, the wind is blowing. There is broken glass and water on the floor and John and Mary are lying dead on the floor. How did they die?

A man was found lying face down in the desert with a pack on his back. How did he die?

Word Puzzles

Begin by giving students a list of information about Sally Williams. For example:

Sally Williams loves swimming, but she hates water.

Sally Williams loves cooking, but she hates to eat.

Sally Williams loves cookies, but she hates cake.

Sally Williams loves dresses, but she hates skirts.

What else can you tell us about Sally Williams?

Riddles

If a papa bull eats a big bale of hay and a baby bull eats a small bale of hay, how much does a mama bull eat?

How many cubic inches of dirt are there in a hole one foot wide by one foot long by one foot deep?

Math Puzzlers

I have a \$5 bill, a \$1 bill, a quarter and a penny. George Washington is on both the quarter and the \$1 bill. Abraham Lincoln is on both the penny and the \$5 bill. So, which of the following is true?

- a. 1 Washington equals 25 Lincolns.
- b. 5 Washingtons equal 1 Lincoln.
- c. 1 Washington equals 100 Lincolns.
- d. 1 Lincoln equals 20 Washingtons.

Consider the following banking transaction. Deposit \$50 and withdraw as follows:

Withdraw \$20	Leaving \$30
Withdraw \$15	Leaving \$15
Withdraw \$ 9	Leaving \$ 6
Withdraw <u>\$ 6</u>	Leaving <u>\$ 0</u>
Total \$50	Total \$51

Where did the extra dollar come from?

Logic Puzzles

If you had only one match and entered a room in which there was a kerosene lamp, an oil heater, and a wood burning stove, which would you light first?

I have in my hand two U.S. coins which total 55 cents. One of the coins is not a nickel. What are the two coins?

Sources of Sponges

Professional Journals, like -- English Teacher or Instructor Magazine

Books:

Math Curse by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith

The 100 Best Brain Boosters by Helen Moore

Fantastic Book of Logic Puzzles by Muriel Mandell