

COVER DAY & SUPPLY · ALL GRADES

Quick Fillers

25 activities for dead time

Why these matter

Cover days have unpredictable timing. The lesson finished 12 minutes early. PE came back 10 minutes ahead. The story took less time than you thought. The next teacher isn't ready for the swap. Dead time on cover days = trouble. Children who'd been quietly busy start to chat, drift, mess about. Five minutes of dead time can spiral into a lost half-hour. Keep this list to hand. Use whenever you find an unplanned gap.

30-second fillers

#	Activity
1	Stand up. Sit down. Stand up. (Reset bodies and brains)
2	Everyone whisper their name to the person next to them
3	Show me a number with your fingers (any rule — your age, your favourite, etc.)
4	Count to 30 in unison, fast
5	Everyone clap a rhythm pattern after me

1-minute fillers

#	Activity
6	I went to the supermarket and I bought... (chain memory game, alphabetical)



#	Activity
7	Brain gym — touch right hand to left knee, alternate, 30 reps
8	Word association — say one word, child says related word, around the room
9	Spelling bee — give a word, child spells. Get harder.
10	Mental maths fire — fast questions, all answer in chorus

5-minute fillers

#	Activity
11	Heads down, thumbs up — classic, you remember the rules
12	20 questions — you think of an animal, they ask yes/no
13	I spy with my little eye, beginning with...
14	Story round — start a story, each child adds a sentence
15	Just a minute — child speaks for 1 minute on a topic without hesitation
16	Categories — name 5 things in this category in 30 seconds
17	Quick draw — describe an object, children draw
18	Number bonds bingo — children make a 4x4 grid of numbers, you call additions

10-15 minute fillers

#	Activity
19	Word ladder — change one letter at a time. CAT to DOG. CAT-COT-DOT-DOG



#	Activity
20	Mind reader — children write 3 things about themselves, you read out, class guesses
21	Boggle — 4x4 grid of letters. Children find words. Highest score wins.
22	Quick quiz — you make up 10 general knowledge questions
23	Story whispers (Chinese whispers) — first child writes a sentence, passes it on by whispering
24	20-clue mystery — describe an object/person/animal, give clues one at a time
25	Class debate — propose a topic, half pro, half against, two-minute speeches

Tips for using these well

1. **KEEP MOMENTUM.** Don't drift between activities — start, run for the right time, finish, transition. 2. **DIFFERENTIATE BY YEAR.** Year 1 children won't manage 20 questions; Year 6 will love it. Match. 3. **BUILD A REPERTOIRE.** Some you'll find work brilliantly with your style; others won't. Note your favourites. 4. **DON'T LET DEAD TIME TURN INTO DRIFT.** The moment you notice you've finished early — start a filler. Don't wait. 5. **AVOID 'JUST CHAT.'** Tempting. Always escalates. Direct activity beats free time.

