

Space

Topic

Space and the solar system

Aims

To develop and practise:

- vocabulary: words connected with the solar system
- structure: there is/are
- curricular work: the solar system
- integrated skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing

Age

Older primary (9–11 years)

Time

90 minutes approximately

Materials

1. Flashcards
<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/flashcards/space-flashcards>
2. Song, activity sheet, answers and lyrics: 'Flying from the sun to the stars'
<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/songs/flying-the-sun-the-stars>
3. Story, activity sheet, answers and transcript: 'Our colourful world'
<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/short-stories/our-colourful-world>
4. Word game: 'Space'
<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/word-games/space>
5. Colouring: 'Space'
<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/colouring/space>
6. Paper plates/polystyrene balls/other craft materials for craft activity (stage 4) – optional
7. Cards for Pelmanism game (stage 5) – optional

For a complete list of all 'Space' content on LearnEnglish Kids, click here:

<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/category/topics/space>

Introduction

In this lesson, learners will look at the planets in the solar system and features of planets. They will listen to and sing a song, then watch a story about features of different planets. They will practise describing planets using 'there is/are', and then work together to invent their own planet. Finally learners can play a game to learn or review vocabulary.

Procedure

1. Introduce the topic (5 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show the learners the picture of the solar system from the flashcards set. Ask them if they know what it is. What's in the middle? (The sun) Where do we live? (On Earth) • Write 'Earth' on the board. See if learners can tell you any of the names of the other planets.
2. Focus on the solar system (15–20 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell learners they are going to listen to a song about the solar system. Ask them to listen out for the names of the planets. • Play the song. Ask learners which planets they remember and write them on the board. Although Pluto is now classed as a 'dwarf planet', it can still be useful to include it. • Give learners the activity sheet for the song. Ask them to complete exercise 1: order the planets. Play the song again to help them. Encourage them to sing along! • Check answers. If you wish, teach learners a mnemonic for the order of the planets, for example: My Very Earthly Mother Just Sat Upon Nine Pins. You could also give each learner a picture of each planet, and ask them to stand in order (with the teacher as the sun!).
3. Focus on language for planets (15–20 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell learners they are going to watch a story about Billy and Splodge exploring planets in a different solar system. Ask them to decide what their favourite planet is. • Play the story. At the end, take a class vote on their favourite planet. Ask them why they like it. • Ask learners to complete exercise 1 and 2 of the activity sheet for the story and check answers. • Play the story again, and learners complete exercise 3 while watching. Afterwards, check answers, then highlight some of the 'there is' and 'there are' sentences. Ask them if they can tell you when we use 'there is' and when we use 'there are'. • Ask them to write or tell each other some sentences about Earth using 'there is' and 'there are'.
4. Extension activity: invent a planet (20–30 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell learners they are now going to work in pairs to invent their own planet. Give them some categories to help them decide on the characteristics of their planet, for example size, temperature, animal life, plant life, number of oceans, type of land, etc. Brainstorm some ideas as a class, if necessary. • In pairs, learners should write down their ideas in their notebooks. If there are any disagreements, tell them they can have different characteristics for different continents! Monitor and help with any language needed at this stage. • Learners now draw a picture of their planet. If you wish, this could become a craft activity – either using paper plates as the planet, which learners could draw on or decorate with aluminium foil, glitter, cotton wool, fabric, etc., or using polystyrene balls, which can usually be bought from arts and crafts shops, and decorated the same way. For pictures of plant or animal life, for example, learners can draw them on paper, cut them out and stick them on. • Now learners write a paragraph about their planet, based on their notes and their creation. Monitor and help with language, checking use of 'there is' and 'there are'. • Fast finishers could write extra details about the plant and animal life on their planet. Don't forget to ask learners to decide on a name for their planet!

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To display the work, you could create a new solar system around the room. Use a circle of yellow paper for the sun and stick it on the wall. Then decide an order for the planets – ask learners to tell you whether the hotter planets and colder planets should go near to or further away from the sun. Stick the planets in the order decided. If you have used polystyrene balls – you could suspend them from the ceiling! • Finally, if appropriate, ask learners to invent a mnemonic for the class solar system!
5. Round off activity (5–10 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play the ‘Space’ word game to learn some more vocabulary connected with space. • Alternatively, you might like to create a Pelmanism game – per group of learners you will need nine cards with the name of one of the planets written on each of them, and nine cards with ordinal numbers ‘first’ to ‘ninth’ written on them. Learners play the game, trying to find matching pairs, for example ‘Mercury’ and ‘first’.
6. Setting homework (5 mins)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners can watch the story or listen to the song again at home. If your learners are members of LearnEnglish Kids, they can leave a comment under the song or the story, giving their opinion of it or answering the question under it. • Lower level learners could complete the ‘Space’ colouring activity. • Higher level learners could choose a planet to research at home, so that next lesson they can each tell the class one interesting fact about the planet they chose.

Contributed by

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