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# Using mini whiteboards in the MFL classroom



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# Using mini whiteboards in the MFL classroom

Mini whiteboards are a great way to quickly determine who understands a concept and who still needs more practice. Students write on their board and hold it up for you to see. By quickly scanning the room, you will get an instant sense of which students are on track and which students still require more practice or teaching. Mini whiteboards can also be used for group and pair work, brainstorming at the start of a topic, practicing new language and assessment.

These are some suggestions:

1

## Checking in

The teacher asks the students to reflect on their understanding of a topic/questions. Students can write a word or a symbol to indicate the stage they are at such as an emoji or a word in the target language.

2

## Review learning

At the end of class, ask students to write something they learnt during the lesson that satisfies the lesson objective.

3

## Think pair and share

Students first write down their thoughts on a topic/discussion. They then pair up with a partner and discuss their ideas. Finally, they share what they have discussed with another pair and then decide on the best idea, comment, etc.

4

## Planning

Individually, students write down everything they know about a topic on one side of their board. On the other, they write what they would like to know more about.

5

## Listen and draw

In pairs, student A describes a scene or an object. Student B draws what s/he hear.

6

## Listen and write

The teacher reads a sentence and leaves a word out. Students then write the missing word on their boards and hold them up. Individually, students listen and write down any key words or words they do not understand as they listen to a text being read or watch a video. Teachers may also ask them to write down a particular type of word e.g. verbs in the past tense, depending on the lesson's focus. Students may also compare their boards with their partners before showing the class or teacher.

7

### Practising new vocabulary

The teacher asks the students to reflect on their understanding of a topic/questions. Students can write a word or a symbol to indicate the stage they are at such as an emoji or a word in the target language.

8

### Dictogloss

A dictogloss is an activity to help students remember certain sentences, phrases or strings of words. Students write out what they want to say on the board. They then have 30 seconds to read over what they have written. They hand the board to a partner and as they try to explain the points they made in writing, the partner rubs off all the parts that they manage to say. The partner then returns the board and the student looks at the bits they did not mention. They then return the board again and repeat the process. The aim is to orally produce all the ideas on the board and have a clear board returned to you.

9

### Peer dictation

In pairs or small groups, one student reads a sentence or short text and the other writes it down. Students can then compare and discuss their differences before checking with the original version.

10

### Write a line and pass it on

In groups, students create a story. The first student writes the first sentence and passes the board to the next student who adds to the story. It must make sense. The board is then passed to the other students in turn. At the end, students review the story from a language point of view and see if it works.

11

### Practicing grammar

The teacher calls out a verb, a tense and a person. Students write the appropriate conjugated form of the verb and lift their boards to show the teacher. This can be made more interactive in conjunction with an animated dice on the whiteboard where each number of the dice represents a person of the verb. Every time the dice is rolled, students have to write the correct conjugation on the board. Give the students a subject and an infinitive and have them write a sentence that has more to it than just the subject and the verb. Challenge students to create a long sentence. Give the students a start to a sentence and have them finish it.

12

### Creating questions

Write an answer to a question on the board and have the students write down what they think the question was (sometimes there is more than one possibility).

13

### Placemat

Students are put into groups of four. The board is divided into four areas with a rectangle in the middle. Each student writes their ideas or vocabulary individually on one of the four parts. Then, students review the ideas and pick the best one which goes in the middle. Students then review the ideas and pick the best one which goes in the middle. This may serve as feedback for the rest of the class.

14

**Chain words**

This activity is to help students understand the syntactical relationship between the constituent parts of a sentence in a foreign language that is highly inflected for number, gender or case. Write out your sentence on a number of boards where one word is written on each board. The words should be written in the most simple form found in the dictionary. Give the boards out randomly to students who then come to the front of the room. Students firstly have to rearrange themselves so that the parts are in order. Then a student facilitator, with the help of the class, has to make changes to the sentence so that it is grammatically correct. This might involve conjugating a verb, making an adjective agree or putting a noun into the correct case.

15

**Peer and formative assessment of writing**

Students produce a piece of writing spontaneously on a whiteboard. The teacher or peer underlines the mistakes but does not correct them. Students then try to correct their mistakes. Other adjustments can be recommended as well as pointing out where further details could be added. Once this is correct, students can then copy their best version in their books.

16

**If this is the question, what is the answer?**

Write a word or phrase on the board. Students should then write on their whiteboard a question to which the word or phrase on the board is the answer. This can be in the target language or in the mother tongue. The rationale behind this activity is to enable students to demonstrate their breadth of knowledge of a topic.

17

**Drafting work**

Whiteboards are great for getting students to draft their work before writing it up in their copy book. This can be further accompanied by the teacher circulating around the room with a different colour pen, underlining errors or suggesting areas for improvement, which students can then work on before copying it into their book.

18

**True or false, multiple choice, higher or lower**

Prepare a number of questions about a topic that are of the true or false variety, multiple choice, etc. Pose these questions to students giving them time to write down an answer. When students have written their answer they hold up their board. This will give you instant feedback as to how they are progressing with a topic.

19

**Sentence relay**

Write out six or seven sentences in the TL. The class are split into teams of two, three or four. One player comes to the front from each team and can see sentence 1. They have to get back to their team and tell them what the sentence says. The person running is not allowed to write it down. When they think they have it, they hold up their whiteboard for the teacher to correct. When it is correct (spelling, capital letters, etc.), another runner can come up and see sentence 2. The first team to have completed all of the sentences accurately wins.

20

**Suggest a sentence**

Write a keyword on the board e.g. *soeur*. Students then must write a sentence on their mini whiteboard that contains this word. This is a great technique to get students applying previously acquired knowledge to new knowledge and thus creating stronger cross topic links through language.

21

**Listening Bingo**

Before doing a listening activity, give students the topic or questions. Ask students to brainstorm vocabulary that they might expect to hear in the activity. Students then listen and tick off the words as they hear them. This is a fantastic activity to introduce students to a difficult piece of listening and to get them listening actively before they attempt the activity proper.

22

### Collaborative writing

Create a writing task that has four distinct parts. Students are put into groups of four and write one part each individually. After a sufficient amount of time has elapsed to allow students to write an appropriate amount, the group then puts their boards together and reviews the four pieces as a whole. Students are then encouraged to make changes so that the piece reads like a whole piece of writing. Students can take a picture of this or copy it into their copy books. Whiteboards are also easy to photocopy to keep a record.

23

### Lyrics training

Write out the lyrics to a song in the target language on the board but with words missing. Try to choose words where there is rhyming patterns. This would work well on a PowerPoint where you can use animation to introduce words slowly. As students listen to the song, they try to write down the word that are missing on the mini whiteboard and hold it up. This technique could also be used with a cloze activity.



