

Guidance on integrating performance techniques into science lessons

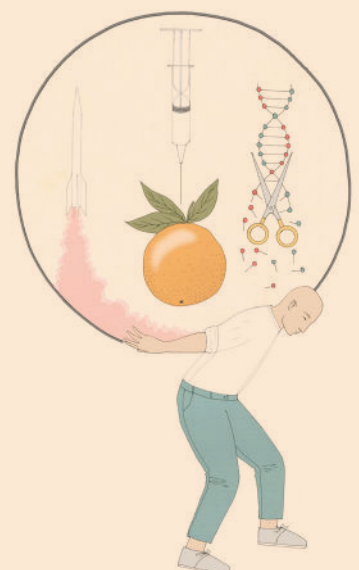
PERFORM invited teachers to use performance-based exercises to help explore issues around scientific research and its impact on society. This toolkit invites you to do the same. During the PERFORM training, we discussed some of the challenges teachers might face in using performance exercises in science lessons. Below are some suggestions to help you overcome these barriers and try out performance methods to enhance your teaching.

“I am worried that introducing performance will lead to a deterioration of behaviour in my lessons.”

- Use of performance activities can actually help students to adopt behaviour that is positive and constructive for learning. Playful interactive teaching can help engage students with curriculum content.
- Using role play, the teacher can choose to take on a character through which they can control behaviour: a harsh quiz show host or exacting TV interviewer, for example.
- Many performance exercises can include an element of scoring and reward. A reward or a sense of competition can help to focus students on the task at hand.
- In order to minimise disruptive responses to new performance elements in the classroom, start small. When introducing a new game or exercise, perhaps just do it for a few minutes at the end of a lesson.

**“I already have so much to fit into my lessons.
How can I ensure that these techniques enhance what they are learning and don't detract from the curriculum?”**

- Many performance exercises are designed to re-focus and re-energise groups. As such, the rest of your teaching will benefit from their inclusion.
- Use the performance exercises as a way to recap and revise. This will also bring to your attention where there are gaps in knowledge and misconceptions.
- Some performance games are very short and by their nature can fit easily into lessons; these activities are designed to be short, adaptable, and easy to slot into a lesson.



“I don’t have enough space in my classroom.”

- Many performance techniques can be done sitting at desks or work-benches. Using your voice or getting into character, for example, are highly effective techniques for representing ideas in different way and encouraging students to consider different perspectives.
- Where techniques involve group-work, consider break-out spaces such as the corridor for quick conversations.

“I am not a drama teacher, so I don’t feel confident using these techniques with my students.”

- You are not teaching the students how to act or how to make plays. The techniques are just exploratory exercises that require a little creativity and imagination. Don’t even call it ‘drama’, then the students won’t even notice or have any expectations.
- If it helps, allow students to begin role-playing exercises in the 3rd person, describing how they think the character might behave i.e. “I think she would behave like this.” If confidence improves you can suggest they move to 1st person later and begin to play out the character themselves.

“What about the students who aren’t confident expressing themselves in this way?”

- Get students to work in groups and let more confident students be the spokesperson. Alternatively, you could get children to perform to smaller groups so it doesn’t seem as daunting.
- Make opportunities for written role-play, rather than just spoken: ‘write an email from your character...,’ for example.
- There are normally other roles available for the less confident, which still keeps them involved: score-keeper or note-taker, for example.



Acknowledgements

This guidance on using performance exercises was based on ideas by [Kilter Theatre](#), a theatre company who developed and delivered the [PERFORM](#) teacher training in Bristol UK 2017 and 2018.