

EduTrend Contents

G4C · PUZZLE PLAY · MIDDLE SCHOOL

Puzzle Strategy Race

Solve two similar puzzles, one freely and one with a planned strategy, and compare how you worked

Ages 11–13	Level: Intermediate	40 minutes	Teams of 3 · up to 30	Activity 03

Inside: activity at a glance · step-by-step session plan · facilitator notes · 3 student worksheets · assessment checklist

ACTIVITY 03 · AT A GLANCE

Puzzle Strategy Race

Teams solve a small jigsaw or logic puzzle with no planning, timing themselves. Before a second, similar puzzle, they spend two minutes agreeing a strategy, such as edges first, sorting by colour or checking one row at a time. They solve it and compare times and experience. The class discusses how planning and monitoring changed their thinking.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session students can:

- plan a strategy;
- monitor progress;
- compare approaches;
- reflect on thinking.

KEY WORDS

strategy · plan · monitor · evaluate · metacognition · compare

CURRICULUM LINKS

Maths: problem-solving. PSHE: study skills.

1	2	3	4	5	6
WARM UP	**EXPLAIN**	**PLAY**	**CHECK**	**TALK**	**CLOSE**
Minds ready	One game, clear rules	Think before you move	Was it a good move?	How did you work it out?	Calm and positive

Materials (per team)

- Pairs of similar puzzles per team
- Timers
- Worksheets 1, 2 and 3

Before the session

- Prepare matched puzzles.
- Set timers.
- Model a strategy talk.
- Plan teams.

SAFETY

Keep competition friendly; celebrate improvement, not only speed.

ACTIVITY 03 · SESSION PLAN

Step by step

Planning, monitoring and evaluating are the core of metacognition.

Time	What happens	Say or ask
0–5 min **Warm up**	How do you usually start a puzzle?	*"Do you plan?"*
5–15 min **Play**	Puzzle 1, no plan.	*"How did it go?"*
15–30 min **Play**	Plan strategy; puzzle 2.	*"Is the strategy working?"*
30–40 min **Talk**	Compare and reflect.	*"What changed?"*

CHALLENGE CARD (print or copy onto the board)

Agree a strategy before the second puzzle and explain whether it helped.

ACTIVITY 03 · FACILITATOR NOTES

The puzzle game know-how in brief

Learning strategies on puzzles often transfer to other tasks.

Planning, monitoring and evaluating are metacognitive skills.

Common ideas to listen for

- “Strategies slow you down.” They often save time.
- “One strategy fits all puzzles.” Choose to suit the puzzle.
- “Fast means clever.” Thinking well matters more.

Adapting the activity

Support

Give a strategy card to choose from.

Stretch

Change strategy mid-puzzle if monitoring shows it is not working.

WORKSHEET 1

Race log

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Record both puzzles.

Results

Puzzle	Strategy	Time	How it felt
1	None		
2			

WORKSHEET 2

Monitoring checklist

Tick during puzzle 2.

Checks

Check	Done?
Agreed a plan	
Checked progress	
Changed if stuck	
Reviewed at end	

WORKSHEET 3

Reflection

Reflect.

Planning changed our thinking because...

FOR THE TEACHER

Assessment checklist

Use during the session. One sheet covers up to eight students; copy as needed.

Student	Plans a strategy	Monitors progress	Reflects on thinking

Suggested codes: W = working towards · E = expected · G = greater depth

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Puzzle Strategy Race is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents G4C Puzzle Play programme (middle school, level: intermediate). Every activity in the programme follows the same format: a practical challenge, a clear session plan, facilitator notes and ready-to-print worksheets, so that teachers, club leaders and parents can run it without extra preparation.

Full 15-, 20- and 32-week programmes are available from EduStore at edutrend.org.

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