

Feelings Card Sort (Levels A-B)

GRATITUDE

To build early emotional awareness and communication by sorting feelings using simple visuals, movement, and supported expressions suited for emerging learners.



Learning Intentions

Emotional Recognition:

Students will explore four simple feelings (happy, sad, excited, calm) using visuals and modelling.

Expressing Feelings Safely:

Students will practise showing or choosing a feeling through gesture, sound, picture, or AAC.

Social Awareness:

Students will notice peers' expressions and participate in a shared routine.



Success Criteria

Students select or respond to one feeling card with support.

Students attempt to show or act out a feeling in any way they can.

Students show engagement by looking toward peers, smiling, vocalising, or making choices.



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Duration: 5 minutes

Objective

To build early emotional awareness and communication by sorting feelings using simple visuals, movement, and supported expressions suited for emerging learners.

What You Need

Feeling picture cards: Happy, Sad, Excited, Calm (found in PDF resource)

Colour feelings picture cards: Yellow, Red, Green and Blue (found in PDF resource)

Tactile objects that match the feelings

- Happy = soft pom-pom or toy (or anything you have on hand that matches happy!)

- Sad = smooth stone or piece of paper (sad face drawn on) (or anything you think matches sad!).

- Excited = shaker (miraker) or ribbon or a flag to wave (or anything you have on hand that matches excited!)

- Calm = soft cloth, towel, blanket or pillow (or anything you have on hand that matches calm)

AAC systems with feelings vocabulary (happy, sad, excited, calm, yes/no)

Optional: a simplified deck of cards using only number or colour prompts

Setup

1. Print off one set of each of the feelings cards and coloured feelings cards.
2. Display the four feeling visual cards at the front of the class on the desk or floor.
3. Display the 4 coloured feelings cards in the same place.
4. Display the 4 tactile objects in the same place.
5. Model each feeling clearly using face, gesture, and body. Link them with the relevant colour feelings card.
6. Model each object clearly, linking them to the relevant feeling/colour card.
7. Support students with modelling, copying, or physical prompts as needed.
8. Open AAC devices to emotion vocabulary.



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Gameplay

1. Pick a Card or Object

Taking it in turns, each student selects one feeling card, they then attempt to match their chosen feeling card to either an object or a coloured card (or both!).

Students may match by:

- pointing to or lifting up the cards
- placing the card under the feeling visual
- looking at the correct feeling
- choosing on AAC
- physically handing the item to an adult

2. Show the Feeling

After each attempt, the students show the feeling they chose in any accessible way:

- facial expression
- body movement (wiggle for excited, droop for sad)
- gesture (arms out for calm, arms up for happy)
- using AAC ("happy," "sad")
- making a sound that matches their expression

Teacher models and labels clearly:

"You are showing HAPPY!"

"Excited—big wiggle!"

3. Group Response

Peers celebrate by:

- clapping
- smiling
- giving thumbs up
- or copying the feeling together as a short group action

4. Repeat

Play for 2 - 3 turns per student depending on engagement and regulation. Encourage them to try and select a different feeling each time it is their turn.

You can also mix up the order in which way the students select their feeling, they might pick the object first and then match the feeling card with a coloured card or vice versa.



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Debrief / Reflection

Use one question at a time with strong visual support:

- "Point to the feeling you liked showing."
- "Which one felt easy?" (show happy/sad cards)
- "How do you feel now?"
- "Show me calm."

Any gesture, look, sound, or AAC press counts.

Sensory-Seeking Learners Variation

1. Use Sensory Feeling Props

Allow students to handle matching sensory items:

- Happy → fluffy pom-pom
- Sad → cool stone
- Excited → shaker
- Calm → soft cloth

Students choose their feelings by touching rather than looking.

2. Add Movement to Each Feeling

- Happy → bounce or clap
- Sad → slow stretch downward
- Excited → fast wiggle or shake
- Calm → deep breath with arm drift down

3. Provide Regulation Breaks

Allow sensory resets between turns:

- wall push
- weighted lap toy
- slow rocking
- squeeze ball

AAC-Specific Supports

1. Model Aided Language Input

Teacher taps feeling symbols while speaking:

"Happy."

"Sad."

"Excited."

"Calm."



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2. Choice-Making

Use two-card choices for emerging communicators:

"Happy or excited?"

"Sad or calm?"

Students respond using:

- pointing
- eye gaze
- partner-assisted scanning
- AAC button activation

3. Supported Expression

Students use AAC to show their feeling:

- "I feel..."
- "Happy."
- "More."
- "Finished."

4. AAC in Debrief

Model:

"I like happy."

"I feel calm."

"That was fun."



FEELING PICTURE CARDS

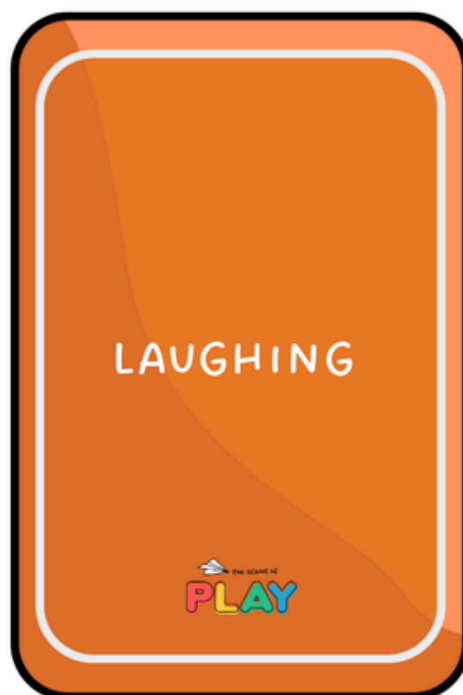
PRINT, CUT, AND LAMINATE IF POSSIBLE. EACH FEELING HAS PICTURE CARDS AND COLOUR CARDS SO STUDENTS CAN SORT AND MATCH. CARDS CAN BE USED ON THE FLOOR, TABLE, VELCRO BOARD, OR INSIDE A SENSORY TRAY. STUDENTS MAY RESPOND BY POINTING, PLACING, EYE GAZE, GESTURE, MOVEMENT, OR AAC.



FEELING PICTURE CARDS



COLOURED EMOTION CARDS



COLOURED EMOTION CARDS

