

Happy Face, Mean Face (Levels F-3)

PLAY

To promote emotional recognition and positive peer interaction through a simple, fun game involving faces and movements.



Learning Intentions

Develop Emotional Awareness:

Students practise recognising and expressing different emotions through facial expressions.

Encourage Movement and Social Interaction:

Students use simple coordinated movements to engage with peers.

Build Confidence and Fun:

Students enjoy playing in a safe environment where participation and effort are celebrated.



Success Criteria

Students can identify and copy a happy or angry face.

Students join in with a simple action (e.g., clap, stomp, turn, or spin).

Students participate positively, showing encouragement and enjoyment with peers.



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Duration: 5–8 minutes

Objective

To promote emotional recognition and positive peer interaction through a simple, fun game involving faces and movements.

Players

Pairs or small groups.

Materials

Optional: Visual cards with happy and angry faces for support (found in PDF resource tab).

Setup

- Students stand or sit facing a partner or small group.
- Teacher/leader models both happy and angry/mean faces with clear, exaggerated expression.

Gameplay

Classic Version:

- Teacher calls: “3, 2, 1, show!”
- Both partners show either a happy or a mean face.
- If the faces match → both clap hands and cheer together.
- If the faces don’t match → both stomp their feet and try again.
- Repeat for several rounds, then rotate partners.

Movement Version:

- Students stand or sit side by side.
- Teacher calls: “3, 2, 1, go!”
- Both show a face and add a movement (clap, jump, or stomp).
- If the faces match → give a high five or air high five.
- If they don’t match → do a quick turn or fun action (spin, wiggle, or stretch) and reset.

For Wheelchair Users / Accessibility

- Replace jumping with clapping, tapping, or raising arms.
- Replace stomping with tapping the side of the chair or making a sound (e.g., “Boom!”).
- Replace spinning with gently turning the chair or waving arms in a circular motion.
- High fives can be adapted as air fives or fingertip touches.
- Provide students with options to choose the movement that feels most comfortable.



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Notes for Inclusion

- Provide visual face cards (happy, angry) for students who benefit from visual prompts.
- Allow students to choose between expressing emotions with faces, gestures, or sounds.
- Pair students carefully to encourage confidence and reduce anxiety.
- Encourage celebration of all attempts, emphasising participation over accuracy.
- Use lots of praise, cheering, and peer encouragement to foster a supportive group environment.

Teacher Tips

- Use explicit modelling with big, fun facial expressions.
- Keep rounds short and light-hearted to maintain focus and engagement.
- Celebrate effort, humour, and creativity, keep the atmosphere playful, not competitive.



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