

Moving Through Math

Memory Box

Where logic the logic and thinking of mathematics meet
music, dance, and drama



Memory and Recall in Grades Pre-K - 2

by

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The Memory Box

When to use this Strategy: After completing a book or a learning activity, invite students to recall their memories and save them in an imaginary Memory Box.

Educational Purpose: Verbalization of learned information, recall of detail.

Drama Objective: Students visualize as they pretend.

Assessment Potential: Use this strategy after teaching to assess what the students retained. Open up the box again a few days later, and ask students to pull out their old memories to see what students retain over time.

Sample Language:

Friends, we are going to take out our Memory Boxes. These boxes are not real. They are imaginary. You will have to pretend that you have a box!

First, let's check our bodies to remember where we hid our boxes.

➔ Pat your body all over as if you are pretending to feel where you left the box. The students will start mirroring you. This will provide sensory stimulation for the students – waking them up and getting them excited and engaged. For young children and ELL students, this is a body part review. As you pat your body at a steady beat, chant the words, “Find your memory box. Find your memory box. Find your memory box. Find your memory box.”

➔ Keep patting your body as you identify different body parts.

Are the boxes in our hair? Our knees? Our feet? Our elbows? Our wrists? Our chins?

On the count of three. We will take out our memory boxes. 1 – 2 – 3!

➔ Pretend to pull something out of your sleeve or sock. Hold you index finger and thumb together so the box seems very tiny.

Now let's get ready to open up our Memory Boxes. Show me that the boxes are very tiny when we first pull them out. And show my how the boxes get bigger as you unfold them.

➔ Use your hands to show that the imaginary box is unfolding in 3-dimensional space. Show the box getting larger from side to side as you unfold it, and show the box getting larger from back to front as you unfold it. As you perform this unfolding gesture, chant the words, “Open it up. Open it up. Open it up. Open it up.”

Let’s all carefully place our boxes on our laps. Now that the box is unfolded it is large.

➔ Perform all the following moves as you describe them to students.

Show me where the top of the box would be.

Show me where the bottom of the box would be.

Show me where the front of the box would be.

Show me where the back of the box would be.

Show me where the two sides of the box would be.

Carefully take off the lid and place it next to you without bumping anyone.

Look inside the box. Is it full or empty? Why?

Now it’s time to fill the box with memories. If you have a memory from our lesson today, please pull it out of your head and put it in your hand. When I see that your hand has a memory inside, I will call on you and ask you to share your memory.

➔ Call on students one at a time and ask them to share their memories. Repeats are fine. Repeats with a slightly different use of language are great.

➔ If you are not getting ideas that you feel have enough clarity or focus, offer slight prompts to re-direct student thinking.

➔ After each child shares her memory, stuff it into the box. Paraphrase or repeat the child’s words as you stuff the memory into the box. Overplay this gesture a bit, as if you are trying to stuff a huge pillow into a small box. Memories are huge and can fly away like clouds – so we want to make sure to stuff them inside the box.

➔ Students will recall all sorts of interesting information, such as “Damian got two turns to write on the board,” and “Marissa was funny when she pretended to be the horse.” While this is not specifically academic recall, it is important. It tells you, the teacher, what is important to the children and how social/interpersonal experiences are associated with memory. Put these memories in the box with as much enthusiasm as you put academic content in the box. The brain is highly networked – this is all part of memory.

➔ After you feel that the students have recalled enough important information, it's time to close the box.

Now it's time to put away our boxes. Look inside the box. Is it empty or full? Why?

➔ Perform all the following moves as you describe them to students.

Carefully place the top back on the box.

Lift the box and show me how it feels heavy.

Show me that the box is very large now.

And show me how the box gets smaller as you fold it up.

➔ Use your hands to show that the imaginary box is folding in 3-dimensional space. Show the box getting smaller from side to side as you fold it, and show the box getting smaller from back to front as you fold it. As you perform this folding gesture, chant the words, “Fold it up. Fold it up. Fold it up. Fold it up.”

Your box should be very tiny now. It should be small enough to fit between your first two fingers.

➔ Hold your index finger and thumb together so the box seems very tiny.

On the count of three. We will hide our memory boxes. You may hide your box wherever you like. 1 – 2 – 3!

Students, remember that each of you has your own memories in your own memory box. You may take out your box and think about your memories whenever you like!

Keep your Imagination Alive! Store your memories in imaginary pouches, purses, or other containers. Invite students to make thematic connections. For example, if you just read the book, “Lilly’s Purple Plastic Purse,” put your memories of the book in an imaginary purple plastic purse. If you just read, “Caps for Sale,” put your memories of the story inside an imaginary cap. If you are reading, “Stone Soup,” then put your memories inside a soup pot.

