

Top Tips for Inclusive Classrooms

Practical ideas for primary teachers
by Sarah Hillyard



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Join ELT consultant, teacher trainer, and author, **Sarah Hillyard** in the Top Tips series, where she shares easy-to-implement strategies for fostering inclusivity in the classroom. From engaging games to empathy-building role-play and meaningful storytelling, these videos are packed with practical activities to help every student feel valued and included. Watch now and bring more inclusivity into your teaching!

How to use this leaflet

- Watch the videos using the QR codes or links
- Choose **one idea** to try each week
- Adapt activities to your learners' needs
- Revisit the key phrases regularly in class



Top Tips Video 1: Using Inclusive Games and Activities

Why inclusive games matter

Inclusive games help children feel safe, valued and included. When learners play and work together, they develop empathy, respect, teamwork and confidence – regardless of language level, ability or background. Inclusive games go one step further by ensuring everyone has a role and a choice.



Try these inclusive games

Connection Ball

Children sit in a circle and share something they are proud of (or choose to pass). This celebrates uniqueness while building unity.

Choice Hopscotch

A hopscotch grid with *two ways to respond* (say it OR show it). Children can speak, act or demonstrate kindness in their own way.

Blind Character Creation

Groups create a character together without seeing each other's drawings. The result highlights diversity and teamwork.

Key takeaways for your classroom

- Focus on **teamwork, not competition**
- Always offer **choice** (speaking, acting, drawing, passing)
- Assign roles so every child can contribute
- Adapt instructions with visuals or simplified language
- Let children suggest how they want to participate

Top Tips Video 2: Encouraging Empathy Through Role Play

Why role play builds empathy

Role play allows children to **step into someone else's shoes**. By acting out real-life situations, learners practise understanding feelings, resolving conflicts and using kind language in a safe space.



Role play ideas

Scripted role plays

Use short, guided scripts to build confidence, especially with younger learners.

Scenario role plays

Older learners can write their own scripts based on a situation (e.g. helping a sad classmate).

Props or puppets

Children can choose how they perform – acting themselves or using puppets.

Key takeaways for your classroom

- Start small with **short, guided scripts**
- Let groups choose between **scripts or scenarios**
- Rotate roles so children experience different perspectives
- Model positive behaviours: kindness, teamwork, resilience
- Practise useful phrases:

“Are you ok?” “I can help you.” “Thank you.”

Top Tips Video 3: Using Stories to Develop Inclusive Practices

Why stories support inclusion

Stories help children understand different perspectives and experiences. They turn abstract ideas like kindness and inclusion into something **concrete and relatable**. Inclusive storytelling invites children to join in using **different senses and skills**.



Inclusive story activities

Freeze Frames

Groups create still images showing inclusion or teamwork from the story.

Hot Seating

A child becomes a character and answers questions about their feelings and choices.

Create a Class Story

Write and illustrate a story together that models kindness and problem-solving.

Key takeaways for your classroom

- Use stories as **mirrors** (familiar experiences) and **windows** (new perspectives)
- Pause and ask reflective questions:
“How would you feel?” “What would you do?”
- Use props, puppets and movement
- Offer different ways to participate: speaking, acting, drawing
- Turn story messages into classroom language:
Be kind. Mistakes are OK. Everyone is special.

Share with Friends!

Choosing the right materials can help make your classroom an inclusive space; from visual aids that engage all learners and realia that meet children's tactile and kinesthetic needs, to coursebooks that are designed with inclusivity in mind.

Share with Friends! is a new coursebook that has inclusivity at its core. It incorporates diversity, equity, inclusion and social-emotional learning into everyday teaching and learning, and it does this through **stories, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) activities, and Our Shared World** sections that incorporate inclusive practices and promote an inclusive mindset.

The series incorporates a range of characters called Sharepals who each have their own unique traits and preferences. They all look different, just like everyone in the classroom! Learners might identify with one specific Sharepal, or see the whole group of Sharepals as representative of their own classes: *They're all different; we're all different.* This is one way in which learners learn to connect with the world around them with empathy and an inclusive mindset, which is a very valuable life skill.

By creating a safe, positive and supportive learning environment *Share with Friends!* boosts students' confidence to speak in English in front of the class and share their learning and experiences with friends.

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