

Communicating information



PICTURE THE RULES

To use a variety of IT tools for a purpose. To learn that bold, clear images communicate meaning more effectively.

†† Pairs.

⌚ 30 minutes at the computer; 15 minutes discussion.

Previous skills/knowledge needed

The children should know either how to use graphics software tools to create simple images, or how to obtain appropriate images from clip art.

Key background information

Symbols are an important way of communicating information. In a multicultural society where many languages are spoken, pictures are often more effective than words in conveying messages.

This activity encourages the children to devise their own symbols using IT. The aim is to illustrate a school rule, although they may think of other more general labels or notices that would be useful to display in the classroom. Using IT allows the children to experiment with a visual idea for their symbol on screen, resize the image easily, change its colour, invert it, rotate it and, if necessary, add text. The children should be able to use the IT tools to achieve a professional-looking result. You could use the activity as part of a topic on communications if appropriate.

Vocabulary

Clip art, image, symbol, proportion, rotate, flip, resize.

Preparation

Find (or draw) some examples of familiar signs or symbols which communicate meaning either in the street, in shops or at home. Make one copy of photocopiable page 136 for each pair of children.

Resources needed

A computer, graphics software, desktop publishing software, a selection of clip art, a colour printer, paper, examples of familiar street/public place signs and symbols, photocopiable page 136.

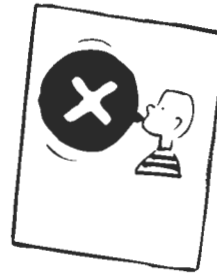
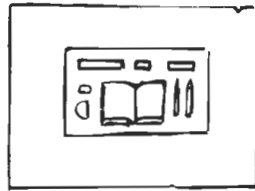
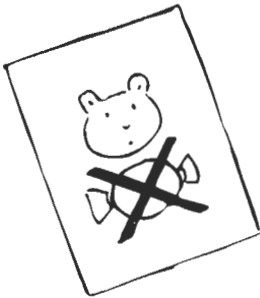
What to do

Show the children a collection of familiar signs and symbols such as washing labels, road signs, 'no litter' symbols and so on. Talk about why we use signs. Ask them to think of any other examples they have seen and to explain what these mean. Discuss what makes a good sign: are colours important? is the size of the symbol important? are words necessary and if so, what kind of words? Show the children an example which is particularly effective to emphasise the importance of clarity and unambiguity in the choice of a symbol.

Now tell the children that they are going to work in pairs to design their own symbols. Some will do this using IT and others will do the activity using conventional art materials to allow a comparison at the end of the activity. Give out copies of photocopiable page 136 – one each for children working conventionally, and one per pair for children using IT. The sheet provides a list of suggestions for school or classroom rules which the children can choose from to design and illustrate a matching symbol. Children working

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Match the symbol to the rule



Never run with scissors

Don't chew gum in class

Never throw things indoors

Never give sweets to the hamster

Keep your desk tidy

on screen can use appropriate images from clip art (if you have access to a clip art library), or design their own using a graphics application. Words could be added via the graphics software, or designs could be saved and loaded into desktop publishing software to add in words at a later stage.

When the children have finished their signs, gather them together to judge the results, highlighting comparisons between those produced using IT and those drawn with conventional art materials. Discuss the merits and drawbacks of each method. Use constructive criticism to discuss the attributes that make signs effective.

Suggestion(s) for extension

More confident children could go on to use IT for producing a series of symbols to show safety in the kitchen, what not to throw in the dustbin (recycling symbols), symbols for a time machine's dashboard, symbols to look at while doing their homework (concentrate, turn the music down, no television, no sweets, no daydreaming, best handwriting only and so on).

Suggestion(s) for support

Ensure that less confident children choose something straightforward and not too sophisticated, such as 'No running' or 'Paper towels go in the bin'. They could concentrate on the symbol only and try out various colours and sizes.

Assessment opportunities

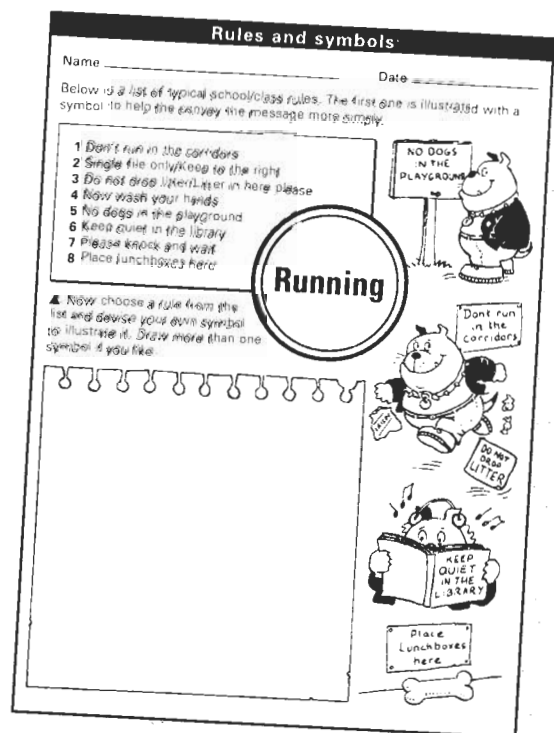
This activity will enable you to assess how well the children are using IT graphics tools to convey meaning using pictures appropriate to the context. There are also assessment possibilities in art.

Display ideas

The children's work could be displayed in the appropriate place, according to the rule they have illustrated, so that it serves its original purpose. For work produced on the computer, use additional printouts to create a 'match the symbol to the rule' challenge by mixing together the pictures and the written rules.

Reference to photocopiable sheet

Photocopiable page 136 contains a 'design a symbol' task. It provides a list of typical rules for the school or classroom which the children choose from to design and illustrate their own matching symbol.



Rules and symbols

Name _____

Date _____

Below is a list of typical school/class rules. The first one is illustrated with a symbol to help convey the message more simply.

- 1 Don't run in the corridors
- 2 Single file only/Keep to the right
- 3 Do not drop litter/Litter in here please
- 4 Now wash your hands
- 5 No dogs in the playground
- 6 Keep quiet in the library
- 7 Please knock and wait
- 8 Place lunchboxes here



▲ Now choose a rule from the list and devise your own symbol to illustrate it. Draw more than one symbol if you like.

