

## Managing hands on activities in schools implementing 2m distancing

Unless your school policy prevents the use of any form of equipment, then the good news is that hands on activities can happen in your classroom. However, in these unprecedented times, your approach to planning and delivery of activities will need to be very different to usual. Everything will take longer, from planning to setup, delivery and clear up.

Like everyone else our understand of the virus is evolving. Check our website and Twitter feed regularly for updates.

### Classroom layout



It is likely that your science, art and D&T lessons will take place in the same classroom that your children will be working in throughout the day. If you have been given guidance by your school on how to arrange your classroom and how children must enter and leave, then you must follow this. Bear in mind there will be equipment on the tables, so additional safety instructions may need to be given prior to children entering the classroom eg don't touch anything in the tray. In many ways carrying out hands on activities with your class will be no different from your new ways of working in other lessons.

In order to keep 2 m distancing:

- Each child should be seated at their own table/desk and must not move around the classroom during a lesson. For the purposes of this guidance we are assuming that a table is a rectangle shape that would under normal circumstances seat 2 children.
- Each table must be positioned to adhere to the 2 m distancing rules. An easy way to set out classrooms is to make a cross out of 4 metre rulers joined in the middle. Make sure you align the crosses to meet a 2 m distance. By marking where a child will sit at a table, use the tool to see how many tables you can fit into your classroom. Make sure there is the 2 m distance between a teacher's desk or a white board to allow a teacher to stand at the front and teach. Don't forget to allow sufficient space along walkways for a teacher to move around the room. Configurations and spacing between will depend on your space; how big it is, what shape it is and the size of your tables/desks.

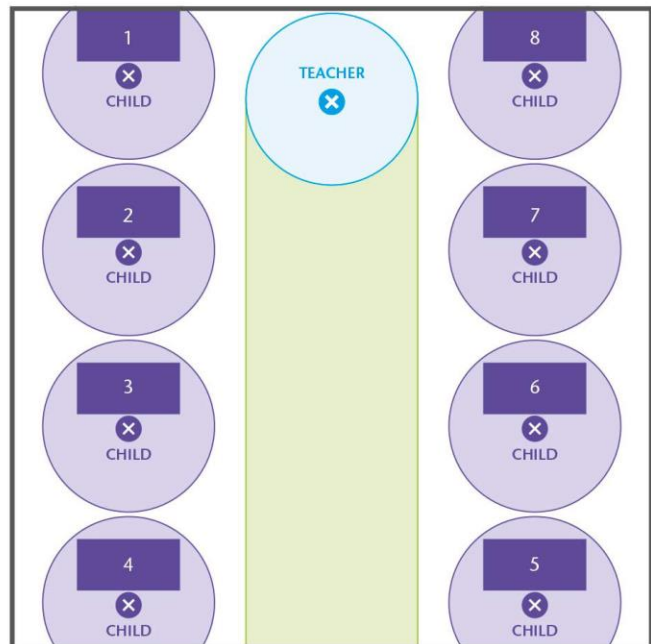
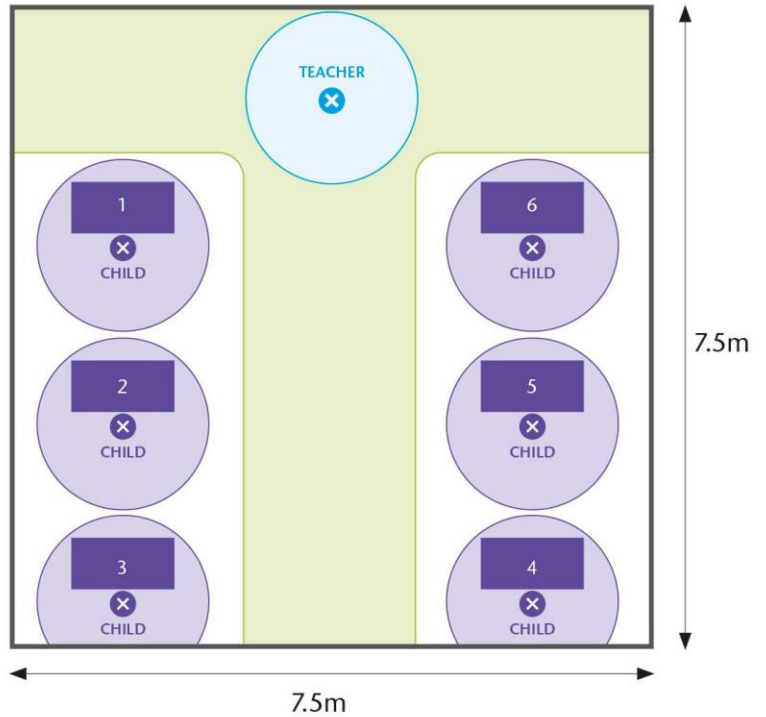
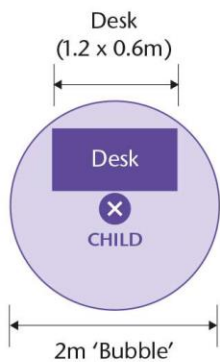
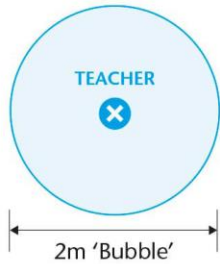
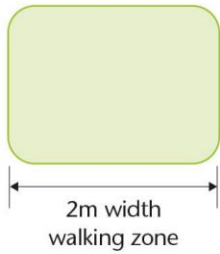




- The number of tables/desks you can fit in a classroom will depend on the size of the classroom. In a 55 m<sup>2</sup> classroom, you can expect to fit between 7 - 10 children while maintaining 2 m distancing. Page 3 shows some examples of potential configurations.
- Clearly label each table with the child's name to confirm their seat. You will have worked with your children about where they sit in the classroom, so they will know which table they have been allocated. Children will need to remain at the same table for science, DT and art as for their other lessons.
- If you have the luxury of a separate science, DT or art room, follow the same guidance. Under the current circumstances it is unlikely that you will have access to specialist shared space. However, if you do, follow the same protocols as above and any other additional protocols required by your school for multi-use areas, for example, cleaning after use.

**This document supports teachers planning practical activities. It is not designed as a worksheet for classroom use**

Based on an average classroom size of 55m<sup>2</sup> (Square format)



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# Managing hands on activities

## Planning

We know that, for a range of reasons, hands on activities are most often carried out in groups. The first major difference between before and now is that children will need to work individually. Your approach to planning will need to take account of the following:

## Equipment

Does your school have enough equipment? Each child will need to have their own set of equipment.

## Choice of activity

- Each child will have to work alone; some may struggle to do this. Knowing your children, you can plan an activity that they can undertake without the need for additional support.
- Some types of enquiry or activity will be more suited to working alone than others. For example, a simple classifying activity (such as magnetic and non-magnetic materials) may be achievable, whereas a comparative test, such as **Sunshine absorbency**, which normally compares the absorbency of 6-8 different materials, will be difficult for a single child to complete. This doesn't mean the activity cannot be done. Try simplifying activities, for example by cutting down the number of variables, so for **Sunshine absorbency**, perhaps use just 2 strips of material. Alternatively, you can give each child a different variable and then collate class data at the end.
- Choose activities that the children will have a reasonable chance of completing on their own. Challenging tasks may demotivate the children if they cannot finish them and 2 m distancing prevents you from providing the support that you usually would.
- Rather than introduce new practical skills, choose activities that you know your children will be able to carry out safely and successfully. How skilled/dextrous are your children when working with equipment? How much experience have they had in relation to using a piece of equipment?
- Look for activities that use disposable/single-use resources rather than standard equipment that will have to be cleaned. For example, our **Light up cards** activity rather than using standard electrical component (wires, crocodile clips bulbs etc).
- Think carefully about activities that often require troubleshooting/adult intervention or replacement equipment, for example electrical circuits. These can be notoriously unreliable and you will not be able to directly support the children. Again, this doesn't mean that this type of activity cannot be done, but more planning and management will be required. For instance, you may need to connect the croc-clips before the lesson and if possible, give additional electrical components to each child.
- Can you do activities outside where there's more space? Now is a great opportunity to think about activities that can be done in your school grounds. Examples include shadow work, bug hunts, **Using UV bead bracelets to study light** or **Pond dipping**. Are there activities that you might normally do in your classroom that could be done equally well outside whilst keeping your children socially distanced. Examples include, **Making a wormery and observing worms**, **Vinegar and bicarbonate balloons** or **Making and successfully throwing a boomerang**.

## Lesson length

Hands on lessons delivered under these new circumstances are likely to take longer than usual to complete, so bear this in mind when planning your day. As well as children needing additional time to carry out each step of the activity alone, you will require extra time for set up and clearing up.

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## Spillages

Additional planning will be required for activities that might result in spills. For example, if you are carrying out our **Overflow** activity, children will need to have paper towels and be taught how to clear up a spill should it occur. You need to ensure you have a plan for what to do in the case of a large spill, and what the children need to do. For example you may need to move some or all of the children while you clear up.

## Clearing up

Hands on activities always require clearing up but this will be different under current circumstances. The extent to which your children are able to help will depend on their age and ability to tidy/clean/follow instructions. Bear in mind tables may need wiping, so plan who will do it and the time it will take. Support older children to clear up their own workspace, provide extra paper towels in their trays and show them what to do.

## Risk assessment

CLEAPSS standard advice and guidance applies. However, in addition to your normal risk assessment process (see **EXPLORE Issue 5** pgs 4-5), the following must also be applied:

1. Children are known to touch their faces without thinking, despite being reminded, therefore telling children to wash hands after touching equipment is not sufficient to prevent potential transmission. This means all equipment given to a child must be clean. As a result, we advise that all equipment is clean before it is used by children. For more guidance see cleaning equipment.
2. Where possible, use disposable equipment available from the supermarket that can be placed in the appropriate waste at the end of the lesson. For example, **Glue from milk**, **Bath bombs** or **Making trace fossils**. One way might be, manage children to put disposable items in the correct bin, one child at a time.
3. Think carefully about any SEND children that would ordinarily have extra support during a hands on activity. TAs may not be able to provide direct assistance. If using a TA is one of your control measures, you will need to use an alternative lower risk activity.
4. Avoid higher risk activities that may require extra supervision or direct adult support. For example, our **Investigating burning** activity, normally requires an increase in the amount of supervision, ie more adults in the room. This may not be possible at present. Look very carefully at the yellow safety box on our activities when planning. High risk activities will be harder to facilitate under the current working conditions.
5. Under the new circumstances, it is likely that a number of teachers/teaching assistants will be supervising groups of children that are not from their normal class. When planning a hands on activity, knowing the children well, influences what safety measures teachers chose to put in place and how they are implemented. This knowledge and understanding will include the children's behaviour, or how well they respond to instruction. Without this knowledge and understanding, choose lower risk activities that you can safely plan for.
6. If an accident occurs, follow your school's guidance. Make sure you know this guidance before the lesson and how to implement it. You will need to talk to your children about what to do if an accident happens during this new way of working. What you say will change dependent on the activity.
7. Taking your children outside is a great choice, but don't forget that you will still need to maintain their 2 m zone. See **Working safely outdoors** for more advice.

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## Cleaning equipment used during a hands-on practical activity

Many people are wondering if they need to clean equipment after a 'hands on' activity, and if so, how? The first thing to do is to find out what your employer's cleaning protocol is and make sure that anything you do follows this.

### What is a deep clean?

In the media there are frequent images of people wearing hazmat suits liberally spraying buildings and furniture with mystery liquids. For many, this has become the only point of reference, and yes, they probably are performing 'a form of' deep cleaning.

In the current context the term 'deep clean' is probably best thought of as very thorough cleaning with proprietary cleaning products, for example the ones you buy in a high street shop.

### How do I clean equipment if I need to?

There are two steps you need to implement to effectively clean something, neither are particularly difficult or technical, but paying attention to both is important:

1. Remove any dirt or grease from the surface of the item.
2. Correctly apply a shop-bought proprietary disinfectant to the surface of the item.

Removing the dirt and grease from items is no different from what you'd do in your home. Soap and water or a multi-surface cleaner and a disposable cloth eg paper towel to wipe them with will work. Use paper towels to dry the items (or let them air dry). Put the disposable material/towels in the appropriate bin.

If you don't remove the dirt and grease, the disinfectant may not work properly. Use a disinfectant which is labelled 'kills 99% of bacteria and viruses' or similar, as in the UK the use of this labelling is regulated.

Follow the instructions on the disinfectant's label, including leaving the disinfectant on for the length of time stated. If you don't, it won't disinfect the surface. This is a crucial step which is often not done. Do not use undiluted or concentrated bleach.

While you are cleaning any equipment the children used, do not touch your face, and remember to wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water afterwards.

### Will our science, D&T and art equipment be free of microbes (including COVID-19) if we clean it?

Probably not. Primary schools do not have the equipment or training needed to sterilise anything. You can't disinfect everything, and even if you did it won't stay that way. The best you can do is to temporarily reduce the amount of microbes (including coronavirus) on any item of equipment.

### Can I avoid cleaning equipment after the children have used it?

Yes. Scientific evidence about COVID-19 is still in its infancy but there's strong evidence that after 72 hours most surfaces are 'COVID free'. Therefore, if possible, set aside for 3 days any equipment that your children have used and you'll avoid having to clean it.

### Could the children help?

If your children are used to washing up when doing activities like food technology, then there's no reason why they shouldn't wipe and dry other equipment they've used. As with all activities you need to risk assess the children and the activity or equipment. For example, you may decide to not let Y4 children wipe over crocodile clips. Do not let any children use disinfectants.

Children, especially older children, can also help by being mindful when they use equipment. If they wash their hands before an activity and keep their hands away from their faces during the activity, it's likely that the equipment will remain cleaner and easier to clean afterwards.

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## **Do I need to use personal protective equipment (PPE)?**

Not as a way of protecting yourself from contact transfer while cleaning equipment. Bear in mind that you are already in the environment. Touching, for example, some magnets that the children have used is no different from touching the door handle.

The cleaning product you use may require you to use PPE (very unlikely with shop-bought proprietary products) but this would be to protect you from it, not COVID-19. Again, follow the instructions on the label, they're very important.

## **Classroom management during a hands on activity**

### **Before the lesson:**

- Setup any equipment at the children's tables before the lesson.
- Setup equipment in individual trays for each child. This will help speed up setup and clearing away and the trays will contain any spills.
- If water is required for the activity, then this should be provided as part of the equipment. Children must not leave their table to collect anything.
- Adults will need time prior to and after the lesson for setting up/clearing up.

### **During the lesson:**

- Teacher demonstrations may be required for children to access the activity. Children must not leave their tables to crowd round a demonstration table, so make use of data projectors and digital cameras / visualizers to project what is being demonstrated.
- Use large visual aids to support instructions. Within this highlight/incorporate safety messages, for example, step by step PowerPoint slides on a whiteboard.
- If at any point during the lesson, you feel that the activity isn't working as you had planned or something is about to go wrong, for example, an accident may happen (even though nothing has yet), then stop the activity. This might mean stopping an individual child or stopping the whole class. Ordinarily you would intervene, but now this is much harder/you can't, so you need to take alternative steps. If necessary, swap to a written/oral activity.

### **End of lesson:**

- If your planning has highlighted that clearing up will need to be done. Think about how this will happen and how long it will take.
- Once the activity has finished, children should place all equipment back into the tray. An adult must clear the trays away when the children have left the classroom, and then carry out any cleaning of equipment as required by your school (for more guidance see cleaning equipment).

## **Opportunities to extend learning using simple hands on activities**

None of this means you will have to compromise on learning outcomes. Use the time to extend your children's learning in other ways, simple or low risk activities present new and exciting opportunities. For more ideas about making the most of hands on activities during this time see **EXPLORE Issue 9** - Hands on activities while social distancing.

Note – as with all other CLEAPSS primary documents, words in bold in this document can be used as search terms to find the document on the CLEAPSS primary website.

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