

Activity Ideas

These activity ideas were given to architects/architectural assistants during a training day for the **Space Explorers** project. Please note that they are *suggestions*, so feel to adapt them for the needs of the pupils you work with.

Recording and Collecting Ideas

If you want to help pupils record the things they see during a you could use a **recording frame (see appendix for examples)**. This can help pupils collect a number of different ideas on one sheet and can be used for note taking, drawing, collecting and sorting found items, collecting rubbings...

Pupils should use the sheets as a frame to help them record their findings, and you should direct what it is they should record: e.g. materials used, textures, windows and doors, building details, favourite things, least favourite things...

Asking and Answering Questions

During a site visit, being able to ask questions to generate discussion is a valuable way to get pupils to interact with each other. The following questioning techniques will help you get plenty of responses:

Vote and Discuss

Ask pupils to vote on whether they do or do not like something. They can do this by a show of hands or by holding up a voting card. E.g. Do you like the Entrance Hall? If you do hold up the green card, if not hold up the red card, or thumbs up, thumbs down. These can be photographed to provide a visual picture of the pupils' choices.

The vote should not end there. Pupils should then be able to say **why** they came to that opinion.

Which do you prefer?

This is a similar exercise, but this time, pupils vote by standing next to their preferred choice. E.g. Which do you like best, the glass fronted building or the stone one? Again remember to add a why question afterwards.

Why?

This is one of the best questions you can ask to get children thinking more. When you have a good rapport with the pupils, and they are confident at answering questions, you can make a game of it, by exaggerating how many times you ask the why question. Answering once is easy, but if you keep asking why, can pupils come up with any more reasons?

E.g.

Q: Which do you prefer, concrete or glass?

A: Glass

Q: Why?

A: Because it lets in more light?

Q: But why?

A: Because it makes the space feel brighter and more welcoming?

Q: But why?

A: Because it stops dark shadows falling in corners of the room... etc

Other Questions

There is a Northern Architecture resource called 'Questioning Architecture', available to download online. You can purchase it for £5 or download it for free at: <http://www.northernarchitecture.com/education/resources.php>

Word Games

Ask pupils to elicit their responses to the place that they visit, using words to describe their ideas, thoughts and feelings.

Word Wall

Have a large supply of pieces of paper cut into brick shapes and use this activity to create a visual record of facts, feelings and thoughts that can be taken back to create a display in the classroom.

First ask them to use the blue pens to write words on the bricks that are facts about the building or place (e.g. red wall, large windows, curved desk...). These should be stacked like bricks in a wall to create a layer of facts.

Then ask pupils to write all the feelings they have about the building in red pen (e.g. scared, happy, worried, indifferent). Stack these on top to create a layer of feelings.

Finally ask pupils to write all the thought and questions they have about the building in green pen (e.g. how tall is it? How does it stand up? Where are the toilets?) Stack these on top to create a layer of thought.

NB You can give more support by doing the writing yourself and asking pupils to tell you their ideas. If pupils write ideas themselves, make sure they know that spelling is unimportant in this activity as long as you can make sense of the words used.

The Good, The Bad & The Ugly

Ask pupils to stand in two lines of equal length, facing each other. One line is going to be the good, one line is going to be the bad, and you are going to be the ugly! Give pupils chance to think about one thing to say about the building or place, good or bad depending in which line they are standing. You walk through the line and as you walk past each pupil they say their thought aloud, creating a soundscape of everyone's thoughts.

Problems & Solutions

Ask pupils to spend some time as another character (e.g. an elderly person, a man in a wheelchair, a blind person, a mum with a pushchair, a toddler). Create some character cards and hand them out to groups of 2-3 pupils. Ask them to explore a building or place thinking about what those people might find difficult about the way a current space is designed and come up with solutions to make that space easier to use. They can then feed their conclusions back to the rest of the class so that everyone gains a greater insight into inclusive and accessible design.

A Design Challenge

Once you have visited the site and found out what works and what doesn't, your next experience with the pupils will be in the classroom, and is likely to take the form of a design challenge. Think about the stages you go through yourself when designing for a client and try and emulate these steps during your time with the class.

Pupils could work for an imaginary client with particular needs, or they could design something based on needs identified during public consultation (e.g. needs identified after questioning other school pupils or the local community).

Set the Brief

Keep it simple and set down some ground rules about size and scale, possibly about materials and think about incorporating an element about sustainability.

Outline the process

E.g. Working in groups of 4, each pupil should find three precedents (you will probably need to explain what this means!) and come up with at least three initial ideas. This should be presented to the rest of the group, before creating one huge display board of all the ideas that should be presented to the rest of the class. Then pupils will develop a final concept and, depending on experience and ability, draw a plan, elevation and section (remember the recording frames to help structure this).

Model-making

Using junk materials (a limited palette of materials is best), pupils work in pairs to make a model of their favourite idea. They will need most help in making sure they make it a manageable size, working out how to get the materials to do what they want and in fixing one material to the other successfully.

Design Charrette

Working along similar lines to the process outlined above, a design charrette can be completed in a much shorter space of time. The activity revolves around process rather than product, as the pupils have to come up with as many solutions to a design problem as possible in a short space of time (say 1 hour). They should draw and annotate diagrams relating to their proposed solutions, then hand them in at the last minute. You can then take the ideas away with you and present them back to the group next time you convene, giving feedback and a little constructive criticism. You can also ask pupils to give their own feedback at this point and ask further questions about the designs put forward.

Investigating Precedents

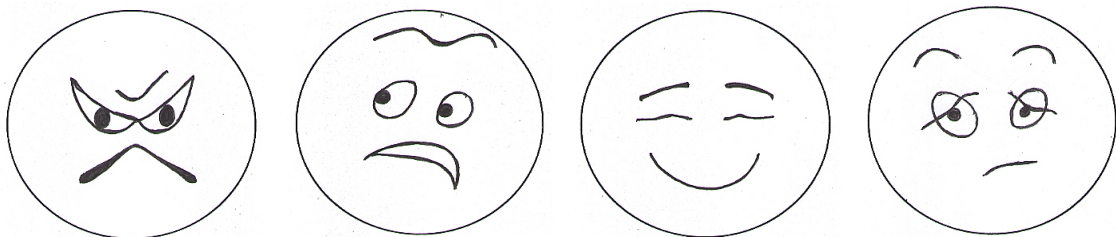
Collect images of precedents (designs by other architects to inspire the pupils) and put them in a PowerPoint presentation, and/or print them off. When you have these images, there are a number of ways you could get pupils to comment on them.

A Judge of Character

What does the design of a building say to you? Does it have its own character? Using simple face cards and word cards, pupils can quickly assess how a building or place can have its own, unique character.

Lay out a number of precedents on a table and ask pupils to place the face cards and words that best describe that character on top of the images.

NB An electronic copy of the face cards (examples below) and words can be obtained by emailing a request to sarah@northernarchitecture.com



Architecture Cool Wall

You could start this adapted version of Top Gear's cool wall during a visit to the class, then leave it for pupils to add to throughout their project. Simply set up a space in the classroom with enough space to attach small images of buildings, spaces and places. Bring in some images to get things started (cut from magazines and newspapers) and get the pupils to help you rate the buildings and places by discussing all the different elements that are good and bad. The categories can be given any names you like, e.g. sub zero, cool, uncool and seriously uncool. Then ask pupils to collect images from magazines and newspapers at home and bring them in to add to the cool wall over a set period of time.

Appendices

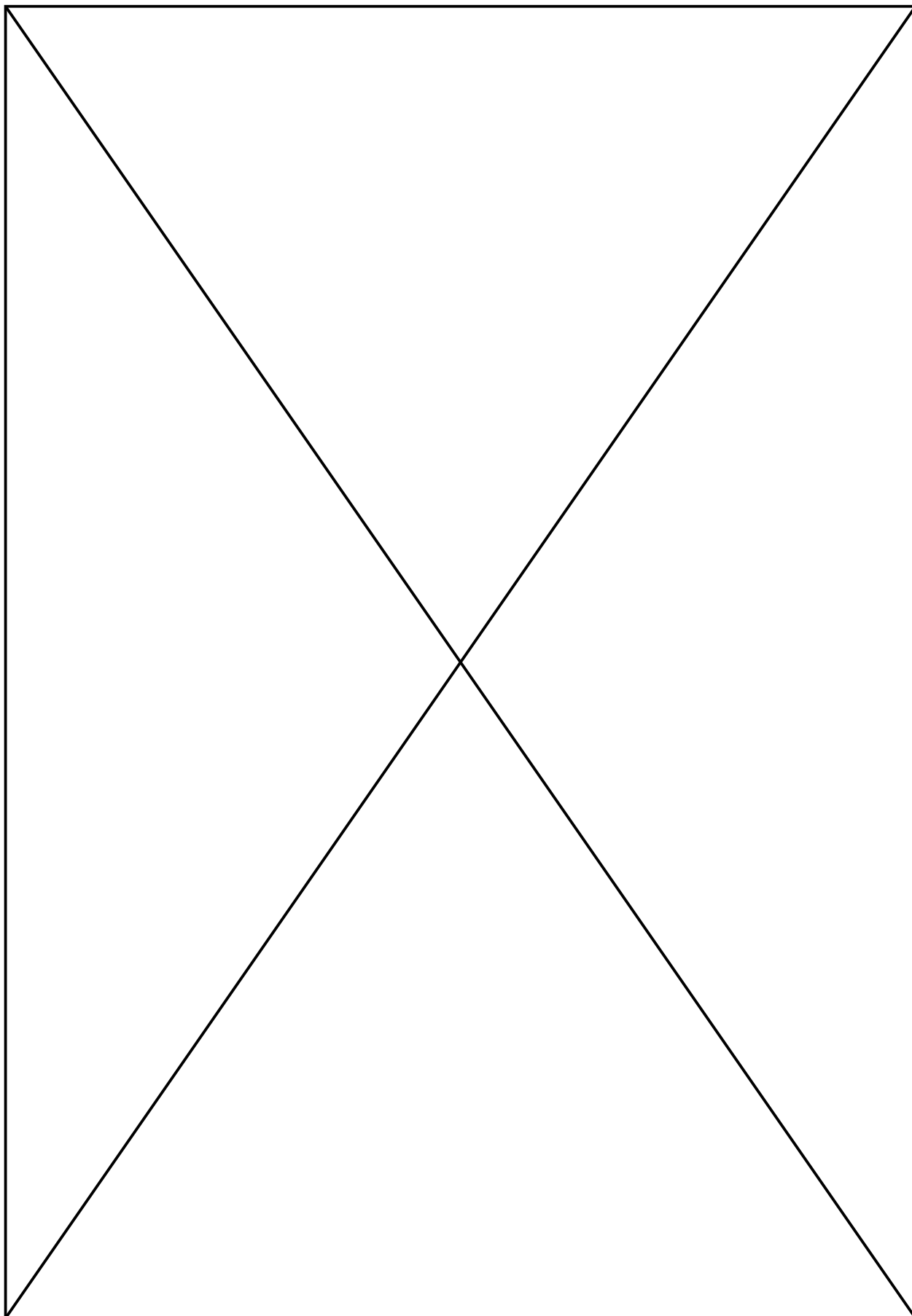
The following appendices are for you to use and adapt as you wish:

- 3 different recording templates for you to photocopy and use during a visit or a design charrette-type activity.
- An activity plan template to guide and prompt you to think about all the different parts of a session

Name:

Name:

Name:



Activity Title:

Objectives

What do you want pupils to achieve?

Resources

What materials are required?

Introduction

How will you introduce the topic – discussion, images, a game...?

Timings

Main Activity

What is the activity and how is it structured? Whole class, small group, individual? Any tips to help pupils with the activity?

Timings

Plenary

How will you conclude the activity? Will pupils present their findings? Will you pick out a few good examples? Will you hold a mini crit?

Timings