TPR (Total Physical Response) games such as Simon Says and songs like Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes are a big hit with children (who enjoy them) and teachers (who think they’re an effective teaching tool). Children also enjoy hearing and acting out stories and teacher like the contextualised chunks of language they contain. Action stories, as the name implies, are a combination of the TPR and stories and are great technique for getting children to memorise substantial chunks of useful language.

**Action stories should ...**
- Be easy to mime
- Be stories with a beginning a middle and an end
- Be 6-12 lines long
- Contain high-frequency verb phrases and other chunks of language

**Advantages of using action stories**
- They’re fun and motivating!
- They activate auditory, visual and kinaesthetic learners
- They’re easy for children to memorise
- They help children learn whole chunks of language at a time
- Teachers can easily write them so they include the language areas they are working on

**Example action story**

*Dad’s shoes*

Dad is looking for his shoes. He looks under the bed. He looks behind the curtains. He looks in the cupboard. He looks in the bathroom.

You are in front of the washing machine.

Take out Dad’s shoes.

“Here you are,” you say, “they are clean now.”

(Do and Understand – Gerngross & Puchta, Longman)

**Teaching sequence**

1. Before you start teaching the action story you will need to pre-teach any unfamiliar lexis.
2. The teacher tells the story and does the actions. The children listen and watch.
3. The teacher tells the story and does the actions. The children listen and do the actions.
4. The teacher tells the story but doesn’t do the actions. The children listen and do the actions.
5. The teacher tells the lines of the story in a jumbled order. The children listen and do the actions.
6. The children tell the story and do the actions.
7. The children do a reading or writing task.

**Revisiting the action story**

In subsequent classes you might like to...
- Make a video of the children doing the action story
- Make a cartoon strip of the action story
- Change/Modify the story
- Get the children to perform the story in groups and award points/prizes for the best ones.

**Reading/Writing tasks**

The difficulty of the reading or writing task you set will depend on the children’s age and proficiency in English. The example tasks on the next page are in order of difficulty, with the easiest first and the hardest last.
Task 1 - Put the sentences in the right order
a) He looks in the bathroom.
b) He looks under the bed.
c) You are in front of the washing machine.
d) He looks behind the curtains.
e) “Here you are,” you say, “they are clean now.”
f) He looks in the cupboard.
g) Dad is looking for his shoes.
h) Take out Dad’s shoes.

Task 2 – Find the second half of each sentence
1. Dad is looking under a. the bed
2. He looks under b. Dad’s shoes
3. He looks behind c. the cupboard
4. He looks in d. “they are clean now”
5. He looks in e. in the bathroom
6. You are in front of f. for his shoes
7. Take out g. the curtains
8. “Here you are,” you say h. the washing machine

Task 3 – Correct the mistakes
1. Dad is looking for his watch.
2. He looks under the table.
3. He looks opposite the curtains.
4. He sleeps in the cupboard.
5. He looks in the bedroom.
6. You are in front of the cooking machine.
7. Look out Dad’s shoes.
8. “Here you are,” you say, “they are happy now.”

Task 4 – Put the words in the right order
1. shoes. is looking Dad for his
2. He bed. looks the under
3. looks the He curtains. behind
4. the looks in cupboard. He
5. in the He looks bathroom.
6. machine. washing the of front in are You
7. Dad’s out shoes. Take
8. “Here are you,” say you, “clean they are now.”

Task 5 – write the missing words
1. Dad is looking ____ his shoes
2. He looks ______ the bed
3. He looks ______ the curtains
4. He looks ___ the cupboard
5. He looks ____ the bathroom
6. You are __________ the washing machine.
7. Take _____ Dad’s shoes.
8. Here you are,” you say, “they are ______ now.”

Task 6 – Write the story
1. D____ l____ f____ h____ s____
2. H____ u____ t____ b____
3. H____ b____ t____ c____
4. H____ t____ c____
5. H____ l____ f____
6. Y____ a____ l____ f____ o____ t____ w____ m____
7. T____ o____ D____ s____
8. “H_____ Y____ a____” Y____ s____ “t____ a____ c____ n____”

More Action Stories

Silence
Don’t shout
Don’t stamp your feet
Don’t talk to your friends
Don’t clap your hands
Don’t play
Be quiet!

Mystery animal
It’s got a long tail
It’s got wings
It’s got four legs
It’s got a trunk
It’s got fur
It’s got an enormous head
It’s a monster

Yes, we can!
We can swim
We can touch our toes
We can ride a bike
We can speak English
We can do sums
We can use a computer
But we can’t fly

Home
Get home from school
Take off your jacket
Play with your little brother
Have a snack
Do your homework
Turn on the TV
Watch a cartoon

Go to sleep on the sofa

Busy day
We’re climbing a tree
We’re throwing a Frisbee
We’re laughing with our friends
We’re kicking a ball
We’re playing hide and seek
We’re hot and tired
We’re drinking water
Ahhhhhh!

Bad tummy
You’re hungry
Eat an apple
Eat a banana
Eat some spaghetti
Eat some pizza
Drink a milkshake
You’ve got a bad tummy

Getting ready
Turn off the alarm clock
Get out of bed
Put on your t-shirt
Put on your shorts
Put on your socks
Put on your trainers
Put on your cycle helmet
Open the door
Shout “Oh, no!”

(Join In 1 – Gerngross & Puchta, CUP)
Ice-cream
It’s hot
Put your towel and flip-flops in a bag
Drive to the beach
Put your towel on the sand
Take off your shorts and t-shirt
Put on your flip-flops
Walk to the sea
Jump in!
Brrrr! It’s cold

The apple tree
Eat an apple
Keep the pips
Take a yoghurt pot
Fill it with soil
Plant the pips in the soil
Water it
Look after it day after day
Be patient
It grows into a little apple tree

The bee
You’re reading a book
A bee lands on your book
You jump up
You climb on the wardrobe
You look behind the curtains
The bee is on your nose
(Do and Understand – Gerngross & Puchta, Longman)

Homework
Take off your coat
Sit down at your desk
Listen to your teacher
Open your schoolbag
Take out your activity book
Turn to page 14
Oh no! The homework was page 14 and you’ve done page 40!

Broken window
We’re playing in the park
I kick the ball hard
It flies through the air
Crash! Oh no! It’s broken a window!
The neighbour comes out of his house.
He looks really angry.
We run away fast
We climb a tree
We hide in the branches

The cowboy
Put on your boots and your cowboy hats
Get on your horse
Go for a ride
You’re tired
Stop your horse
Get off
Sit down on the ground
Ouch!
You’ve sat on a cactus
(Join In 3 – Gerngross & Puchta, CUP)

The supermarket
Go into the supermarket
Put a coin in the trolley
Push the trolley around the supermarket
You’re hungry
Put some crisps in it
Put some ice-cream in it
Run to the checkout
Oh no! You haven’t got any money!

The dream
You’re swimming in the sea
You see a shark
You swim quickly to the beach
You walk along the beach
A bird lands on your shoulder
‘Come with me’ it says
You fly through the air with the bird
Suddenly, you’re falling
You wake up from the dream

The present
It’s Christmas morning
Take your the first present
Shake it
Unwrap it
It’s a bowl
Take your second present
Squeeze it
Unwrap it
It’s a rubber ball
A bowl and a ball – how strange!
Your Dad brings in your third present
It’s a puppy!

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