In Class Lessons: Lesson Plans: Unit 1

Unit 01 Lesson 02
Thinking - Our Mind's Idea Factory

Unit Description:

This foundational unit introduces students to the mind as an interconnected system with three essential parts: Thinking (the "Idea Factory" for planning, problem-solving, and imagining), Feeling (the "Messenger" providing information through emotions and body sensations), and Doing (the "Action Player" making our inner world visible through observable actions). Students learn that everyone has a mind with these same three parts, and critically, that these parts influence each other in multiple directions through reciprocal loops, not just in one-way linear chains.

Through concrete daily-life examples, sorting activities, and observation exercises, children identify and label these three parts in themselves and others. They practice distinguishing between private mental experiences (thinking and feeling happen inside, invisible to others) and observable actions (doing is what others see). The curriculum builds progressively toward understanding reciprocal influence: early lessons explore each part individually, while Lesson 4 reveals how they work together as a dynamic feedback system where any part can influence any other part in both directions.

Students discover their "loop power"—while they cannot directly control thoughts or feelings appearing, they can use their Action Player strategically to influence the reciprocal loops and change how they think and feel. Role-play and cause-and-effect scenarios help students describe these bidirectional influences using simple language: "I thought about..., which made me feel..., so I did..., and then that action changed how I was feeling."
The three-part reciprocal model establishes psychology's foundational framework—that mental processes can be observed, categorized, and understood systematically as an interconnected system rather than isolated components. This introduces age-appropriate metacognition (thinking about thinking) by making abstract internal experiences concrete through metaphor and observable examples, providing the organizing structure for understanding all future psychology concepts.

By framing the mind as an understandable system of reciprocal influences rather than a mysterious black box or simple cause-and-effect chain, students develop foundational psychological literacy and self-efficacy ("I can understand how my mind works, and I have power to influence it through my actions"). The shared vocabulary and reciprocal loop framework enable both self-awareness and empathy, supporting children to discuss mental experiences that will underpin learning about attention, memory, emotions, relationships, and problem-solving throughout the curriculum.

Unit Learning Objectives

- Define psychology as the study of how minds work and explain that everyone has a mind with three parts: Thinking, Feeling, and Doing
- Identify and label examples of thinking (Idea Factory), feeling (Messenger), and doing (Action Player) in everyday scenarios from their own lives or observations of others
- Distinguish between private mental experiences (thinking and feeling) and observable actions

(doing) by categorizing given examples as "inside my mind" or "others can see"
- Describe how the three parts of the mind influence each other through reciprocal loops (bidirectional influence) rather than just linear cause-and-effect, using examples that show influence flowing in multiple directions (e.g., "I did [action], which changed how I felt, which then changed what I thought")
- Use the framework vocabulary (Idea Factory, Messenger, Action Player, loop power, reciprocal loops) to discuss their own mental experiences and explain their actions or the actions of others
- Apply the concept of "loop power" by identifying how they can use their Action Player to influence their thinking and feeling through feedback loops, even when they cannot directly control thoughts or feelings appearing

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Lesson Description

This lesson explores the **Thinking** part of the mind in depth, teaching children that thinking includes many different jobs: remembering, imagining, planning, solving problems, wondering, and making decisions. Children learn that their "Idea Factory" is constantly working — even when they're quiet or sitting still — and that thinking happens privately inside their heads where others can't see it.

Through hands-on activities, children discover that they can use their Idea Factory deliberately to help them in everyday situations: generating multiple solutions to problems, thinking before acting, remembering important information, and imagining possibilities. The Memory List Test experiment demonstrates that **thinking strategies affect outcomes**—organized thinking helps memory work better—showing students that how they use their Idea Factory matters.

They also learn that everyone's Idea Factory works a bit differently — some people think in pictures, some in words, some need quiet to think, others think better with movement. This builds understanding that minds follow general patterns but express them individually.

The lesson emphasizes that thinking is a tool children can learn to use more skillfully, and that noticing when and how they're thinking helps them make better choices and understand others better. While this lesson focuses specifically on the Thinking part, it continues reinforcing (from Lesson 1) that thinking connects to and influences the other mind parts, preparing students for the full reciprocal loop model in Lesson 4.

Learning Objectives

- **Identify** at least three different types of thinking their Idea Factory does (e.g., remembering, imagining, planning, problem-solving, wondering, deciding) and give an example of each from their own experience.
- **Explain** that thinking happens privately inside our heads where others cannot see it, even when our bodies are still or quiet.
- **Apply** deliberate thinking to solve a simple problem by generating multiple possible solutions before choosing one (e.g., "What could I do if I forgot my lunch?").
- **Recognize** that different people's Idea Factories work in different ways (e.g., thinking in pictures vs. words, needing quiet vs. movement) by observing and describing examples from themselves and classmates.
- **Demonstrate** the practice of "thinking before acting" by pausing to use their Idea Factory in a scenario and explaining what they thought about before deciding what to do.

Lesson Plan Unit 01 Lesson 02

Warm-up (5 min)

Activity: "The Invisible Work Challenge"

- Teacher sits silently at desk for 30 seconds, completely still
- Ask: "What was I doing? Was my mind working?" (Students might say "nothing!")
- Reveal: "My Idea Factory was VERY busy! I was: remembering yesterday's lesson, planning what to teach next, imagining what you'd say, solving the problem of how to explain thinking!"
- Key point: "Thinking is invisible. Even when bodies are still, Idea Factories work hard. Today we study what thinking actually DOES."

Materials: None needed

Explore + Practice (30 min total)

Part A: The Many Jobs of Thinking (10 min)

Activity: "Idea Factory Jobs Board"

- Introduce five main thinking jobs using concrete examples:
    1. **REMEMBERING** - Pulling up information stored earlier (What did you eat for breakfast?)
    2. **IMAGINING** - Creating pictures/ideas of things not here now (Imagine a purple elephant!)
    3. **PLANNING** - Deciding steps before doing them (How will we clean up?)
    4. **PROBLEM-SOLVING** - Figuring out answers (The pencil broke—now what?)
    5. **DECIDING** - Choosing between options (Which book should I read?)

Mini-Activity: Teacher calls out situations, students identify which thinking job:

- "You can't find your shoe" (PROBLEM-SOLVING)
- "Thinking about summer vacation" (REMEMBERING or IMAGINING)
- "Choosing red or blue crayon" (DECIDING)
- "Figuring out how to reach the high shelf" (PROBLEM-SOLVING)
- "Thinking about what to do at recess before we go" (PLANNING)

Materials: "Idea Factory Jobs" poster with 5 jobs listed (hard copy/displayed)

Psychology Video (2 min)

- **Title:** "How Does Your Brain Work? - Simple Brain for Kids"
- **Link:** Search YouTube for "brain for kids simple" or use "Peekaboo Kidz How Does the Brain Work"
- **Purpose:** Shows brain as physical organ that does thinking work (connecting abstract "thinking" to concrete biology)
- Watch, then discuss: "Your brain is the body part that does the thinking work. It's working right now as you learn!"

Materials: Video projection. **Title:** "How Does Your Brain Work? - Simple Brain for Kids"

Part B: Psychology Experiment - The Memory List Test (PowerMaster) (10 min)

PowerMaster Psychology Test Format

This experiment demonstrates that thinking strategies affect how well our Idea Factory works.

Game Flow:

- **Setup:** Screen shows two rounds. Students use clickers to answer questions after each round.
- **Round 1 - Random Words:**
    - Screen displays 8 unrelated words for 20 seconds (CAR, APPLE, SOCK, CLOUD, FORK, TIGER, BALL, HOUSE)
    - Screen goes blank

    - Multiple choice questions appear one by one: "Was TREE on the list?" Students click YES (button 1) or NO (button 2)
    - 5 questions total, mixing words that WERE and WEREN'T on the list
- **Round 2 - Grouped Words:**
    - Screen displays 8 words in categories for 20 seconds (APPLE, BANANA, ORANGE, GRAPE / DOG, CAT, BIRD, FISH)
    - Screen goes blank
    - Same format: 5 multiple choice questions about which words appeared
- **Scoring:** App tallies correct answers for each round
- **Win Condition:** Compare Round 1 vs Round 2 scores. Most students score better in Round 2.
- **Debrief:** "What happened? Round 2 was easier because your Idea Factory could USE A STRATEGY—grouping similar things together. Scientists discovered that organized thinking helps memory work better!"

Materials: PowerMaster app, student clickers

Part C: PowerMaster Game – "Idea Factory Job Matcher" (10 min)

Game File Name: icg-01.02-game01.html

Game Title: Idea Factory Job Matcher

Game Format: Matching Pairs (Memory Flip Game)

Format Justification:

This format has 0 uses across all units and is ideal for teaching students to recognize and match the six different thinking jobs (remembering, imagining, planning, problem-solving, wondering, deciding) with concrete examples from daily life. The memory flip mechanic requires students to hold multiple thinking jobs in working memory while searching for matches—itself a metacognitive exercise that reinforces the lesson's focus on how the Idea Factory works. Unlike simple identification, this format demands active retrieval and comparison, strengthening students' ability to distinguish between similar-seeming thinking types through repeated exposure and matching practice.

Purpose: Students match thinking job labels (remembering, imagining, planning, problem-solving, wondering, deciding) with everyday scenario examples, strengthening their ability to recognize different types of thinking and understand that the Idea Factory performs multiple distinct jobs.

Lesson Arc Location: Part C of Lesson 2 (approximately minutes 25-35 in the 45-minute lesson)

Pedagogical Rationale: This game is placed after students have been introduced to the five main thinking jobs in Part A and completed the Memory List Test experiment in Part B. At this point, students have learned the vocabulary (remembering, imagining, planning, problem-solving, deciding) but need practice connecting these abstract labels to concrete, relatable situations. The Matching Pairs format provides intensive retrieval practice—students must recall what each thinking job means while searching for matching examples, which deepens their understanding through active mental work. This consolidation prepares them for the final reflection activity where they'll identify thinking jobs in picture scenarios, and builds the foundation for recognizing these thinking types in themselves and others throughout the curriculum.

Reflection (5 min)

Activity: "Thinking Detectives"

- Students pair up. Each pair receives a simple picture card showing a child in a situation (e.g., child looking at two toys, child with puzzle pieces, child at closed door).
- Partners discuss: "What thinking job might this person's Idea Factory be using?"
- 2-3 pairs share their analysis
- Teacher reinforces: "Excellent scientific observation! You can't SEE thinking, but you can make smart guesses by watching what people do."

Materials: Picture scenario cards (hard copy)

Home Prep (5 min)

Preparing for PowerMaster at Home

- Explain: "At home, PowerMaster will give you 'Idea Factory Challenges.' You'll solve puzzles and problems, then the app asks: 'Which thinking job did you just use?'"
- Show sample screen: puzzle → "Did you use PLANNING, PROBLEM-SOLVING, or REMEMBERING?"
- Instructions: "After each challenge, think about what your Idea Factory did. This helps you understand your own thinking!"
- Emphasize: "Scientists observe carefully, then think about what they observed. You're doing both!"

Materials: PowerMaster app demonstration

Connection to Unit Arc

This lesson builds on Lesson 1's introduction of THINKING as one mind part by revealing its internal complexity and varied functions. Students now understand thinking as a toolbox with different tools for different jobs. Lesson 3 will explore FEELING (the Messenger) with the same scientific detail, and Lesson 4 will show how THINKING and FEELING both guide DOING, completing the integrated system.
