Suggestive language for teachers

A little bit of hypnotic language for the classroom in a fun pack of cards

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The principles of suggestion (as defined in NLP)

1. There is a surface structure to language (the actual words) and a deeper structure (their meaning and what is suggested)

   Notice the difference between:

   If *you do this you* **might . . .**

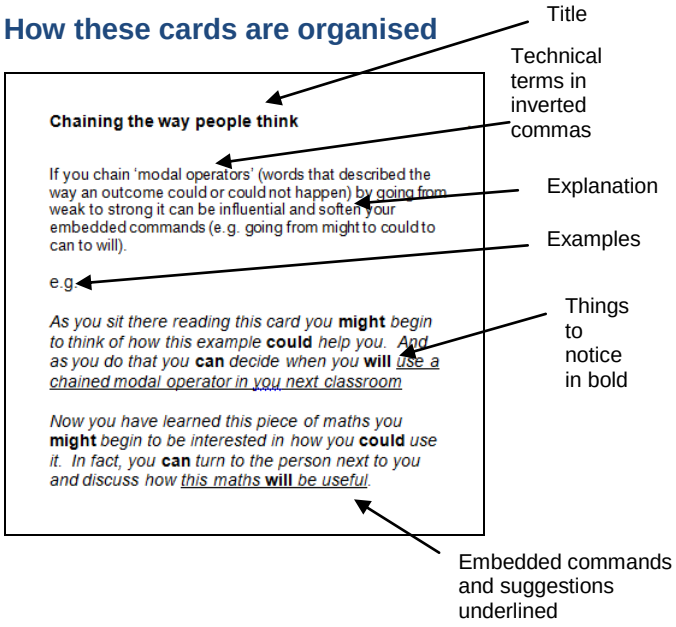
   and

   When *you do this you* **will . . .**

2. Suggestion is the art of putting instructions into the deep structure that reflect what you want

3. It s also about avoiding implying what you do not what. 'Try' for example implies possible failure

How these cards are organised



Things to remember

Many examples on the cards contain multiple examples of suggestions. We have just pointed out the most obvious ones. But as you get more confident in using influential language you will begin to notice even more.

Note that in some schools of hypnosis it is suggested that the order of words is not important for a suggestion to be received by the person's 'unconscious' (or automatic part of their mind). Thus a phrase like *"This is the easiest way,* **isn't it?"** is the same as saying "isn't this the easiest way".

The more you practise the patterns the more you will become fluent at saying them. Then you will find it easy to create your own.

Limiting mindset with a question

Phrase a question to include a suggestion that the person that the question is directed at, will think of what you want- whatever degree they think of (this is a sort of 'Double Bind' (or choice with no choice)

e.g.

***So* how interested** *are you in this option?*

I'm wondering **how quickly** *you will begin to learn this?*

Would it *now be an opportunity to do some measuring?*

Mentioning a desired state

Mentioning the desired state of mind, or emotion (what you want), in your suggestion can help to encourage that state of mind by bringing it to the attention of the person you are talking to.

e.g.

I am **curious** *to know when you will* enjoy number bonds.

Let's have a **play** *with this example of a reverse operation.*

Another **fun** *way to do this calculation is to. . .*

I'm **wondering** *. . . .*

Because

If you connect a suggestion to something that is undeniably true it makes the suggestion more likely to be accepted. This is known as a 'cause and effect' pattern (or a 'complex equivalence' if you suggest that something means something).

e.g.

As you read this *you could* begin to think of your own version of this pattern.

Completing this activity **means** *that you will find the next one easier.*

Now that you know *you can make equivalent fractions and you know percent means 'out of 100',* **you will** *be able to turn simple fractions into percentages.*

Yes tags

Adding a 'yes tag' (isn't it, doesn't it, wouldn't it, can't it?) after a suggestion (particularly at the end of a sentence) makes it more likely to be accepted. This works even better if you nod while you do it, **doesn't it?**

e.g.

Now you can multiply by 10, you can divide by 10, **can't you?**

Your group had the answer 36. This group has the answer 12 cm and Paul's group has £5. Now you could make up as many similar questions as possible, **couldn't you?**

This is the easiest way, **isn't it?**

The more the more

This pattern creates a chain of thinking in which growing improvement is suggested.

e.g.

The more *you use this strategy to solve this equation, the* **more you** *will begin to appreciate how this could be applied in practice.*

The more *examples you do,* **the more** *excited you can become about this.*

But

But implies that the thing before is to be ignored. You can use this to deal with anticipated problems. Or to negate a way of thinking.

e.g.

Some of you might already have felt anxiety about this type of work **but** *once you start it will feel easier and easier.*

There may be some of you here who think that fractions are difficult **but** *using the strategy I am going to teach you it will all be very easy.*

Yes, you found that activity difficult **but** you will *find the next one easier*.

Past, present, future

You can deliberately phrase things in the future or put difficulties in the past to promote motivation and belief in a person's ability to achieve.

e.g.

In the past *this was a problem but now you know how to do it* **the next example** *will be easier.*

Just imagine using that simple strategy to solve problems **in the future.**

Now you have done the hard part everything **from now** *on will be easier.*

Yet

Yet has a lovely suggestion or presupposition built into it as it suggests that something may be possible in the future.

e.g.

That's right, you can't do this **yet.**

Perhaps you just haven't realised that you like maths **yet.**

The way you do it

The way something happens is called a 'modal operator'. Use stronger modal operators like 'will' and 'can' (which suggest achievement) rather than might.

e.g.

As you work through the examples you **will** *learn how to solve the next one.*

That's right you **can** *start work straight away now.*

Rather than using a weak modal operator like might which leaves choice in the listeners mind.

You **might** *like to start work straight away.*

Chaining the way people think

If you chain 'modal operators' (words that describe the way an outcome could or could not happen) by going from weak to strong it can be influential and soften your embedded commands (e.g. going from **might** to **could** to **can** to **will**).

e.g.

As you sit there reading this card you **might** *begin to think of how this example* **could** *help you. And as you do that you* **can** *decide when you* **will** *use a chained modal operator in your classroom.*

Now you have learned this piece of maths you **might** *begin to be interested in how you* **could** *use it. In fact, you* **can** *turn to the person next to you and discuss how this maths* **will** *be useful.*

You cannot not think of something

When you use **not,** or **don't,** the listener always has to bring to mind the object in the sentence. For example, **don't think of a pink elephant**! This works in two ways in the classroom: 1. Remember to say what you want, not what you don't want (to avoid constantly suggesting poor behaviour; 2. Use **not** cleverly as below.

e.g.

I am **not** *going to tell you that* you are going to enjoy this.

I **don't** *know when you will start to find this easy.*

I'm **not** *suggesting you will understand division straight away.*

Using your voice

You will have noticed how we have underlined the embedded commands and suggestions in some of the sentences. You can mark these out with your voice tone ('Analogue Marking') by using a softer more suggestive voice tone when you say the suggestions. Practise with the examples below and find your 'hypnotic voice'.

e.g.

It's halfway through the session. The sun is shining. We have reflected on what we've learned. You can now ***create your own questions****, can't you?*

I'm not going to tell you when to **practise this at home** *because you* **know your schedule** *better than me.*

Command with a question

Taking your embedded command or suggestion and turning it into a question softens the command and helps to make it more acceptable as a suggestion. Read the suggestion below with and without the question and notice the difference.

e.g.

Can you think of a question *to ask?*

Can you work more quietly?

Could you put your pens down, look and me and listen?

That's right

People love praise and reward. Use **that's right** frequently when you see behaviour you like and use your suggestive, gently voice when you do it. Also, when other people hear the praise they will want to copy the action to get a reward too.

e.g.

That's right *label the x and y axes careful.*

Talking quietly in groups, **that's right**

A variation of this is to say - right now - which is ambiguous and says - **do it -** to the people who are not but says - that's rights - to the ones that are.

Starting with the graphs, **that's right now.**

Accessing past positive resources

If someone has limiting beliefs about their ability to do something it can be useful to get them to think of a time when they overcame a problem and reflect on how they overcame it. Or just to remind them of their internal resources and capacity.

e.g.

Could you remember a time when you overcame a similar problem, **what resources did you use***?. . . how could you apply those now?*

Remember a time *when you overcame a challenge, how did that feel? Could you use those feelings now?*

Presupposing success

Stating things in a way that presupposes, or suggests, future success.

e.g.

Sooner or later *you will know how to do this?*

Everyone who learns this eventually **looks back** *and is surprised at why it seemed so difficult.*

Suggesting a mindset of the possible

Use a 'generalisation' to get learners to reflect and realise that there are lots of possibilities.

e.g.

Just imagine **all** *the ways in which you could overcome this.*

Every time *you do an example you will find it easier.*

Someone I said

Attributing something to someone else makes it easier for people to accept. This is known as a 'conversational postulate'.

e.g.

I knew someone who always used to say *that starting a new problem is always the hardest bit* [Suggestion that things will get easier once you start].

Someone once said that *when you know the names of common shapes you can begin to find out more about them.*

Embedded naming

When you use a listener's name they tend to assume that what follows is directed at them and will pay attention. This is useful if someone is not paying attention and you want to point this out indirectly.

e.g.

John, *you know there are 100 years in a century, 100 pennies in a pound, 100% in a whole thing. Now we can build our confidence finding different percentages.*

One day **Erica** *may want to use this maths to check that her pay packet is correct. If so here is how she can do it. . .*

It's possible

'Reframing' things to make them sound possible can help to overcome barriers in thinking.

e.g.

So what would it be like if *you were able to use this?*

If you did *know the answer what would it be?*

Let's pretend

Get learners to pretend things in their mind so that their focus is on what is possible.

e.g.

Just pretend *for a moment that you already know how to use this sort of maths in everyday life.*

Pleasure zone

Mentioning positive states of mind can bring them to the attention of your learners and influence the classroom climate.

e.g.

It's good to know *that if you* read the questions carefully *you* get it right more often.

OK so let's have a **play** *with a few examples.*

A **fun** *way to use this formula is to. . .*

Presupposing pace

You can suggest the pace that you want to see and presuppose that it will happen.

e.g.

Just **how quickly** *can you* pack up the resources*, I wonder?*

How quickly *can you* use percentages in your everyday life*?*

Numbers are influential

Counting down with number begins a process of acceptance. This is a typical feature of a hypnotic induction (5 . . . 4 . . . 3 . . . etc). We can use the same structure in the classroom. In Hypnosis this is known as the use of 'ordinal numbers'.

e.g.

Counting down the steps to success in this lesson we have: **5.** *Look at me now;* **4.** *Listening carefully to the instructions;* ***3.*** *Thinking about how you could work quietly through the examples;* **2.** *Thinking about the work we did last lesson;* **1.** *Being ready to hear my instructions now.*

Choice with no choice

When the learner is offered two or more choices, both of which would be acceptable. Known as a 'double bind' (or 'use of or').

e.g.

Would you like to do the maths assessment **or** *the maths examples now?*

Regarding the 2 maths worksheets, **which one** *do you want to do at home?*

Would you like to use the traditional method **or** *would you like to use the grid method?*

Yes, yes, yes

'Yes sets' state a series of facts before an embedded command or suggestion. You can also end them with a 'yes tag' (e.g. isn't it?). When you state an absolute fact people naturally start to agree.

e.g.

You have *learned about scale conversion,* **you have** *applied this to a scale drawing;* **you have** *measured a door frame.* Now is a good time to practise for yourself, **isn't it***?*

We learned *about scale conversion,* **we applied** *this to a scale drawing,* **we measured** *a door frame. Now would be a good time to* practise for yourself, **wouldn't it***?*

Generalising

Generalisations are influential because they are more meaningless than specifics and therefore are more acceptable as there is less to disagree with. Connecting your suggestion to a generalisation is therefore a cleverer way to influence.

e.g.

Over the last few weeks, we've learned about fractions, decimals and percentages. Now we are ready to put them **all** *together, aren't we?*

You will **always** *use decimals in everyday life and it will make checking your wages easier.*

Pacing current experience

Make reference to what someone is doing, thinking or experiencing before you make the suggestion. So you 'pace' their experience.

e.g.

As you sit there reading this card *you can begin to think of how to use this pattern.*

Sitting there listening to me *you are probably beginning to wonder. . . .*

Pacing and leading

One principle that underpins a lot of suggestion is the idea of 'pacing and leading'. It is usually better to begin from a person's experience by stating facts or by building from gentle to strong suggestions. Pace-Pace-Lead works better than Pace-Lead.

e.g.

It's halfway through the session. The sun is shining. We have reflected on what we've learned. You can now create your own questions, **can't you?**

You **might** *like to remember there are100 years in a century and 100 pennies in a pound. . . 100% in a whole thing. Now we* **will** build your confidence finding different percentages.

Ambiguous phases

You can make suggestions using ambiguity. Notice the double meaning and suggestion in the following.

e.g.

That's **right***. . . it's good to* **write***,* **right [write]** *now.*

Many can

Presuppose that it can be done and use a generalisation to soften the command.

e.g.

Many people have *overcome the challenges of this before.*

Every *person who has used this strategy has found that it is the best way to do it.*

Metaphor

Creating a short metaphor with a suggestion built in that makes the point you want can be very influential.

e.g.

Now that you can measure set amounts you will be able to follow the **recipe** *that is this formula.*

Learning is just like the weather *once it is over you will hardly remember the challenges.*

Mind reading

Mind reading involves pretending that you know what some of your audience are thinking before you make a suggestion.

e.g.

After this introductory demonstration, **I'm sure you can begin to think of ways** *we can all use this in everyday life.*

Many of you will be thinking *of ways in which you could use PowerPoint or OHP to present your mathematical findings.*

Stop!

Stop is a clear and unambiguous word that can be very useful to get attention and break a pattern of behaviour.

e.g.

Let's **stop**! f*or a minute, think about what you've done and how it feels to be successful.*

Stop! *What will you do now instead to change what you are doing?*

Stop! *What will you now do differently?*