

# The Mascot's Trip



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An idea from:

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**Age:** 3-5 years

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**Keywords:** #emotions #language #photography #selfie #mediaeducation

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**Key question:** *How can we convey a message using a photograph?*

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**General objectives:**

- Use a transitional object (mascot) to encourage speech and language within the group and to develop an emotional link between the classroom and the home
  - Become aware of one's emotions and express them
  - Analyse images
  - Understand that the content of a photograph is the result of a specific intention of the photographer
  - Taking self-portraits
  - Develop the children's creative autonomy through the use of a camera
  - Learn how to convey a message through photos
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**Time:** 7 activities at school for a total of around 5 hours, as well as 4 activities with the family. The project can spread over several weeks, depending on the number of children involved.

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## Materials

At school	At home
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Smartphone or tablet, or digital camera</li><li>● Class mascot</li><li>● Projection system</li><li>● Creative material to make a poster, a calendar and an album</li><li>● Children's albums, books, portraits to introduce the topic of emotions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Camera, or tablet or smartphone equipped to take photos</li><li>● Internet connection and connected device to share activities done at home with the educator.</li></ul>

## Short Presentation

Building on the journey of a class mascot between school and home, this workshop explores an educational approach to photography. Specifically, it consists in preparing and documenting through photos the adventures of the mascot traveling from family to family. Through this approach, the children handle the photo media both in terms of production (shooting) and of reception (analysis, impact of the point of view, etc.) to sharpen their perspective.

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## Step by step

<b>Preparatory work</b>	<p><i>Before the first session, the educator chooses a mascot and photographs it from every angle, in various environments and settings. Some of the photos are precise, others less so (blurry, wrong framing, etc.)</i></p>
<b>Step 1</b> --- At school	<p><b>Meeting the mascot</b></p> <p>The educator introduces the mascot to the class, possibly by telling a story. The group discovers the mascot and names it.</p> <p>The educator projects the different photos of the mascot. The children are encouraged to comment on the photos and to choose those they feel are the best based on the following guiding questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- <i>What do you see?</i></li><li>- <i>Can you see the whole mascot? Or only a detail?</i></li><li>- <i>Where is the mascot?</i></li><li>- <i>What is it doing?</i></li></ul> <p>The children are encouraged to comment to understand that a photograph is a medium that conveys a message, specifically because of the range of possible shots. A lot of space can be left to the expression of their feelings (I like it because, I don't like it because). For example, "you can clearly see the whole mascot on this picture", "I like that photo because it was taken in the school garden", "this one is bright, whereas the other one is darker and scary", etc.</p>



Figure 3: Meeting the mascot, Belgrade municipal school, Belgium.

### For distance learning

The educator introduces the mascot to the children at a distance, by means of a short film or presentation photos. Instead of a single mascot, the educator proposes a mascot that each child can make him/herself: a drawing to be printed, coloured and cut out of a character that will become the class mascot.

Steps 2 and 3 can then be proposed but adapted from these multiple mascots, made by the children.

### Step 2

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At  
school

### Communication with the parents

The class prepares a note (free choice of format and method) for the parents explaining who the class mascot is, with its photo and what it has been invited to do (visit a different family every weekend, organisation, etc.)

### Step 3

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At  
home

### Introducing the mascot to the families

The children introduce the mascot to their family with the help of the note. Then, they are invited to talk about what the mascot might experience when it comes to stay with them.

- *Where would it sleep?*
- *Will it share our meals?*

- *Will it come walking with us?*

#### Step 4

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At  
school

#### Handling the tablet and the camera feature

The educator shows the children how to hold a tablet optimally, starting by how to switch it on and off and how to handle it with care.

- *Where do you press to turn this tablet on?*
- *You must leave this button pressed down for a little while. Up to how much do you need to count?*
- *What button must you press on to switch it off?*
- *To use the tablet once it's switched on, there are several useful gestures: sweeping, lightly touching, brushing, etc.*

Then, the educator explores the camera feature with the children:

- *How should the tablet be positioned? How should it be held?*
- *Where do you press to take a picture?*
- *How do you zoom in or zoom out?*
- *How do you see the picture taken?*

The children handle the tablet on their own.

The educator suggests taking pictures of specific objects in the immediate classroom environment:

- *How do you take a picture to properly represent what you want to show?*
- *Where should you stand to frame the picture?*
- *How do you take a wide shot?*
- *How do you photograph a detail? By zooming in or coming closer?*
- *Is it interesting to photograph the object from above or below? (Framing, wide shot/details, high-angle/low-angle shot, etc.)*

Pupils understand that the content of a photo is not random but that it is the result of a specific intention (choice of the angle of view, framing, etc.). At this point, pupils are not expected to use the proper terminology (framing, wide shot, close-up) but to be able to talk about them in their own words.

#### For distance learning

The educator invites the families to handle a tablet or a smartphone and to practise taking pictures using the key questions proposed in step 4.

#### Step 4

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At  
school

#### Preparing a bag for the mascot and photographing it

The class discovers the mascot's suitcase (or bag) and contents (accessories such as a hat, sun hat, t-shirt, toothbrush, pyjamas, jacket, sunshades, etc.).

The educator asks the children to name each object

The educator forms small groups and gives each group an accessory

from the mascot's bag. The children photograph each accessory with a tablet and with the educator's help using the guiding questions:

- *Where should the objects be placed to take the photo? In the light?*
- *What setting do we want for our photo? What background?*
- *At what distance should we take the photo?*
- *Should we come closer? Move further away ?*



Figure 4: Photograph of the mascot, Belgrade communal school, Belgium.

## Step 5

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At  
school

### Visual inventory of the suitcase contents

The educator projects the photos of the accessories taken by the pupils:

- *What do you see?*
- *Is there enough light?*
- *Is the object easily recognisable?*
- *Is it too close or too far?*
- *Is it clear or blurry?*
- *Is it centred?*

The group discusses and selects the most evocative photos.

Progressively, the pupils are made to understand that the content of a photo is arbitrary (i.e. "We'll remove this photo because there are papers littering the floor and it doesn't look nice" or "We're going to frame this photo differently to avoid showing the dirty wall behind").

The educator prints the chosen photos.

Together, the group prepares a document to represent the contents of the suitcase which will be used as a reminder before each of the mascot's trip, because she is going to stay with the families and must have all her accessories...



Figure 5: Selecting the photos, Belgrade municipal school, Belgium.

## Step 6

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At  
home

### Preparing for the mascot's visit and family portrait

Thanks to the note, the parents have been informed that the mascot will be coming to stay with the family.

The children are invited to draw the members of their family that the mascot will meet, pets included.

## Step 7

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At  
school

### Creating a calendar with selfies of the children

The educator explains that the class will prepare a calendar with the dates that the mascot will be visiting the different families. Thus, the class finds out about the mascot's visiting schedule. To illustrate this calendar, the dates are associated to the child's first name and selfie. The educator suggests that each child takes a selfie to be used as a portrait.



Using the tablet, the educator shows the children how to take a selfie.

- *Where should you press to activate the camera mode?*
- *How should the tablet be positioned?*
- *At what distance from the face?*
- *Should you smile? Are we allowed to make a face?*

Each child practises taking selfies with the tablet.

The educator prints the selfies and the group arranges them in the calendar.



*Figure 6: Taking selfies, Belgrade municipal school, Belgium.*

### **For distance learning**

The educator explains to the families that a calendar will be made to plan when each child should report on the adventures of their mascot at home. In order to make this calendar, each child is invited to practise, with the help of his/her parents, taking a self-portrait: the children are invited to use a smartphone or a tablet using the key questions in step 7.

	<p>Then, the parents are invited to accompany their children to take selfies representing several emotions: a happy selfie, a sad selfie, a frightened selfie, an angry selfie, etc. (see step 9).</p> <p>The parents send several photos to the educator: 3 successful photos and 3 unsuccessful photos.</p>
<p><b>Step 8</b> --- At school</p>	<p><b>Introducing emotions</b></p> <p>Using books, stories and characters with whom the class is familiar, the educator encourages the group to discuss the emotions experienced by the characters: happiness, sadness, disgust, fear, anger, love.</p> <p>Then, the educator projects several portraits of unknown characters for the group (photos or illustrations). The children are invited to identify the character's emotions just by observing the likeness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>What is the character feeling?</i></li> <li>- <i>What emotion are they feeling?</i></li> <li>- <i>How can you tell by just observing their likeness? (tears, smile, frown, etc.)</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 9</b> --- At home</p>	<p><b>Selfie and emotions</b></p> <p>The educator sends a note to the parents explaining that their children have learnt how to handle a tablet and take selfies and that they also worked on different emotions.</p> <p>The parents are invited to help their children take selfies representing several emotions: a happy selfie, a sad selfie, a scared selfie, an angry selfie, etc.</p> <p>The parents send several photos to the educator: 3 good photos as well as 3 bad ones.</p>
<p><b>Step 10</b> --- At school</p>	<p><b>Examining the selfies</b></p> <p>Back at school, the educator projects the photos received.</p> <p>Provide an alternative if the children were unable to carry out the activity at home: suggest they take their selfie at school.</p> <p>The group examines the photos together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Who do we see?</i></li> </ul>

- *Is she or he easily recognisable?*
- *Too blurry? Is it too dark?*
- *What emotion is portrayed? How can we tell?*

The educator asks the children to sort the photos: the good ones, according to them, in a green circle (or green poster) and the bad ones in a red circle (or red poster).

Depending on the quality of the photos received, another possibility would be to sort them by emotion identified.



*Figure 7: Selecting photos, Belgrade municipal school, Belgium.*

### Step 11

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At  
school

#### **Last-minute check before the mascot leaves and presentation of the album**

The mascot is finally ready to travel! When it's time for the mascot to leave, the educator and the group check the portrait-calendar of the mascot's trip just before and the full list of the suitcase's contents.

The educator shows the group the mascot's album: a notebook in which every family is invited to tell the story of the mascot's stay with them, using short sentences dictated by the children to the parents, drawings but most of all, photos taken by the children themselves.

It is also an encouragement to identify the emotions experienced by the family and the mascot during its stay.

## Step 12

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At  
home

### The mascot goes on a trip

A child takes the mascot home for a specific period of time, as well as the suitcase with the mascot's accessories and the album narrating the story of its journey.

The educator encourages the parents to let the children take pictures of the mascot on their own, using a smartphone or a tablet.

Note: Not all parents have the possibility of printing out a colour photo. The educator suggests sending the image digitally to print it at school before documenting the album in class.



Figure 8: The mascot's album, Belgrade municipal school, Belgium

### For distance learning

In spite of the distance learning, the educator can invite the children, one by one or simultaneously, to integrate their mascot into the family activities for a weekend and to relate the adventures of the mascot through photos: meal times, the place where the mascot will spend the night, the bath, an outing, etc.

	<p>Parents are encouraged to let the children take pictures of the mascot themselves using a smartphone or tablet.</p> <p>The photos are sent to the educator and can be compiled in a digital album to share with the whole class.</p>
<p><b>Step 13</b> --- At school</p>	<p><b>The mascot returns</b></p> <p>The child tells the other children about the mascot's experience at home (with the help of what is recounted in the album).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>What was your favourite moment with the mascot?</i></li> <li>- <i>What did the mascot experience with your family?</i></li> <li>- <i>Was there a happy moment?</i></li> <li>- <i>Was there a sad moment?</i></li> <li>- <i>Was there a funny moment?</i></li> </ul> <p>The educator encourages the sharing of experiences and emotions.</p>
<p><b>To be continued</b> --- At school</p>	<p><b>Continuity</b></p> <p>The mascot may be used on different occasions throughout the year. For example, as a reminder of the rules of life, to play down a situation (visit to the doctor), during special moments in the life of the class (birthdays, outings, visit of...).</p> <p>For each event, the children are invited to take the pictures themselves to complete the album.</p>

## Conclusion

At the end of the school year, the educator and her/his class look through the album to retrace the mascot's trips to the families and emotions. The album is made available for viewing in the classroom or during the school fete.

A similar "photo storytelling" process may be suggested to the children regarding their holiday projects.

Presence	Virtual
<p>Creation of the mascot's album either on paper or in digital form.</p>	<p>Creation of the album in digital form, using Book Creator for example.</p>