

LESSON 8

Introduction to Scratch Jr.

30 minutes

My First Steps in Digital Storytelling

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

Get started with Scratch Jr., a programming language for young children. Follow steps to open the app, explore its interface, create characters and backgrounds, move them using motion blocks, and add actions to build interactive stories or games.

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Understand the purpose and basic functionality of Scratch Jr as a programming tool for children.
- Navigate the Scratch Jr app interface with confidence.
- Create and customise characters and backgrounds for interactive stories or games.
- Apply basic motion blocks to animate characters within a project.
- Experiment with action blocks to enhance character interactions and storytelling.

BEFORE THE LESSON

- Confirm the Scratch Jr app is installed and opens on every tablet, and that pupils have a device each or shared in pairs.
- Open Scratch Jr yourself and start a blank project so you can point to the plus button, the Scenery button and the three screen areas as you talk.
- Charge the tablets. This is a drag-and-drop lesson and a flat device stops a pupil dead.

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HOW THE LESSON RUNS

Getting to Know Scratch Jr.
Starting with the App
Understanding the Interface
Creating Characters and Backgrounds
Moving Characters
Adding Actions
Wrap-Up and Q&A

TEACHING MOVES

- 1. Getting to Know Scratch Jr. Say plainly that Scratch Jr lets them tell the character what to do by joining blocks together. Hold off opening tablets until you have their eyes.
- 2. Starting with the App. Walk them to the plus button together, one instruction at a time, and wait until every screen shows a new blank project before moving on.
- 3. Understanding the Interface. Point to stage, blocks toolbox and code area on your own screen and have pupils tap each one on theirs. Name them so you can reuse the words later.
- 4. Creating Characters and Backgrounds. Let them pick a character and a background freely, then bring focus back. Choosing can absorb the whole lesson if you do not set a time to stop.
- 5. Moving Characters. Model dragging one motion block and snapping it to the start block, then have them copy it. Tapping the green flag runs it: show that it moves, not just sits there.
- 6. Adding Actions. Show a say block attached after the motion block so the character moves then speaks. Give a few minutes to experiment and circulate for the ones who cannot get blocks to snap.
- 7. Wrap-Up and Q&A. Ask one or two pupils to show what their character does and name the blocks they used out loud. Take questions before they close the app.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Pupils drop a motion block into the code area but it does not connect to the start block, so nothing happens when they run it. Show that blocks must click together edge to edge. Have them drag the block right up against the start block until it locks, then tap the green flag.
- Pupils think the character moves just by dragging it around the stage with a finger, and do not see why blocks are needed. Move the character by finger, then run a motion block. Point out the block makes it move on its own when the program runs, which is the whole idea.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Emerging: Sit beside pupils stuck at the start and do the first plus-button tap and one block with them, then step back and let them repeat it.
- Developing: Prompt them to add a second motion block themselves and predict what will happen before they tap run.
- Proficient: Challenge them to chain three or four blocks so the character moves, speaks and moves again, then explain the order back to you.