

Movement-Based Brain Break Guide

What? Movement-based brain breaks are quick physical activities for the classroom that are short in duration (1-5 minutes), take very little time to prepare, and no extra materials. These breaks challenge the brain and encourage light to moderate physical activity and crossing of the midline, which helps to engage the brain and enhance the learning process.

CALM- Blue

1.No Stress for My Best

Activity: Before a class, test, or quiz have a 5 minute walking break or stretching break to help students relax.

Retrieved from: <http://school.fueluptoplay60.com/tools/view.php?id=15749467>

2. Pinkie Thumbs

Activity: Stand up, hands out in front of you. On one hand point your pinkie finger, other hand have your thumb up, as fast as you can switch back and forth.

3. Butterfly Breath

Activity: Have students stand tall with feet hip width apart and arms out to the sides. Have students exhale and lift their right knee to their left elbow, then inhale and switch. Repeat a few times.

Retrieved from: <http://www.coloradoinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CEI-Take-a-Break-Teacher-Toolbox.pdf>

4. Yoga Poses

Activity: Have students do a few simple yoga poses with controlled breathing.

-Tree Pose: Students stand and put their right foot to their left knee breathing and balancing

-Warrior Pose 2: students take a deep lunge putting their arms parallel to their legs

Retrieved from: <http://www.coloradoinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CEI-Take-a-Break-Teacher-Toolbox.pdf>

5. Hookup

Activity: Have students stand up and extend their arms in front of them, left wrist over the right and both thumbs down with palms together. Students then interlace their fingers and draw hands into the chest with their elbows down. Have students cross their left ankle over their right ankle and breathe evenly for 1-2 minutes. Next, students unhook and sit back down.

Retrieved from: Brain Breaks Work by Okeze

6. Pressure Point Massage

Activity: Have students stand up straight and gently massage the pressure point on the temple of your head between your thumb and pointer finger for one minute.

Retrieved from:

<https://www.pgsd.org/cms/lib07/PA01916597/Centricity/Domain/43/Brain%20Breaks.pdf>

7. Look both ways and Handcuff

Activity: Turn your head to the left as far as possible and hold, then to the right and hold. Bring heads back to center. Students will then place both arms behind their back while standing and interlock their fingers with palms facing each other. Extend elbows and slowly raise arms, holding the stretch for 30 seconds.

Retrieved from: www.focusedfitness.org

8. Down Facing Desk

Activity: Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and knees slightly bent at an arm's length away from a desk. Bend forward, keeping your back straight and place palms on top of your desk. Lean into the stretch, allowing your head to hang forward. Hold the stretch for 30-60 seconds. Extension: Have students bend and straighten their legs for some squats.

Retrieved from: www.focusedfitness.org

9. Seated Torso Stretch

Activity: Sit with your back against your chair and inhale. Exhale and twist your upper body to the right and grab the chair with the both hands, holding the stretch for 10 seconds. Repeat to the left side.

10. Rainstorm

Activity: Have a rainstorm in your classroom. Have students follow your lead; begin by having students very lightly rubbing their hands together, then lightly snap, slap their thighs, slap their thighs and stomp their feet (the rainstorm is at its peak!). Then stop stomping their feet, just slap their thighs, return to lightly snapping, rubbing their hands and stop. Do each action for 20 seconds.

Retrieved from: <http://school.fueluptoplay60.com/tools/view.php?id=15749467>

11. Do Nothing

Activity: Go to the website www.donothingfor2minutes.com for a timer. Have students do some personal stretching and breathe in and out while listening to the calming wave sounds from the website.

Retrieved from: <http://www.coloradoedinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CEI-Take-a-Break-Teacher-Toolbox.pdf>

12. Squiggle Story

Activity: On a blank sheet of paper, whiteboard, or Promethean Board, draw one squiggly line. Give students one minute to stand and draw with their opposite hand, turning the line into a picture or design of their choice. You can have students share their ideas.

Retrieved from: <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/brain-breaks-focused-attention-practices-lori-desautels>

13. Hands Switch

Activity: Have students stand up and start by waving their right hand in front of them left to right. Your palm should be facing away from you while keeping your hand with your fingers pointing up. Next, stop that hand and have your left hand in front of you waving it up and down. Now practice moving them at the SAME TIME. Do not move your hands going diagonally. Now switch to have your right hand up and down and your left hand left and right. Do this faster and switch often to make it more difficult. Lastly, to increase the difficulty, have your arms crossed while doing this.

Retrieved from: <http://brainbreaks.blogspot.com/>

REFOCUS-Purple

14. Write Your Name

Activity: Using your index finger as an imaginary pencil, write your name in huge cursive in the air. Now repeat using different body parts as your pencil – elbow, knee, etc.

15. Sparklers

Activity: Extend your right arm out at chest level with your thumb. Move your arm in a sideways figure eight. Keeping your head still, use your eyes to follow your thumb. Repeat the previous steps with the left arm.

16. Ear and Nose Switch

Activity: Stand up, take your right hand and grab your left ear, then take your left hand and touch your nose. Uncross arms and move your left hand to your right ear and right hand to your nose. Keep switching as fast as you can.

17. Prior Knowledge Walk and Talk

Activity: Partner students up. Ask students to take a walk around the room. Give the students a topic that leads into the topic of discussion for the day.

Retrieved from <http://www.activeacademics.org/LessonIdea.asp?ID=60>

18. Foot Tracing

Activity: While standing or sitting, use your left foot to draw a sideways figure eight on the floor or in the air. Repeat the movement with your right foot (other words/pictures can be drawn).

Retrieved from: Cowan, K., Malm, R.T., Marshall, A., & Whitfield-Babcock, J. (2013). FAB 5 Fast Fitness.

19. Textbook/Notebook Aerobics

Activity: Have the students take out their textbooks or notebooks and use them to do the following exercises:

- Bicep curls: Hold the book in one hand and bend at the elbow to raise the book toward the shoulder.
- Triceps push backs: Hold the book in one hand and lean forward over the desk with the other hand holding the desk. Hold the arm with the book parallel to the body, bend the elbow to 90° and raise and lower the book extending backward up to shoulder level.
- Overhead lifts: Hold the book in one or two hands and lift it above the head in one smooth motion.
- Twists: Hold the book to the chest with both hands and twist slowly from side to side.

Retrieved from: TAHPERD Physical Activity Taskforce 2007

<http://www.tahperd.org/web/Online/>

20. Mirror Drill

Activity: Partners face one another. Hold palms up in front of chest, facing partner. The leader will move one hand at a time and the follower will mirror the movement. Switch hands every minute.

Retrieved from: <http://www.coloradoedinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CEI-Take-a-Break-Teacher-Toolbox.pdf>

21. Arm Circles

Activity: Have students stand up and stick their arms out to the side circling arms forward and then switch to backward.

22. Shake It

Activity: Students remain seated and raise their hands in the air. Get out any jitters and have them start by shaking their:

- Right hand 10 times
- Left hand 10 times
- Left foot 10 times
- Right foot 10 times

Repeat counting down the number of shakes from 9-1. Speed up or slow down the counting to keep it interesting.

Retrieved from: <http://www.coloradoedinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CEI-Take-a-Break-Teacher-Toolbox.pdf>

23. Monkey Moves

Activity: Students will start at the top of their ear and gently unroll the outer edge of the ear moving to the bottom of your earlobe for a count of eight. Simultaneously alternating feet with a front heel touch. Start back at the top of the ear and repeat.

Retrieved from: www.focusedfitness.org

24. Clap and Tap

Activity: Have students stand feet shoulder width apart and cross their right foot over the left and tap their toe on the ground. Simultaneously, students will cross their right arm over their body and clap their left hand. Repeat on opposite side.

Retrieved from: www.focusedfitness.org

25. Stretch It Out

Activity: Have students stand with both arms extended out in front. Slowly, alternate using arms to push open an imaginary door. Clasp hands together and extend arms out, bending the elbows slightly, and stretch neck by lowering your head (as if trying to touch nose to chest).

Retrieved from: <http://school.fueluptoplay60.com/tools/view.php?id=15749467>

26. Crazy 8's

Activity: Have students draw figure 8's using their right finger, arm, and foot. Repeat with the left finger, arm, and foot.

27. Estimation Destination

Activity: Have students guess how many steps it will take to reach an assigned destination. Have students write down their estimation prior to walking and their actual steps taken after returning. As a class, everybody walks together, silently counting their own steps.

Retrieved from: https://sph.uth.edu/research/centers/dell/resources/APAL_Brain%20Breaks.pdf

28. Take a Tour

Activity: Lead students on an imaginary tour of a different country or state in a charades-like game. As the teacher says the activity, the students should act out the motion. For example, take a tour of Colorado: fly to Colorado Springs (students will put their arms out like an airplane and fly), hike through San Isabel Forest (students will mimic a mountain climber motion), swim the Arkansas River (students will make swimming motions with their arms), etc. Create other simulations that point out various landmarks within any state. State all the landmarks and have students guess the location based on the landmarks.

Retrieved from: https://sph.uth.edu/research/centers/dell/resources/APAL_Brain%20Breaks.pdf

29. Chair Roller Coaster

Activity: Direct students to sit down and balance on their seats without the use of their hands or feet (engaging core muscles). The teacher will lead giving instructions for students to simulate being on a roller coaster while students follow along in balanced position:

- Harness on – Pull imaginary harness over shoulders
- Climbing – Hold on to imaginary harness and lean back
- Turns – Mix in a variety of “turns” by leaning arms to one side, then the other, start slow and get faster
- Drop – Both hands up and scream, shake arms
- Repeat – Turns, Climbs, Drops
- Finish – Lift harness off of shoulders.

- Exit – Everyone stands up, grabs their belly, and acts like they are sick

Retrieved from: <http://www.coloradoedinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CEI-Take-a-Break-Teacher-Toolbox.pdf>

30. Invisible Pictures

Activity: Have students stand up and partner up then draw a picture in the air while their partner guesses what it is. You could give them categories such as foods, places, or other ways to narrow the guessing.

Retrieved from: <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/brain-breaks-focused-attention-practices-lori-desautels>

31. Body Number Spots

Activity: Have students stand and partner up. Each body part will have spot values: right shoulder = 1, right hand = 2, top of head = 3, left hand = 4 and left shoulder is 5. Without talking, one person will touch two of their own number spots and the other person will have to say the numbers out loud and then add them together. Once one person has done a few problems, the other person can give some problems.

Retrieved from: <http://brainbreaks.blogspot.com/>

32. Pattern Clap

Activity: The teacher will clap his/her hands in different slow and quick patterns and have students copy.

Retrieved from: <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/blog-posts/tiffani-mugurussa/brain-breaks-energizing-time-out/>

REENERGIZE-Red

33. The Classroom Workout Circuit

Activity: Have students do the following in place for 1 minute each (feel free to mix up the order) Jog in place, high knees, jumping jacks, hop on one foot, hop on the other foot, and/or jump on both feet.

Fuel Up to Play 60. Retrieved from <http://school.fueluptoplay60.com/tools/view.php?id=15749467>

34. 4 Corners Review

Activity: Use multiple-choice options for each corner of the room. Assign each letter an answer and once the question is asked, students will go to the corner they believe is the correct answer.

35. Snowball

Activity: All students write down a question/problem on a piece of paper. They crumple up the paper and on the signal "GO" students engage in a 10-30 second snowball fight. On the "STOP" signal student find ONE snowball, open it, and solve the problem/answer the question. Names can be put on the problem/question so that answers may be checked.

Retrieved from: East Carolina University website: http://www.ecu.edu/cs-°©-hhp/exss/upload/Energizers_for_Grades_K_2.pdf

36. Shuffle & Shake

Activity: Students partner up and on the GO or movement cue they cross the midline slapping hands four times, bump their partner's shoulder and move to the next partner until the cue is given to stop.

37. Six Spots

Activity: Number six spots around your room from 1-6. Have students each go to a spot of their choice. Roll a di and have all the students at the number rolled go back to their seats. Students that are left should go to a new spot and the di is rolled again. Continue until only a few students are left.

Retrieved from: Brain Breaks Work by Okeze

38. Simon Says

Activity: 1 player takes the role of "Simon" and issues instructions (usually physical actions such as "jump in the air" or "touch your shoulders") to the other players, which should only be followed if prefaced with the phrase "Simon says". If a student does an action that was not prefaced with "Simon says," they are out and should sit down.

39. Would You Rather?

Activity: Ask a would you rather question and have students show their choice by moving to one end of the room or the other. Have a few students share why. (i.e. Would you rather teach K-3 or 4-6?)

40. Sports Galore

Activity: Teacher calls out the following sports skills to mimic for 10-15 seconds:

- Shooting a jump shot
- Running through tires
- Batting a baseball
- Serving a tennis ball
- Downhill skiing
- Spiking a volleyball
- Swinging a golf club
- Throwing a football • Juggling a soccer ball • Shooting an arrow • Shooting a hockey puck • Swimming underwater • Fielding a ground ball and throwing it to first base • Dunking a basketball

Mahar, M. T., Kenny, R. K., Shields, A. T., Scales, D. P., & Collins, G. (n.d.). Energizers: Class-

room based physical activities K-2. Retrieved from East Carolina University website:
http://www.ecu.edu/cshhp/exss/upload/Energizers_for_Grades_K_2.pdf

41. Chair Aerobics

Activity: Have students pull their chairs out from their desk. Students should sit up straight, keeping their ankles together to do leg lifts by extending their legs to a 180-degree angle for 20 repetitions. Then have students stand behind the chair and while holding the back for balance, extend their right leg out to the side to a 45-degree angle for 20 repetitions. Then repeat with the left leg.

Mahar, M. T., Kenny, R. K., Shields, A. T., Scales, D. P., & Collins, G. (n.d.). Energizers: Classroom based physical activities K-2. Retrieved from: East Carolina University website:
http://www.ecu.edu/cs-hhp/exss/upload/Energizers_for_Grades_K_2.pdf

42. Calf Raises

Activity: Have students stand with their feet shoulder width apart and keeping their legs straight, lift their heels and rise up onto their toes. Lower heels to the ground. Repeat this movement 12-15 times or for 1 minute.

Retrieved from: www.focusedfitness.org

43. Zero In

Activity: One student is selected to stand in front of the room while facing the class. The class is given direction that they are going to help the student (a.k.a the guesser) guess a secret number without talking or using hand gestures. A secret number is held up behind the student. The guesser will call out a number. If the guesser needs to guess higher, the class will cue him/her by jumping up and down. If the guesser needs to guess lower, the class will cue him/her by squatting up and down. The class continues to give active, silent, cues until the guesser guesses the secret number.

Retrieved from: https://sph.uth.edu/research/centers/dell/resources/APAL_Brain%20Breaks.pdf

44. Stop and Scribble

Activity: Students stand at a desk. The teacher calls out physical activity:

- o Jumping
- o Twisting
- o Jogging
- o Jumping Jacks
- o Hopping
- o Knee Lifts
- o Playing air guitar
- o Marching
- *etc.

Students begin activity and continue until the teacher calls out a spelling word. Students freeze write the action word on a piece of paper. After 10-15 seconds, the teacher calls out new activity. Continue until the 1-3 minute mark is reached.

Retrieved from: https://sph.uth.edu/research/centers/dell/resources/APAL_Brain%20Breaks.pdf

45. Chair Action

Activity: Have the students pull their chairs away from their desks for personal space and sit on the edge of their chairs while keeping their back straight. The teacher will call out the following actions for students to mimic:

- Hiking: Students swing their arms and reach left and right while tapping their toes and lifting their knees.
- Swimming: Students move their arms as if doing the front or back crawl and kick their legs in a flutter kick.
- Cycling: Students hold on to the seat of their chairs and pedal their legs as if riding a bike.
- Paddling: Students use an imaginary paddle to paddle a canoe (both sides).

Retrieved from: <http://www.coloradoinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CEI-Take-a-Break-Teacher-Toolbox.pdf>

TRANSITIONS-Orange

46. 5-4-3-2-1

Activity: Students stand up and the teacher will have them do five different movements in descending order. (For example the teacher would say: 5 jumping jacks, spin around 4 times, hop on one foot 3 times, walk around the classroom 2 times, and give your neighbor 1 high-five.)

Brain Breaks Work by Okeze

47. Find it Fast

Activity: Call out a color or other trait (something round or something made of wood or find a group of 3 students) and students must find an object in the room that fits the trait and get to it quickly. Then name another trait until students are refocused.

Brain Breaks Work by Okeze

48. Pencil Jumps

Activity: For a quick movement break in between lessons, have each student place a pencil on the floor. Jump over the pencil a designated number of times.

Retrieved from: <http://www.coloradoinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CEI-Take-a-Break-Teacher-Toolbox.pdf>

49. Walk and Talk

Activity: Break students into groups of 2 or 3, and assign a topic related to a current lesson plan that students need to discuss while taking a short walk around the building. They should report back to class and share their discussion.

Retrieved from East Carolina University website:

http://www.ecu.edu/cshhp/exss/upload/Energizers_for_Grades_K_2.pdf

50. Get in Order

Activity: Students have to line up in order with or without talking in order of - “birthdays”, “alphabetical by name”, “height” etc.

Retrieved from: Teacher Pay Teacher 2012 Being Inspired

51. Circles

Activity: Call out numbers and students have to form circles with that many people in them. (great for creating small groups)

Retrieved from: Teacher Pay Teacher 2012 Being Inspired

52. As If...

Activity: Teacher reads sentences to class. Have students act out each sentence for 30 seconds.

- o Jog in place AS IF a big scary bear is chasing you.
- o Walk forwards AS IF you're walking through chocolate pudding.
- o Jump in place AS IF you are popcorn popping.
- o Reach up AS IF you are grabbing balloons out of the air.
- o March in place AS IF you are in a marching band.
- o Shake your body AS IF you are a wet dog.
- *Sit down AS IF you are ready to work.

53. Task Master

Activity: Have students stand up and push in their chairs. The teacher explains that he/she is going to give them a series of tasks and the goal is to complete them as quickly as possible. Direct students that once they have completed the task, they should stop where they are and raise their hand. For the first task have students touch 10 chairs not in a row. For the next task have students touch elbows with 8 classmates. For the last task, have students sit back at their desk or get into a small group with the classmates closest to them.

Retrieved from: https://sph.uth.edu/research/centers/dell/resources/APAL_Brain%20Breaks.pdf

54. Friend Connect

Activity: Take 2 minutes to connect with a friend in class. Talk about your weekend or your day, or even how you are doing. Then they will partner up with them for the next activity or continue back to instruction.

Retrieved from: <http://www.coloradoedinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CEI-Take-a-Break-Teacher-Toolbox.pdf>

55. Touchdown Dance

Activity: Have students get into groups of 3 or 4 and create and perform a touchdown dance. Now, this is their team for an activity.

Retrieved from: <http://www.coloradoedinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CEI-Take-a->

[Break-Teacher-Toolbox.pdf](#)

56. Crowd Favorite

Activity: Play a common dance that most everyone will know the moves to (cotton-eyed-joe, cha-cha-slide, YMCA) Play the song and have students do the dance or ask a student who knows it to lead. Then have students return to their seats or enter into a small group.

57. Hop Up

Activity: Teacher will do a quick overview to close out a lesson. Students will “hop up” out of their desk to state something they learned from the lesson. Once everyone has hopped up, the students will return to their seat prepared for the upcoming lesson.

Retrieved from:

Teachers Pay Teachers All Students Can Shine

58. Zap It

Activity: The students will participate in a quick guided dance through Go Noodle. This dance will help them regain their energy, wake up, and transition easily.

Retrieved from:

<https://app.gonoodle.com/channels/koo-koo-kanga-roo/zap-it?s=category&t=Class%20Transitions>

59. Seat Swap

Activity: For a lesson introduction, pick up your things and find a new classmate to sit by. Quickly review the previous lesson with them and then prepare to move forward with the day.

Retrieved from:

Teachers Pay Teachers Jamie Skripw

60. Knees to Elbows to Partner

Activity: Have students move their right knee to their left elbow and left knee to right elbow, alternating for 30 seconds. Then, have the students turn to a partner and do 30 more seconds of knee raises, but instead of lifting their elbows they high five their nearest partner at each knee raise. This transitions from individual to partner work.