

## IN-SCHOOL ACTIVITY BREAKS

Physical Activity Breaks: These 3-5 minute physical activity ideas can be incorporated into any classroom. Here are some examples of how to get your students moving. Feel free to get creative and come up with your own!

- 1 Around the Clock.** Have every student do 30 jumping jacks at the beginning of class. After 20 minutes into the class, do another 30 jumping jacks. After 40 minutes, do another 30 and when the bell rings, finish one last set of 30 and hustle to the next class!
- 2 TD Tap.** Have everyone stand, face their chair and place hands on hips. Next, they should tap their left foot 25 times on the seat of the chair. Switch legs to tap the right foot 25 times on the chair. For the next 60 taps, alternate left then right toes tapping the chair. (Add a degree of difficulty by having students pump their arms overhead as they tap.)
- 3 Serve It Up.** Have students bring types of small balls (tennis balls are perfect) from home to leave in the classroom. Keep your students seated and have them place one of the balls between their knees. Squeeze and release the ball 25 times without letting it drop. Next, have them hold the ball between their feet and while holding onto the sides of the chair, lift and lower their legs 10 times. Finish with a smash and have them flip the ball to another classmate.
- 4 A Balancing Act.** Practice balancing on each foot. Have kids lift their foot off the floor at least 5 inches and hold for 30 seconds. Rest and repeat 3 times. Switch legs. Teach kids that they have to tighten their abs and focus on something straight ahead to be able to balance. As students advance, have them keep their arms parallel with their ears and bring palms together overhead.
- 5 The Flexible Plank.** Have students get in plank position and hold for as long as possible. *Plank Position:* On the floor, position the body in a straight line by propping up on elbows and toes. Make sure elbows are directly below shoulders, palms flat on the floor with fingers pointing forward and keep the body parallel to the floor (no bottoms in the air). Over time, work to hold longer. After two challenges, have students do a forward stretch and hold for 30 seconds. *Forward Stretch:* While standing, bend forward and reach toward toes. With practice, students will be able to get fingers closer to the floor.
- 6 Dip Into It.** Have students slide to the edge of their chairs—do this in partners to help hold the chairs in place. Tell them to grasp the sides of their chair, fingers pointing toward floor, and slide their bottom off the chair (arms holding them up) enough so that they can raise and lower their body, knees should be in a 90-degree angle. Have them use their arms to lower their bottom toward the floor and raise back up. Do 15 repetitions. Partners then switch positions. Repeat 4 times.
- 7 High-Knee Drill.** Have each student put a ruler (a piece of masking tape can be used here, too) on the floor between their feet. Have them move like a football player and “high-knee” it as fast as they can for one minute (without moving the ruler between their feet). Rest for 10 seconds. Then, they should stand facing the ruler with feet together, hop over and back for one minute. Rest for 10 seconds. Stand parallel to the ruler and hop side-to-side.

- 8 Sound the Alarm!** Create an alarm noise that triggers the students to get up and out of their chairs. Have them fast-pace walk it down the hall and out to an area commonly used for physical activity. They should run for 2 minutes and then fast-pace it back to their chair.
- 9 Breathe It Out.** The heart rate is typically elevated when stressed. To release tension, teach the students to breathe in through their nose for 5 counts and then breathe out through their nose (not their mouth) for 5 counts. Repeat 10 more times at a steady pace. For the next minute, have them breathe in positive thoughts and breathe out any negative thoughts.
- 10 Weight-less.** Isometric routines require no equipment; just make sure you remind the students to fully engage (tighten) their muscles to get the maximum benefit. Have students stand. Engage the biceps by making a tight fist and do 20 biceps curls. Next, have them raise their arms straight out to the sides at shoulder level, engage their shoulder area, and lower arms on a 3-count, then lift them back up to shoulder level on a 3-count. Do 20. Then, have students tighten their abs and alternate touching right elbow to left knee and right knee to left elbow for 30 lifts. Repeat the entire routine one or two more times.
- 11 Laughter is the Best Medicine.** Have one student begin laughing (“fake it until you make it” is ok here). Join in yourself and watch how contagious laughter becomes in the classroom. If some don’t participate, tell them to fake it. It will catch on. Cut it off at 3 minutes because it is hard to stop laughing on cue. This is a fun abdominal exercise.
- 12 Shakespeare Literature.** Read or have students read excerpts from Shakespeare to the entire classroom and every time the words thee, thou, thine, thy and thyself are heard, the classroom must “stand up-jump-sit down” quickly. (For a variation, use this idea with anything students read aloud. For example, if you are reading a news article, have students “stand up-jump-sit down” every time they hear the words a or an.)
- 13 Grapevine.** Have students do the grapevine movement (alternate crossing left foot over right, then right over left moving in a sideways motion) around the room.
- 14 Simon Says.** One student will lead their classmates in performing the exercise they were assigned from the “Bag of Tricks” homework activity break on page 24. They will discuss and demonstrate the proper form and have everyone continue doing the exercise as the leader goes around ensuring everyone is correctly performing.
- 15 Yoga-cize.** Have students stand up and get an arms-length distance from their neighbor. Have them place their hands on their hips and position the sole of their foot resting on the inside of the opposite leg (above the knee as they advance). Hold this position for 30 seconds. Then, have them slowly move their arms straight out to their sides while bending forward and extending their foot behind them to land in “airplane” position. Have them hold for as long as possible. Teach the class to engage (tighten) their abdominal muscles and focus on a spot on the floor to help them balance. Repeat on the other side.

## IN-SCHOOL ACTIVITY BREAKS (continued)

**16 The Wave.** Have students form a circle. Have a student start the traditional wave motion (raise arms as second student immediately follows, like you see at a sports event). Have the same student now do a different action to start the wave, like getting in a squat position. Have the same lead student lean left and everyone follows, then lean right. To add more action/activity, begin a second or third simultaneous wave each time.

**17 Match Game.** Actively learn vocabulary words. With index cards, have students write the word on one, the definition on another. The teacher is the taskmaster unless there are an odd number of students that day. Distribute matching definitions and words to students. Have everyone spread out around the room. Have the students with the words hold the cards up over their head. The kids with the definitions have to quickly move around the room to find the person with their word. Repeat again, this time having the kids with the definitions hold them up and the kids with the words get to move about.

**18 Stretch It Out.** Lead students in a series of basic stretches. Hold each for 30 seconds and include stretches that focus on the upper and lower back, shoulders, hamstrings, calves, and quadriceps. Try arm circles, toe touches, neck circles, or these:

- **Twist:** Sit tall with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart. Place hands behind your head with elbows out to the side. You can also cross your arms over your body or leave them at your sides, whichever is most comfortable. Twist your body to one side so you face the side wall. Your head should follow your body as you turn. Be sure to twist from your waist. Return to starting position. Repeat on the other side. Repeat 6-8 times.
- **Seated March:** Sit tall with your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart. Raise one knee as high as you comfortably can. Return to starting position. Repeat on the other side. March 20 times.

**19 Mama Knows Best.** Have students practice good posture, both while sitting in their chair and when they walk. While seated, encourage them to sit up tall, shoulders down and both feet on the floor. When walking, stand up tall with shoulders back, as if the shoulder blades are slightly pinching together. Have them practice walking around the classroom pretending there is a book balancing on their head.

**20 Fighting Fatigue.** Have each student bounce around in place like a boxer for 1 minute. For the next minute, have them punch straight up in the air, first right then left arm. Take a 10 second break and finish with punching out straight in front at a steady pace, alternating left and right arms. Make sure students are spaced at least an arms-length apart.

**21 Take a Seat.** Have students find a place on the wall and slide down into a position as if they are sitting in a 90-degree angle against the wall. Back should be flat against the wall, knees directly above ankles. Knees should NOT extend beyond toes. Hold for as long as possible and repeat 3 times.



**22 Backpack Book Lifting.** Have each student perform basic arm curls with their backpacks or a book. Do 12-15 reps slowly, counting 5 on the up and 5 on the down motion. Do 3 sets.

**23 Military Style.** Get the kids in a single file line (have one or two lines). The person at the back of the line sprints to the front of the line. When the last person in line sees the previous person take their spot at the front, they take off to the front of the line. Keep moving 3-5 minutes.

**24 Total Zen.** Dim the lights and have students focus on nothingness, completely clearing their minds and not letting any thoughts in for two minutes. For the next minute, have them keep their eyes and mouths closed, and several times together, practice taking a big breath in and making the hhhmmmmmm sound loudly on the exhale.

**25 Stomping Out the Myths.** During a class lesson where students are asked to determine if the answer is true or false, have the kids use movement to give their answers. Read a question. If they believe the statement is true, have the students stay seated and punch their arms toward the ceiling. If they believe the answer is false, they get up and march in place.

**26 Leaping Lizards.** Have kids leap frog around the room as you give a lecture or assignment. Depending on the size of the class, you can form two lines. The goal is to keep as quiet as possible and listen while engaging in physical activity.

**27 Walking a Tightrope.** Place a piece of masking tape in a line across the room. Have each student “walk the line” as if on a balance beam. Be sure they are concentrating on staying completely centered on the tape and have them use their arms extending straight out to the sides for balance.

**28 European Vacation.** As students study about Europe, be the tour guide and take them on an imaginary trip. As you make your stops along the way: March at the gates of Buckingham Palace, Swim through the English Channel, Climb the Swiss Alps, Till a garden in the English countryside, Play tennis at Wimbledon & soccer at Nou Camp, etc.

**29 Book Smarts.** Have students stand up out of their chair and pass their book quickly from hand-to-hand around their waist in a clockwise direction and then stop and go the opposite direction.

**30 Getting Warmer.** Have one student leave the room. Hide an object around the room. When that student re-enters, they will be guided by their classmates’ movements to locate the hidden object. Students will indicate whether to go left, right, forward, backwards, up higher or down lower. To indicate backwards, students could use the backstroke motion, indicate go left or right using a side bend, go forward using a march, up higher using a climbing motion and down lower by having kids kneel. When the student gets within one foot, classmates should pretend they are stepping on something hot. Rotate over the days until every student has had a chance to be “it.”