

“Brain Breaks” and Movement Breaks at Home
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During this time many children are home receiving instruction through online learning. This is a great use of technology, but it leaves children sitting in front of a screen for hours a day which is a lot for most kids. When children are expected to sit and attend for long periods of time, they naturally start “fidgeting” in order to get the movement their body desperately needs and is not getting enough of to “turn their brain on” and attend to the task. If we ask them to “sit still and pay attention”, then essentially their brain goes “back to sleep” (e.g., is not operating at an optimal level of focus or attention).

For children to attend for periods of time and learn, we need to let them move. Movement “turn on” the brain (see figure right). We can provide this movement to children through “brain breaks”. Brain Breaks are short, energizing bursts of activity that boost blood flow, send oxygen to the brain, and help kids better retain information. They can be as simple as taking five minutes to stand up, stretch, and run in place.

Having kids take a 3-5 minute break during learning blocks can help their brains be optimized to learn for up to the next 45 minutes. So allowing kids to get up, stretch and clear their minds is not only good for their bodies, but helps them to focus better on their school work.

Page 2 of this document includes simple “brain break cards” that can be printed out and used at home. Put your cards on a clip, ring, or in a brain break container to use as needed. Consider setting a kitchen timer or phone for 45-60 minutes. When it rings, have your child pick a brain break card to do—you may even want to do the action together. This break is also a good time to encourage children to go to the bathroom or get a drink if needed. Other places to check for “Brain Break” ideas include:

- Exercise with [Go Noodle](#); free, short videos for movement: <https://www.gonoodle.com/for-families/>
- Have child perform stretching and yoga moves from either site:
 - www.yogainmyschool.com
 - <https://www.cosmickids.com/category/watch/>
- Download a roll the dice break game (from www.yourtherapysource.com/rollsomefunfree.html) at:
 - <https://d3eizkexujvlb4.cloudfront.net/2019/01/22062339/Roll-Some-Brain-Breaks-Freebie-updated.pdf>
- Families can de-stress together with meditation apps for kids and families found at:
 - <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/assistive-technology/finding-an-assistive-technology/8-meditation-apps-for-kids>
 - <https://www.commonsemmedia.org/lists/meditation-apps-for-kids>
- Download free K-2 energizers at: http://www.pelinks4u.org/files/energizersK_2.pdf
- View “move to learn” videos at: <https://movetolearnms.org/>
- Check out a list of fun brain break dance videos with links at: <http://teachtrainlove.com/20-brain-break-clips-dance-like-no-ones-watching/>
- Check this pinterest page with more examples: <https://www.pinterest.com/act4healthykids/classroom-brain-breaks/>

Cognitive Effects of Exercise in Preadolescent Children

Average composite of 20 students' brains taking the same test after sitting quietly or taking 20 minute walk









Source: Derived from research by Dr. C.H. Hillman, University of Illinois at Urbana, Champaign, Urbana, IL (2009).

For additional resources, please check back on NJCIE’s website at: <https://www.njcie.org/online>

Print the cards below (or write your own movement activities on slips of paper or popsicle sticks) then place in a "Get Up and Move!" container (like an empty coffee can or other). When you feel your child needs movement, draw a slip or stick from the container and have them perform the activity.

"Brain Break"/ Movement Break Cards

<p>Cross Pulls Child holds arms out in front, cross arms at wrist, turn palms down and in toward each other, clasp fingers together, pull clasped hands under and up through arms in front of chest and reverse. Repeat.</p>	<p>Lazy Eights Child forms the figure 8 pattern with one hand, the opposite hand, then both hands together at least three times--can be done in the air or on a board.</p>	<p>10 Chair Push Ups</p> 
<p>Criss Cross Jump Child stands with feet shoulder-width apart, then jumps up, crossing one foot over other, and lands with feet crossed. Jump again, uncrossing legs, and land in starting position. Switch legs and repeat.</p>	<p>10 Wall Push Ups Do 10 wall push ups (performed against a wall).</p> 	<p>10 Cherry Pickers 1) Jump up to the ceiling 2) jump down into push up position 3) jump into a frog position. That's 1. Do 9 more.</p> 
<p>2 Minute Dance Party Turn on a fun kid song and dance for 2 minutes.</p> 	<p>GoNoodle Time Have child pick a brief activity from Go Noodle's short videos for movement: https://www.gonoodle.com/families/</p>	<p>Muscle Flexes Squeeze and release muscles in body.</p> 
<p>Frog Jump Crouch down with your knees out wide and your hands on the ground between your feet. Jump up by pushing off with your hands and feet. Land in a crouch position.</p> 	<p>Yoga Time! Have child perform stretching and yoga moves from either site: www.yogainmyschool.com https://www.cosmickids.com/category/watch/</p>	<p>20 Jumping Jacks Perform 20 jumping jacks.</p> 