



Movement Breaks



Structured movement breaks are purposeful physical activities like yoga, guided stretching, or movement routines that re-energize the body and brain. They increase oxygen flow, boost mood-regulating chemicals like dopamine, and enhance focus and cognitive performance, especially after long periods of sitting.

1

CHAIR YOGA

Lead students through seated poses like shoulder rolls, seated twists, and deep breaths to promote calm & awareness. Gentle stretching and breathing improve flexibility, reduce stress, and enhance focus—especially effective in tight classroom spaces.

2

4 WAY THUMB WAR

Form a group of four. Everyone puts their right hand in the center, interlocking fingers to create a “thumb arena.” Declare a thumb war! Last thumb standing wins! Try Double 4-Way Thumb War for an extra challenge!

3

ROCK-PAPER- SCISSORS

Have students play for a winner of their table group or row and then have them ultimately play or a class winner or just pair students for quick rounds of rock-paper-scissors to energize social interaction and light competition.

4

WALL SIT CHALLENGE

Challenge students to hold a wall sit for 30 seconds to build strength and focus through stillness. Short bursts of isometric exercise like wall sits improve physical strength and mental endurance, especially in older students.

5

CROSS BODY TAPS

Guide students to tap opposite hand to knee or elbow to stimulate brain-body connection and reset attention. Movements that cross the midline of the body activate both brain hemispheres, improving coordination and cognitive processing.

6

STAND AND STRETCH

Guide students through a short standing stretch routine to release tension and reset posture.

7

BLOBS & LINES

Give a prompt and students will either gather in groups (blobs) or line up in a specific order. (E.g. Blobs- favorite color, subject Lines- ABC order for name, birthdays, number of pets., etc.)

Credit: Cult of Pedagogy

8

BALANCE CHALLENGE

Have students balance on one foot or in a yoga pose for 10–20 seconds to build focus and core strength.

9

HIGH FIVE CHAIN

Create a quick high-five chain around the room to energize and build classroom community.

10

INVISIBLE JUMP ROPE

Ask students to pretend they're jumping rope for 30 seconds to boost heart rate and rhythm.

11

TOE TAPS

Ask students to tap their toes quickly on the floor or chair legs to stimulate circulation and coordination

12

DESK PUSH UPS

Guide students in doing push-ups against their desk or wall to activate upper body strength in a safe way.

13

SHOULDER ROLL RESET

Lead students in slow shoulder rolls forward and backward to release tension and promote calm focus.

14

FREEZE DANCE

Play music and have students dance freely, freezing when the music stops to energize and build focus. Combining music, movement, and self-regulation boosts mood, increases heart rate, and helps students practice impulse control.

15

ANIMAL WALKS

Ask students to move like animals (e.g., bear crawl, crab walk) for 30 seconds to activate muscles and creativity. Engages gross motor skills and imagination, which helps release energy and improve classroom behavior.

16

BRAIN BODY SWITCH

Call out a movement (e.g., jump, squat, spin), but students must do a different one (e.g., when you say “jump,” they squat). This builds focus, listening, and self-control.