

A BRILLIANT ME IN ACTION ONE PAGE GUIDE TO...

BRAIN BREAKS

Brain breaks are short, structured periods of physical activity or calming activities integrated throughout the school day. A 2025 study demonstrated the impact of 'micro-breaks' in improving attention / performance.

WHAT?

They are designed to re-energise the brain, refresh thinking, restore focus, and break up routine. They enable the brain activity to switch different networks allow the brain pathways to rest and the brain chemical messengers – neurotransmitters – to be topped up.

Brain breaks can be calming or energising and improve concentration, reduce stress, and enhance self-regulation. They can be used by individuals and whole groups. Examples might include a quick game, a physical activity, or a mental challenge.

Brain breaks do not require disruption in the flow of learning. Simply stretching, moving to a different part of the room, or singing a song can revitalise the brain.

The Neuroscience of Brain Breaks

WHY?

The amygdala has an important role to play in learning and creating memory.

When students' brains become anxious, highly confused, or overwhelmed or, even if students are not stressed by the pace or content of new learning, a point arises when the amygdala (required to help turn information into memory) gets overloaded and stops working effectively. Brain breaks can help the amygdala to refresh.

Benefits of Brain Breaks

IN PRIMARY SEL?

- Improve memory and focus to help children think more clearly and boost learning.
- Decrease stress and support emotional regulation.
- Energise or calm – depending on activity chosen.
- Help create routines and ease transitions.

Brain breaks work best when

- Children understand the purpose and have opportunities to practice
- Children have choice and agency – so that activities feel comfortable / beneficial.
- They are used consistently.

A quick online search will provide any number of brain break ideas / resources.

FIND OUT MORE

Edutopia have some [excellent articles](#) and a short video '[The Science Behind Brain Breaks](#)'.

Lori Desautels has many examples of brain breaks (alongside what she calls **FoAPs** (Focused Attention Practices) as part of [Applied Educational Neuroscience](#), which are freely available to download.

SEE ALSO

- FoAPs
- Applied Educational Neuroscience
- Executive Functions
- EASEL Kernels

