

Brain Breaks

The brain works and learns best when it has time to process information and shift gears when you move from activity to activity. The following strategies can be helpful in giving the brain time to think and shift between activities.

- Use an “I Chart” to help students process information during instructional time.
- Use word puzzles, cartoons, jokes, and riddles to help relieve stress, transition between topics, or create an enjoyable learning climate.
- Use the 10:2/20:2 Rule (as seen in Figure 5.4) to ensure that students have time to think.
- Use creative thinking activities to help students think more broadly.
- Use physical activity to stimulate blood flow such as doing a quick set of jumping jacks, stretching, bending over to touch toes, taking three deep breaths, walking around the room, or singing the song: “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes.”
- Have students do facial stretching and relaxing to relieve tension in the head and neck.
- Use cross-lateral brain activity to stimulate the entire brain. Have students do the following activities:
 - ▶ Cross your right arm over your left arm and intertwine your fingers. Now, roll your clasped hands toward your body and wiggle your right index finger.
 - ▶ Hold up your right index finger and left thumb. Then, switch them back and forth quickly (right thumb/left index, right index/left thumb).
 - ▶ Touch your right hand to your left knee and then your left hand to your right knee. Repeat several times while singing a song.
 - ▶ Raise your right hand and cross it behind your head to touch your left shoulder. Do the same thing with your left hand and right shoulder. Repeat while counting backward by 3s from 52.

Benefits of Brain Breaks

- Relieve stress
- Provide physical activity
- Stimulate blood flow
- Energize the students
- “Wake up” students’ brains and get them in gear for learning
- Make students more comfortable in the classroom
- Prepare students for presentations
- Help students stay focused
- Help students retain information
- Give students time to think