
Body Breaks

Body breaks should take about 15 minutes, and a timer should be used. For the first two activities, choose “**heavy work.**” For the third activity, choose something “**calming.**” Heavy work requires muscular effort and usually involves movements such as pushing, pulling, lifting, or carrying. It can help the body develop proprioception, the sense of body position. Some heavy work activities have higher cardiovascular demands, provide vestibular (i.e., movement) input, and/or have a “motor planning” focus.

Heavy Work Activities: “I Can Move”

Bear Walk: The student walks “like a bear” on straight arms and legs.

Belly on the Ball: Lying on their belly on an exercise ball, the student rocks back and forth by pushing off alternately with their feet and hands while an adult supports them at their hips.

Body Sock: The student removes their shoes and gets into the body sock, sitting or lying down. Stretching against the body sock provides deep pressure touch and heavy work. (*This activity can be calming if the student relaxes in the sock.*)

Bunny Hop: The student squats, touching the floor with both hands, then jumps up with their arms reaching toward the ceiling.

Crab Walk: With their belly toward the ceiling, the student lifts their body off the floor, keeping their arms straight and legs bent to walk “like a crab.”

Exercise Ball: See “Ball Exercise Library” handout. Activities are sequenced from easiest to hardest.

Froggy Jumps: The student squats down, leaps forward, and lands on the floor in a squat.

Hop Ball: The student bounces on the hop ball.

Jumping Jacks: The student jumps legs apart while bringing their hands together overhead, then jumps again to return to standing with their hands at their sides. Repeat.

Scooter Board: See attached handouts.

Seal Walk: On their belly, the student moves like a seal by “walking” on straight arms while letting their extended legs drag behind.

Skipping: Have fun with a skipping rope.

Trampoline: The student bounces on the mini trampoline. An adult may hold hands with the student to provide heavy work for the student’s arms and shoulders.

Wheelbarrow Walk: The student moves like a wheelbarrow by “walking” on straight arms while a partner carries the student’s legs at their knees. See handout, *Wheelbarrow Walk*.

Wounded Dog: The student moves around on both hands and one foot (like a one-legged bear walk.)

Heavy Work – Motor Planning Focus: “I Can Move and Hold”

(From Easiest to Hardest)

The following movement activities are designed to build motor planning skills, beginning with symmetrical movements (of upper/lower and left/right body) and building to activities that involve coordinating movements of arms and legs on opposite sides of the body. Some of the activities also support the development of visual tracking, which leads to improvement in eye-hand coordination. These activities involve moving the body in specific ways and holding poses.

1. **Airplane:** Lying on their belly, the student extends their arms and legs, then lifts them off the ground. See handout, *The Airplane*.
2. **Beanbag Toss:** The student lies on their back with their feet together and lifted toward the ceiling, with knees slightly bent. An adult tosses a beanbag toward the student's feet while they attempt to kick it.
3. **Log Rolls:** The student rolls along a mat with their arms extended overhead and their eyes closed.
4. **Popcorn:** Lying on their back, the student curls into a ball with their arms across their knees. On a count of 5, the student “explodes” by extending their arms and legs.
5. **Turtle Crawl:** While balancing two beanbags on their back, the student crawls while moving quickly or slowly.
6. **Shoulder Touch:** Reach across body with right hand to touch left shoulder and vice versa.
7. **Scooter Toes:** On belly on a scooter board, propel forward using only the toes of alternating feet.
8. **Push-Ups:** The student positions their hands on the ground slightly wider than their shoulders and raises/lowers their body by straightening/bending their arms while keeping their back straight and supporting their body on their hands and toes. Knees can be on the ground to make push-ups easier.

9. **Lizard Walk:** The student starts on their hands and knees, stretches out their opposite arm and leg and holds them up, keeping their back flat (i.e., without a sagging tummy or twisting body).
10. **Dead Bug:** The student lies on their back with their head off the floor and hands beside their head. The student bends their knees and lifts one at a time to touch to their opposite elbows.
11. **Cross March:** Standing in one spot, the student marches with high knees, swinging their opposite arms upward.
12. **Elbow March:** The student touches their opposite elbow to their raised knee.
13. **Leg Cross:** Touch foot of one leg to knee of other leg and vice versa.
14. **Cross-Country:** The student stands in a 'stride' position with their opposite arm and leg in front. They jump while alternately swinging forward their opposite arm and leg.

Calming Activities: “I Can Hold and Relax”

Activities may involve deep pressure touch, calming visual/auditory input, rhythmical repetitive movement, and/or holding the body steady in various positions/poses. Practice belly breathing during or after the activity: “I Can Breathe.”

Ball squeeze: The student lies on their belly on a mat, carpet, or blanket. An adult rolls an exercise ball along the student’s body with slow, firm pressure.

Belly breathing: The student places one or both hands on their belly and slowly takes a deep breath, in through their nose and out through their mouth. The student’s awareness should be on their breathing and whether their hands are moving as their belly expands. It is easiest to feel belly movement if student lies on their back. Try placing a weighted beanbag on the student’s belly to increase their awareness of breath.

Mat Press: The student lies on their belly between two gym mats. An adult applies firm pressure along the top of the mats at their shoulders, mid/low back, thighs, and calves. For younger students pretending to be a hot dog or burrito in the mats, the adult can ask the student which “condiments” to apply.

Infinity Draw: The student draws a large infinity pattern on a white board (vertical surface) or paper. Standing at the centre of the pattern, the student continues to trace it repetitively. An adult can draw the infinity pattern for tracing. Try different sizes.

Listen to Music: The student relaxes while listening to music.

Quiet Time: The student gets comfortable in a quiet space (e.g. under a mat, beanbag, or weighted blanket) and relaxes (possibly with the lights off) and a familiar “safe” adult nearby.

Relax and Rock: The student lies on an exercise ball on their belly. An adult supports them at their waist and slowly rocks the ball back and forth.

Row Your Boat: The student and an adult should sit facing each other with their legs crossed or in a V, and arms outstretched, just reaching each other. Holding hands, they alternately lean back to pull each other forwards, maintaining arm tension.

Spider: An adult sings “Itsy-Bitsy Spider” while applying deep pressure to the student’s arms.

Wall Push: The student pushes against a wall with both arms, then their back, and finally with each of their shoulders. Hold each wall push position for 5-10 seconds. *This activity is also heavy work.*

Yoga: If familiar with yoga, an adult can guide the student through a variety of yoga poses, or simply have the student lie on their back with their legs straight up, supported against the wall (i.e., their sitting bones should be against the wall to prevent hyperextension at their knees.)

- Boat pose
- Slide pose
- Plank pose
- Downward dog
- Tree pose
- Egg pose
- Chair pose
- Triangle pose
- Table pose

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