



Quick lesson breaks to improve behaviour, focus and concentration."

Sitting still for long periods is not only bad for our long-term health, it's bad for behaviour, focus and concentration too. There are some easy ways to build in physical activity and break up sitting time that should help you make your lessons more active, engaging and enjoyable.



A BOLT OF ENERGY

This activity only takes a few seconds, but can 'kick-start' the metabolism as well as re-energise and re-focus pupils who have been sitting still for too long. It can be done in the classroom without moving any furniture.

- Everybody stands up and makes a 'Usain Bolt lightning bolt' shape. On 'go!' everyone runs as hard as they can on the spot for six seconds before finishing with a 'Mo Farah robot' pose. Pupils (and you) should feel that their heart is beating faster, a little out of breath and a little hotter. More blood will be pumping around the body, and more oxygen will be reaching the brain. The effects of this high intensity exercise can have a positive effect on the metabolism for several hours.
- For pupils with mobility challenges, they could wave their arms or clap their hands as hard as they can for six seconds.
- Schools have adapted the start and finish shapes to fit a topic they are studying, such as making dinosaur shapes, letter shapes or mathematical signs.



CLASSROOM WINTER OLYMPICS

When pupils sit still for too long, their core muscles become less and less active and their posture gets worse. Poor posture leads to slower, less tidy handwriting and poorer attention. To re-activate the core muscles, try some of these Winter Olympic events from your chairs.

- **Downhill slalom:** Pupils should sit up straight on their chairs and follow you (or a Youtube video clip such as **this**), leaning left and right through the slalom course. Beginners can keep hands on the chair and feet on the floor, intermediates can lift their hands up and advanced can lift hands and feet in the air.
- **Ski Jump:** Lean forward in your chair with feet off the ground to simulate the approach, then lift your bottom off of the chair using your arms to simulate the flight. You can copy a clip like **this** or have a class competition to see who can hold themselves up the longest.
- **Bobsleigh:** Stand behind your chair and run on the spot, using a video like **this** for timing. When the driver jumps in their sled, sit down in your chair. Lean left when the driver steers left, lean right to go right. Lean forward to go faster and lean back at the end to slow down. This can be done at the pupils' desks, or, for a competition, lined up in teams of four. The best synchronised team wins.

FOR OTHER IDEAS

This Change4Life 10 minute shake up video is a good example of ways to break up the day with 10 minutes of activity. There are plenty of **examples** around including a full set of **Change4Life 10 minute shake ups**.

Gonoodle is a free, American site with a wealth of ideas and activities aimed at primary schools, most of which are accompanied by video clips.

Here are a few simple ways you can adapt your regular classroom routines to make them a bit more physically active. Our work with schools has shown that these small changes don't significantly impact on your teaching time, and that they can help pupils remain focused and attentive for longer.

Checking for understanding



There will be times when you want to get a quick visual check of a group's understanding of something - some teachers use 'thumbs up and down', some use a red or green coloured page on a planner. It is very easy instead to ask the whole class to stand up, and to stay standing if they agree with a certain statement. For example, 'stay standing if you agree that there are examples of synonyms' (they're not!). A quick series of four or five questions will get everyone up and moving out of their chairs, reducing sitting time, engaging core muscles, raising pulses a little but not reducing teaching time.

Multiple choice



If you have a group question that gives alternative outcomes as answers (a maths problem, for instance) try using different body shapes to signify the different choices. You could create your own shapes based on yoga positions or ask the students to create shapes based on a topic you are studying.

Registration race



Could you turn register time, which can be a bit of a drain on enthusiasm for all concerned, into a 'Mexican wave' where pupils stand up in turn and call out their name? Some classes have turned it into a race against the clock, trying to beat their previous fastest time as a group. You can also change the order in which the group stand up, going from back to front, or ordering by first name, or birthday.

Agree, or disagree?



For questions that require more of an opinion, you can ask your pupils to stand along a continuum that runs through the centre of the teaching space. 'Stand at this end if you agree strongly, stand at the far end if you disagree strongly, or stand somewhere in between.' This is also a way of bringing together pupils for pair or group discussions. If you want them to talk with someone with a different idea or opinion, cut the line in half and ask each half group to walk past the other towards the far edge of the room until the two lines are facing one another.

The washing line idea can be adapted to group pupils differently



Ask them to line up in birthday order, the order of the first letter of their first name, the order of the number of their house, for example. By doing this, you can mix the class quickly and get them to work with different partners.

The fifteen minute rule



Advice from experts says that we should avoid sitting down for longer than fifteen minutes at a time. When you're engaged in a sustained piece of work, it can be easy to forget this, so perhaps you could run a countdown clock on your whiteboard that gives everyone a reminder to stand up and stretch?

TUTOR IDEAS - GETTING INTO GROUPS

Find a partner



Get into twos (people you know/don't know, odd numbers make a 3) you could do this by moving/jogging/skipping/galloping around and saying hi, shaking hands as you approach people. When you call stop - that's their partner!

Body parts game



Move around the space to the music (if there isn't any music, ask them to move to the music playing in their heads) and call out a number and a body part, e.g. 3 ankles, 4 wrists, 12 feet, stop when they are in groups of the required number.

Heads up



Invite everyone to write names of famous leaders/sports people/celebrities on a post-it-note, fold them up and ask people to pick from a bag full, place them on their forehead (without looking), play 20 questions as you move around asking different people until you discover who you are.

Mexican wave



Mexican Wave around the class. Every 15 minutes - if the teacher rings a bell or holds up a particular item then children complete 3 Mexican waves.

Coloured dots



Coloured dots on name badges (teams of 3? - 3 greens, 3 reds, 3 blues, etc).

Comfort, stretch, panic



A comfort-stretch-panic continuum is where you ask questions or give scenarios and get people to stand in the place on the continuum (silly ones like "How would you feel if you had to go to a fancy-dress party - on a bus). Use this to get groups of similar experienced people (where they are standing near to each other on the continuum) or opposite levels of experience by folding the continuum so the left end is working with the right end.

Divide the whole group, by using....



Dates of birth Jan-Mar, Apr-May, All names beginning with...

Jig saw, or cut up picture-pieces and find your partners

Line up against the wall - 123123123 all 1s are in one team.

Floor spots



Create teams using floor spots (or use hoops or cones) with varying colours - go and stand on a spot, by a cone (teams of 3? - 3 greens, 3 reds, 3 blues, etc).

Pictures



To create teams add pictures (of farm animals, happy families, cartoons, photots), numbers, colours, playing cards, etc on each name badge or just give them out to each delegate.

Famous double acts



Use famous double acts (batman and robin), or a famous threesome, (snap, crackle and pop) and give out cards with pictures or words linking to the characters and move around the room to try to find your partner. You can play this with or without speaking. You could also do this with animal noises, or accents, to find your partners.

Sweets



Sweets with coloured wrappers, give out wrapped sweets (moams/frutella/starburst work well) find people with the same coloured sweets (sweets pre-counted into groups of 4s/5s).

Dice game



Dice Game involves pupils rolling a dice (one dice per table or per class) and whatever number they get links to an exercise. The pupils give ideas of exercises that each number represents (e.g. 1 = 10 jumping jacks, 2= running on the spot for 10 seconds etc). The dice should be rolled every 15 minutes.

ACTIVITIES WITH MOVEMENT

Graffiti Sheets



Pin up flipchart sheets around the room with a statement or question on each. Give each person their own specific coloured pen or post-its, they record their response on each sheet. If time ask them to go round a second time.

Birthdays



The group mingles around trying to find the person with the birthday closest to their own (month & date). When they have done this, find two more things they have in common.

Z



In small groups try to find objects that you have on you or with you starting with each letter of the alphabet. Make it a timed activity. First group to get all 26 letters wins the game.

Name/ Adjective/ Action



In a circle people introduce themselves with their name and an adjective starting with the same letter. Make it more fun by adding an action for the adjective. Prepare ideas in pairs before you start. Try to remember all the names at the end.

Wool Wide Web



Stand in a circle. Using a ball of wool the 1st person says their name and something interesting about themselves. They then toss the wool to someone else remembering to hold onto the end! When everyone has spoken there will be a large web that can be put up on the wall.

ACTIVE PUPILS PERFORM BETTER

Plan your active 30 minutes a day for every pupil at www.activeschoolplanner.org

BRAIN FUNCTION IMPROVES

Brain functioning improves leading to better concentration and learning



SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT IMPROVES

Stronger school engagement with improved attendance and behaviour



PUPIL ENGAGEMENT IMPROVES

Short bursts of activity in classrooms improve pupils engagement for up to one hour after



ACADEMIC
RESULTS
IMPROVE



HAPPIER, MORE
MOTIVATED AND
CONFIDENT PUPILS



ENERGISERS AND ICEBREAKERS

Things in common



Split the group into pairs.

They have one minute to find 5 things in common.

Now put two pairs together they have a further minute to find 3 things they all have in common. Each group present their list.

Groups of...



Students mingle around. The leader calls out a number (1, 2, 4 etc), they have to form a group containing that number of people. Call out another number and so on. You can make it competitive by issuing points to the first group on each occasion.

Line ups



Ask the students to form a line across the room in order of:

- Shortest to tallest
- Order of birthdays
- House number etc.

Section the line into groups of 2s, 3s, 4s.

Fruit bowl



Sit in a circle. Name each student one of the 3 fruits e.g. pear, banana, mango. Someone calls out 1 or 2 fruits. Those people have to stand up and swap seats. The person in the middle tries to get a chair. If the leader calls out "Fruit Bowl," everyone has to get up and change.

The sun shines on...



Sit in a circle with one person standing in the middle. This person says, 'The sun shines on everyone wearing shoes,' for example. All the others that are wearing shoes have to stand up and swap seats. The person in the middle tries to get a chair. The game continues with someone new in the middle.

THINK OF YOUR OWN IDEAS TO BUILD ACTIVITY INTO YOUR LESSONS, ADD ACTIVE BREAKS AND BREAK UP SITTING TIME