



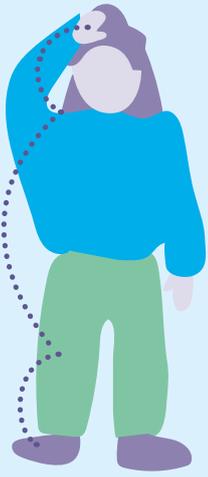
Visit **Mentally  
Healthy Schools**  
for more resources

# BRAIN BREAKS: helping children settle back into the classroom

Following lockdown, your students may find it difficult to return to the formality of sitting at desks and concentrating for longer periods of time.

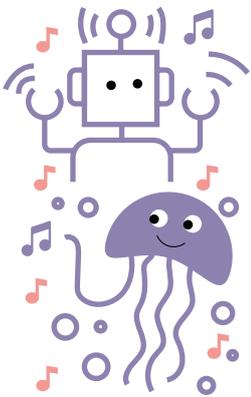
To reduce this restlessness, intersperse your lessons with brain breaks, which are short bursts of activity to keep their brain and body active.

Begin these more frequently, gradually reducing throughout the term as the children adapt to their regular routine.



# 1. Heads, shoulders, knees and toes

Ask the children to take part in the classic action song. This can be done in a classroom space but still gets the body moving and brain engaged. Encourage the children to point to the body parts in order of the song, rather than touching. In subsequent rounds of the song you can make it more difficult by blanking out words – for example, asking them to stay silent instead of singing ‘head’. You can make it more challenging for older children by learning the body parts in a different language.



# 2. Musical statues with a twist

Play the classic musical statues game in the classroom, but ask the children to dance like something e.g. robots, jellyfish. When the music stops, encourage the children to stand still in an appropriate pose for the subject. Instead of people sitting out for moving, choose a winner each round as the best robot or jellyfish etc. This can be changed each time – encourage the children to think of dance categories to try.



# 3. Go for a wellbeing walk

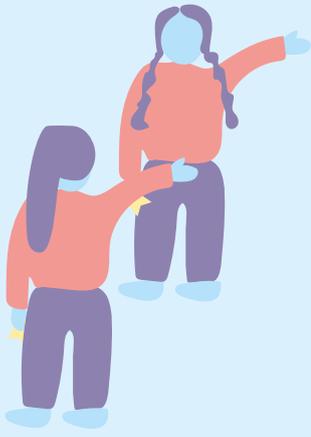
Take the children for a brief five-minute walk in one of the outside areas of your school. Once you reach the destination, ask them to close their eyes and tune in to their senses for 30 seconds.

Ask them to answer in their heads: What can they hear? What can they smell? How do they feel? Ask them to open their eyes and really look closely at something they normally wouldn't, then ask what they noticed about it. In partners, children can share what they noticed before walking back to class.



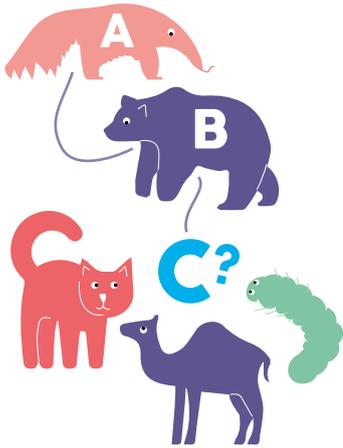
# 4. Mix it up

Stand the children in a circle, spread out with at least 1 metre between them. You or a child in the centre of the circle will then call out ‘Mix it up if...’, and then complete the sentence with a trait or characteristic e.g. you have curly hair, you have a brother. The children who the statement applies to must swap spaces, the last person to swap goes into the centre and thinks of a statement to call out.



## 5. Mirror mirror

Ask the children to get into pairs, standing apart but facing each other. Explain that one of them is to be the person and the other is to be their mirror reflection so they must match their actions as closely as possible. Every time the person moves slightly the mirror must copy. In the classroom encourage these to be slower, smaller movements, but where space allows these can be more mobile. Allow the children to alternate roles.



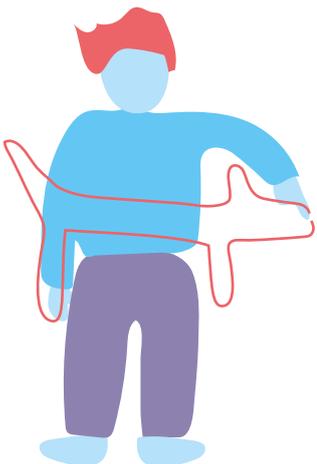
## 6. Categories

This can be done as a whole class or in small groups or pairs. Pick a simple category like animals, colours or something related to your learning. The children then take turns to name something from the category. Go around the group, each saying an associated word until you run out. To make this more active the children could act out their suggested word. For older children, you could ask them to go in alphabetical order, so the first child says anteater, the second says bear, etc.



## 7. Create a musical storm

Ask children to all tap one finger of each hand on their desk gently, like the patter of light rain. Then ask them to make the rain a little heavier, adding a second finger to the tapping. Build this up to a crescendo so the children are eventually tapping all fingers on the desk. You may also want to add in some instruments to make the sound of thunder. Gradually signal to the children to bring the volume down ending up with just a light patter again before silence. As an alternative, you could ask a child to conduct the storm.



## 8. Drawing the invisible

Ask the children to partner up. One becomes the artist and draws a simple picture in the air with their finger. Their partner has to guess what the picture is. Alternate so they both have a go.