

Listed below you will find many brain breaks that you can utilize in small spaces to “re-boot” your group. If you are concerned about re-grouping your audience after taking a break, there are multiple re-engagement strategies listed at the very end. Our thanks go to Jeannie Blaydes, Scott Miller and David Sladkey for providing many of these adaptations through Action Based Learning.

7 STEPS and BRAIN DUMP

(Students communicate their understanding to reinforce knowledge. Repetition helps to reinforce learning.)

1. Stand up and walk seven steps in any direction and find a partner.
2. Take turns explaining the difficult concept to each other for 30 seconds each.
3. When the time is up, walk seven steps in a different direction and find a new partner.
4. Take turns telling each other what you heard about the difficult concept from previous partner for 30 seconds each.
5. When time is called, return to your seat and “brain drain “by writing down your understanding of the difficult concept.

ANKLE TOUCH

(Touching your ankles using different patterns)

1. Stand up and spread your arms out.
2. Lift your right foot in front of you and touch your ankle with your left hand. Put your right foot down. Lift your left foot in front of you and touch your left ankle with your right hand. Put your left foot down.
3. Repeat ten times.
4. Repeat above but touch the bottom of your foot after touching your ankle.

Variation: Repeat above but put foot behind you. Balancing on one leg is good for core strength.

ARM STRETCH

(Stretching your arms together from side to side)

1. Stand up and put your arms out in front of your hands clasped together, keeping your elbows locked.
2. With your hands together, slowly move your arms to the left of you while keeping your arms straight. Move your arms as far to the left as you can.
3. Now move them in the other direction, as far to the right as possible.

Variation: Standing on one leg while doing this activity, to help your core strength.

CHOIR DIRECTOR

(Making a lazy eight in the air with your index fingers)

1. Stand up and put your hands out in front of you about 12 inches apart with your index fingers pointing straight forward.
2. Imagine a large lazy eight between your index fingers. With your right finger trace the outline of the lazy eight. Practice this by making three rotations.
3. Now put both fingers back at 12 inches apart. You will trace the lazy eight with both fingers at the same time. Start with both fingers going up. This causes you to go in the same direction. Your fingers will cross at the middle of the lazy eight at the same time.

Variation: Now put both fingers back out at 12 inches apart. Start with the right finger going up and your left finger going down, making your fingers go in opposite directions.

DIFFERENT DIRECTION CIRCLES – INDEX FINGERS

(Moving your hands in different directions)

1. Stand up and put your hands out in front of you. Point your index fingers toward each other.
2. Move your right index finger in a forward circular direction about the size of a basketball. While continuing to move your right index finger, start your left index finger in a backward circular direction that is the bigger than your right.
3. Try to move your fingers so that they start and end one circle at the same time.

Variation: Inverse the circle direction or try to vary your speeds so that your left finger is slower or faster than your right finger.

DIFFERENT DIRECTION CIRCLES - THUMBS

(Moving your thumbs in different directions)

1. Stand up and put your hands out in front of you. Clasp your hands together.
2. Point your thumbs toward each other. Move your right thumb in a forward circular direction about the size of a golf ball. While continuing to move your right thumb, start your left thumb in a backward circular direction that is the same size as your right.
3. Try to move your thumbs so that they start and end one circle at the same time.

Variation: Inverse the circle direction or try to vary your speeds so that your left thumb is slower or faster than your right thumb.

EAR AND NOSE SWITCH

(Switching your hands from your ear to your nose)

1. Stand up and take your right hand and grab your left ear. Now take your left hand and touch your nose.
2. Uncross your arms and move your left hand to your right ear and your right hand to your nose. Your left arm should now be closest to your body.
3. Switch back and forth as fast as you can.

I BET YOU CAN'T DO THIS!

(While standing, try these activities that most people can't do)

1. Put your arm out in front of you with your index finger extended. Spin your wrist slowly in one direction and your index finger in the opposite direction.
2. Roll your neck in one direction while at the same time moving your tongue around the inside of your lips in the other direction.
3. While spinning your right foot toes in a clockwise direction take your right hand index finger and draw the outline of a 6 in the air.

INCH WORM STRETCH

(Helping to stretch your legs)

1. Stand up and bend down and touch the ground with your hands. Bend your knees if you need to.
2. Start inching your hands out in front of you while your feet remain in place. Move your hands farther and farther out in front of you.
3. Once you have extended yourself as far as you can go, keep your hands still and start inching your legs forward until they meet your hands again. Try to keep your knees as straight as possible. Repeat several times.

ITSY BITSY SPIDER

(Along with the rhyme that says “The itsy bitsy spider went up the water spout...)

1. Stand up and put your hands out in front of you.
2. Take your left thumb and touch it to your right index finger. Take your left index finger and touch it to your right thumb.
3. While pivoting on your left index finger and right thumb, rotate both hands upward so that you can now reach your left thumb to your right index finger. Continue rotating your fingers and thumbs upward so that they are “walking up the water spout”.
4. Repeat the process behind your back.
5. Repeat going “down the water spout”.
6. Once you’ve mastered this, perform the same process with your index fingers and your pinkies.

PAPER TWIRLING

(Moving a piece of paper around your waist without grabbing it)

1. Find a piece of paper or a spiral notebook and stand up.
2. Put your right hand out with your palm up. Put the paper on top of your hand, without grabbing it.
3. Keep the paper at a level height and move it around your waist.
4. Transfer the paper to the other hand. Continue to keep the paper level and move it to the front of you. Do this in the same direction for three rounds and then switch directions and do three more rounds.

Variation: Try to do this as fast as possible.

PRETZEL OUTLINE

(Outlining a pretzel with your index finger/fists)

1. Stand up and put your hands out in front of you with your index fingers pointing out away from you. Your hands are separate.
2. Imagine a large (12 inch) pretzel in front of you. Put your index fingers at the two ending points of the pretzel.
3. Now outline the pretzel with your index fingers. Your hands should be working at the same time. Then reverse your finger direction.

Variation: Clasp your hands together and start at the end point of the pretzel and trace the pretzel in the air with your fists. As soon as you finish one pretzel, reverse direction and repeat.

ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS... LOSE!

(Losing to your partner in the traditional game with a twist)

1. Stand up, find a partner, and face each other. Both partners place their right hand behind their back.
2. Person A will make Rock, Paper, or Scissors with his/her right hand then will move his/her hand selection to the front for Person B to see. Person B will now make Rock, Paper, or Scissors with his/her right and move his/her right hand to the front quickly as possible in order to lose to Person A. (Remember Rock loses to Paper and Paper loses to Scissors, and Scissor loses to rock)
3. Repeat five times with Person B beating Person A and then switch so that A has to figure out how to beat B.

ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS, MATH

(Mental Math Addition)

1. Stand up and find a partner or two.
2. Face your partner and both say, "Rock, Paper, and Scissors, MATH". At the same time pound your fist to your open palm with each word. When you say "MATH" you should put between 1 and 4 fingers out. The person who adds the numbers together and says the numbers correctly first is the winner for that round. If a person says an incorrect answer they automatically lose that round.
3. Play the best of five rounds.

ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS, MATH NEGATIVE NUMBERS

(Mental Math Addition with a Negative Number)

- 1 Stand up and find a partner or two.
- 2 Face your partner and both say, "Rock, Paper, and Scissors, MATH". At the same time pound your fist to your open palm with each word. When you say "MATH" you should put between 1 and 4 fingers out.
- 3 The person with their back to the door or is the tallest, etc. represents a negative number. The person who adds the numbers together and says the numbers correctly first is the winner for that round. If a person says an incorrect answer they automatically lose that round.
- 4 Play the best of five rounds.

SAY Z and WIN

(You are trying to be the person to say the letter Z by going through the alphabet.)

1. Stand up, find a partner and face each other.
2. Person A chooses a letter from "A" to "E" to start the game. Person A can say that letter only or that letter and the next letter in the alphabet.
3. Person B then says the next or the next two letters in the alphabet. Each person takes turns saying either one or two letters at a time. For example, if Person A just took his/her turn and said the letter "E" then Person B could say "F" or "F" and "G".
4. The alternating turns continue until the winner says the letter "Z".
5. Play the game again with Person B choosing the starting.

Variation: Use numbers and play to 21.

SNAP WINK

(Snapping and winking in opposition requires you to engage both hemispheres of the brain and promotes neural pathway development.)

1. Stand up
2. Wink your left eye and snap your right hand index finger and thumb at the same time.
3. Wink your right eye and snap your left hand index finger and thumb at the same time.
4. Switch back and forth as fast as you can.

THUMB and PINKIE

(Switching a thumb on one hand and a pinkie on the other)

1. Stand up and put your hands out in front of you. Make a fist with each hand.
2. Put your thumb up on your left hand.
3. Put your pinkie out with your right hand.
4. Now switch and put your thumb out on your right hand and your pinkie out on your left hand.
5. Switch back and forth as fast as you can.

RE-ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Worried about bringing students back together after a break? These strategies will help to focus people's attention after performing a brain break. Eventually re-engaging people will become a routine.

1. Tell people "Let me see your eyes" several times until you have their attention.
2. Hold up a pen and say, "Look at the tip of this pen. What color is it?"
3. Approach a couple of people and say, "if you can hear my voice, clap your hands once." Continue with, "If you can hear my voice, clap your hands twice." Continue this until you have the entire group's attention.
4. Use a timer so that the brain break has a time limit.
5. Tell people to turn around twice when they are finished with the brain break.
6. Tell people to sit down when they are finished with the activity.
7. Use a bell or clicker to signal the end of the activity
8. Use music to let the students know to transition out of the brain break.
9. Stop the activity and have the group members write a quick response.