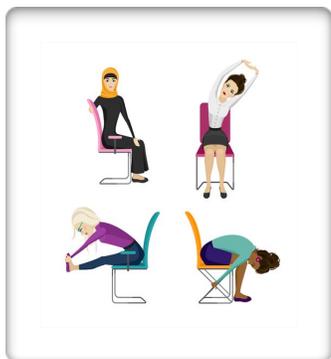


7 Ideas for Increasing Movement in Virtual Lessons

There's a saying in neuroscience: "When the bum is numb, the brain is the same." If you've noticed your students drifting off or fading away during online (or in-person!) lessons, a quick movement activity can be just the thing to refresh, refocus, and reenergize. Here are **7 ideas** that can work for any grade level, K-12. Try weaving one or more of these into each lesson you teach.



Guided Stretch/Exercise Break: For a low-key movement break, take a guided stretch or exercise break. This can be done standing or seated. You can lead these breaks yourself or find a video on YouTube to follow along with. Doing seated stretching is a great option if you have concerns about students transitioning back to their desks/computers and refocusing after a movement break. Guided exercises can also be combined with a review of content. For example, students can count by 2's or by prime numbers as they touch their toes or as they hold a seated spinal twist pose. Or students can rehearse a mnemonic device while doing jumping jacks or while flapping their arms up and down.



Dance Break: Host a free form or synchronized dance break! Be sure to participate – you'll see greater buy-in from students when you show that you are willing to be vulnerable or silly along with them. Add a layer of personalization by allowing students to submit their favorite songs or videos to use. For your reluctant or shy students, allow them a graceful exit – they don't have to dance if they don't feel comfortable doing so, but they must get up out of their seats and move in some way. Need some music to start with? Try choosing songs from the 1950s. Music from the 50s is catchy, fun, and best of all it has no inappropriate language!



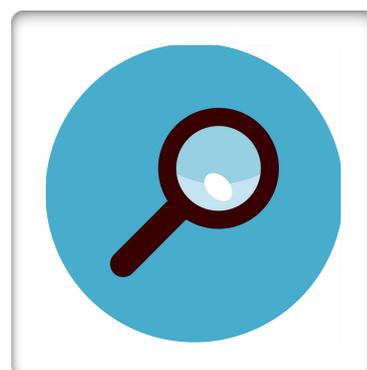
Mirror Words: To help students remember a difficult new vocabulary word you can create a set of physical movements to go with it. Model the movements while speaking the definition out loud for students. Then have students "mirror" the movements by copying you. ([video tutorial: www.tinyurl.com/2sjq45p9](http://www.tinyurl.com/2sjq45p9)) This will help students put abstract information into concrete form in their bodies and memories. As students become more familiar with this technique you can turn over control to them by allowing them to create their own set of movements to go with difficult vocabulary in future units.

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Content Charades/Drama Pantomime: Variation 1: The teacher acts out a previously taught concept or vocabulary word without speaking, and the students all guess what the concept or word is. After someone guesses correctly, the entire class simultaneously acts it out together with the teacher. **Variation 2:** The teacher chooses one student to act something out and the rest of the class guesses what concept or word it is. Instead of yelling out their guesses, students write their guesses down and all hold their guesses up at one time at a cue from the teacher. **Variation 3:** For homework, students create movements to act out something they learned in class that day, record it, and upload it to the teacher.



Scavenger Hunt/Data Gathering: In this movement activity, students walk away from their computers for a screen break, but they go with a content-related purpose. Teachers might have their students count the number of windows and chairs in their home for a ratio lesson, or find an item in their kitchen with more than 20 grams of carbohydrates listed on the nutrition label for a carbon cycle lesson, or find any small object from another room in their home for a lesson on compare and contrast. This type of movement has the added benefit of building community. As students bring their information or objects back and share them with the class as part of the lesson they also learn something about each other.



Mindfulness Walk: A mindfulness walk allows students the much-needed opportunity for a screen break while adding in some structured meditation. Put up a short timer and invite them to walk away from their computer. If the timer has music on it, make sure it is relaxing (example: www.tinyurl.com/2fdkqz9y). Give students something to focus on during their walk – for example, their breathing, things they can hear, round things, or things that are green. A mindfulness walk is not just a great reset for attention, it also allows the body to return to a relaxed state and the brain to process and organize new content.



Water/Bathroom Break: This strategy is for one student, rather than for a class. By sending an emotionally triggered, disruptive, or distracted student on a water or restroom break, we allow them the physical and mental decompress they need, but on our terms. Utilizing this techniques allows both student and teacher to catch their breath, regain calm, and be able to move forward more productively, without escalating an already tense or overwhelming situation.

