Motor Breaks and Games for Elementary Schools
To Increase Physical Activity During the School Day

5 or more fruits & vegetables
2 hours or less recreational screen time*
1 hour or more of physical activity
0 sugary drinks, more water

*Keep TV/Computer out of the bedroom. No screen time under the age of 2.

www.letsgo.org
This tool will help you incorporate movement into the classroom to get your elementary students up and moving during the school day. Some exercises in this booklet are designed to be very quick and can be done while students are simply standing alongside their desks as a transition from one task to another. Others are designed to be a larger-scale, formal activity for the class.

**Tips for success at your school:**

Encourage students’ participation and enjoyment of these motor breaks by making them a part of your routine and showing enthusiasm yourself! To incorporate them into your schedule with ease...

- Post activities around the school to serve as “motor break stations.”
- Use the numbers assigned to each activity in the Table of Contents to randomly pick the exercise(s) for the day. Pull numbers out of a hat, use a random number generator, etc. Be creative!
- String together a series of short activities for a longer motor break period.
- Host a *Let’s Go!* Olympics in your classroom during a rainy-day recess period.
- Use one of the short exercises as a quick energy release when the class starts to get restless.
- Try them all as a class, then allow students to vote on their favorite.

Visit us at [www.letsgo.org](http://www.letsgo.org) to find more fun ways to provide physical activity opportunities for children!

Many of these activities were contributed by the Lincoln Middle School 5-2-1-0 Committee.
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Add Your Own Activity Idea Here!
MyPlate Relay

Materials:
- 10 brown paper lunch bags
- Index cards
- Markers
- Masking tape to mark off start line*

*Use whatever you have to mark the start line - cones, playground equipment, chairs, etc.

Preparation:
Write down each of the five food groups on the paper bags, one per bag (vegetables, fruits, dairy, grains and protein). You should have two complete food group sets. Then write a variety of food items on the index cards (one item per card); create two identical sets of cards.

Mark off the starting line and place each set of index cards at two different points along the line, about 10 feet away from each other (or a distance appropriate for the space you have to work with). Line up one complete set of labeled lunch bags across from each stack of index cards and as far from the start line as the space allows so students run as far as possible. Divide students into two teams and have them line up behind the starting marker, next to their deck of index cards.

Leader Cues:
“We are going to play a game called MyPlate Relay. There is a food item listed on each card in the pile next to your line. When I say, “Go!,” the first person in line is going to grab a card and read it. You will then run to the brown paper lunch bags labeled with different food groups and place the card in the correct food group bag. You will then run back and tag the next person in line. The first team to put all of their cards in the correct bags will be the winner! Here we go…!”

Heart Smart

Instructions:
Begin this activity by discussing the heart as a class. Talk about things like:
- Where it is located (left side of chest)
- What size it is (fist-sized)
- Its function (to deliver blood to the body)
- What types of activities strengthen it (running, biking, healthy diet, etc.)
- What types of activities weaken it (smoking, unhealthy diet, inactivity, etc.)

Leader Cues:
“Now that we have learned a little bit about the heart and how to keep it healthy, we’re going to play a game called Heart Smart. I will call out an activity that either strengthens or weakens the heart. If you think it makes the heart stronger and healthier, jump as high as you can! If you think it makes the heart weaker, squat down as low as you can. Ready?”

Examples:
- Riding a bike – jump
- Eating a giant ice cream sundae – squat
- Walking your dog – jump
- Roller skating – jump
- Taking the elevator – squat
- Taking the stairs – jump
- Walking to school – jump
- Eating broccoli – jump
- Having a dance party – jump
- Watching TV – squat
- Vacuuming for your parents – jump

Activity adapted from “After-School Energizers” East Carolina University School of Health and Human Performance.
Back Cross Crawls

- In a standing position, touch your left hand to your right foot behind your back.
- Repeat using the opposite hand and foot.
- Try it for 30 seconds.

(Increases left/right brain connection!)

Group Slide

Ask the students to follow your directions. Ask the class questions like:

- Step forward if you… did your homework.
- Do a jumping jack if you… had a good day.
- Slide to the right if you… are looking forward to summer.
- Slide to the left if you… like to read books.

(Underlined phrases may be changed to suit the classroom.)

Chair Pose

- Stand with feet and legs pressed together.
- Keeping your knees together, sit back like you are sitting in a chair.
- Hold that position as long as you can.
- Relax when you need to, and then try again.

Redy* Says…

Instructions:

Have children take turns being the leader and play just like you would play “Simon Says.”

Leader Cues:

“This activity is called Redy Says. We will take turns being the leader, and the leader will demonstrate different movements either starting with Redy Says…or not. Players will only follow along with the demonstrated movement if the leader says, “Redy Says.” If players perform the movements without hearing “Redy Says,” they will do 10 jumping jacks before rejoining the game.”

* Redy is a native Mainer and the mascot and spokesperson for Let’s Go! and the 5-2-1-0 message. Redy’s favorite foods are fruits and vegetables, especially apples, blueberries, and green peppers. He loves doing cartwheels and likes to cool down with a nice refreshing bottle of water after a long day of exercising! Redy can be seen around town promoting exercise and good eating habits.

— Biography contributed by students at Mahoney Middle School in South Portland, ME
Do the Conga! (Music Required)

- Instruct students to line up, placing their hands on the shoulders of the student in front of them.
- Start some music and lead students in a conga line around the classroom.

Play Cards! (Deck of Cards Required)

- Using a standard card deck, assign an activity to each of the four suits (e.g. jumping in place for hearts, running in place for spades, sit-ups for clubs, squats for diamonds).
- Pass out a card to each student. Tell them to perform the activity associated with their suit for 20 seconds.
- Instruct students to pass their cards to their neighbor and repeat for 5 passes.

The Classroom Workout Circuit

- Have students do each of the following in place for 1 minute each:
  - jog in place
  - high knees
  - jumping jacks
  - hop on one foot
  - hop on the other foot
  - hop on both feet
- Feel free to mix up the order or incorporate other exercises into the routine.

The Wiggles

Instructions:
Instruct students to stand at their desks. Be sure they have enough room to do the following activities:

- Wiggle fingers.
- Then fingers and wrists.
- Then fingers, wrists, and forearms.
- Then fingers, wrists, forearms, and elbows.
- Then fingers, wrists, forearms, elbows, and shoulders.
- Then fingers, wrists, forearms, elbows, shoulders, and rib cage.
- Then fingers, wrists, forearms, elbows, shoulders, rib cage, and hips.
- Then fingers, wrists, forearms, elbows, shoulders, rib cage, hips, and knees.
- Then fingers, wrists, forearms, elbows, shoulders, rib cage, hips, knees, and head.

*Optional – play fun, upbeat music

Leader Cues:

Today we will be playing The Wiggles. When I say go, you will begin jogging in place at your desks. I will tell you to begin wiggling your fingers. Then, I will start adding on body parts for you to move, one at a time, until your whole body is one giant wiggle!
Favorite Swap (Music Required)

- Instruct students to move around the classroom as the music plays (however you decide - walk, jog, side-step, etc.)
- When the music stops, they should find a partner (person closest to them). Then you will ask a question and they should share a one-word response with their partner.
- When the music comes back on, they should move again. (Find a new partner for each new question.)

Boogie Days (Music Required)

- Instruct students to spread out across the room. Play a school-appropriate song and let kids bust-a-move.
  
  OR

- Have them follow your (school-appropriate) dance moves.
- Try doing some vintage moves like the twist and mashed potatoes, or just jump around!

Look Ma, No Hands!

- Have students put an object on their desks or on the floor (e.g. pen, notebook, ID card) and call out different body parts they have to try to pick it up with (e.g. elbows, feet, knees, forearm, neck, etc.).

Food Freeze

**Materials:**

- 5 large pieces of paper
- Markers
- 5 hula hoops (optional)
- Music (optional)

**Preparation:**

Write down each of the five food groups on the five pieces of paper, one per paper (vegetables, fruits, dairy, grains and protein). If you have hula hoops, set them around the perimeter of the room or outdoor space and place one paper in the middle of each hoop. Have students gather in the middle of the space. Come up with a list of food items from each food group to call out during the activity.

**Leader Cues:**

“We are going to play a game called Food Freeze. I am going to turn on the music and you are going to skip around the middle of the room/outdoor space. When I turn off the music, I will call out a food item, such as oatmeal, and you will run to the hula hoop with the food group you think that food item belongs to. Everyone who goes to the correct food group will get to do a victory dance!”

*For younger students who may have trouble reading, use pictures for each food group instead. Be sure to clarify the correct food group after they have chosen their station.*

Activity adapted from “After-School Energizers” East Carolina University School of Health and Human Performance.
Strike a Pose (Music Required)

- Tell the students to jog around the classroom at a comfortable pace when you turn the music on.
- When you turn the music off, tell them to freeze and strike a funny and/or dramatic pose (demonstrate!).
- At the end, you can have them each strike their favorite pose.

*Madonna’s “Vogue” is perfect for this activity!

Reverse Sit ups

- Instruct students to jog a lap, then sit in their chairs and pull knees up to their chest for 30 seconds.
- Repeat for three rounds (or until students are satisfactorily challenged).

Cross Crawls

- While standing, lift your left knee and touch it with your right hand.
- Repeat using the opposite knee and hand.
- Keep going for 30 seconds!

Let’s Go…to the Olympics!

Instructions:

Instruct students to march or jog in place at their desks, then make up a narrative leading students through a variety of 10-second activities as if they were competing in the Olympics. Go around the class and ask students to come up with their own activities.

Examples: Jump over a giant hurdle, crawl under a creaky balance beam, swim through a deep pool, sprint across the long soccer field.*

Leader Cues:

“Today we are gold medalist athletes going to the Olympics! As we march from the start to the finish line, there will be a lot of tasks for us to complete in order to earn our gold medal. When I call out each activity, we will stop marching and act it out in the silliest way possible until I put my hand up as a sign that the task is over. Then, we’ll keep marching until the next activity is called out.”

*For running events, instruct the students to run in place, lifting their knees as high as they can.
Animal Run (Large Space Required)

- Tell students they are going to do some laps, but they will need to change up their speed according to the animal you call out.
- Have them start by jogging, then call out the name of an animal.
- Examples of animals: cheetah, rabbit, horse, penguin, turtle, chicken, hawk, ostrich, squirrel, fox, sloth, snail, hippopotamus, elephant, jaguar, dog, spider, gazelle.
- You can also have them adopt the movements of the animal(s) instead of the speed.

Skate in Place

- Pretend to ice skate in place.
- As you move side-to-side, bring your heel behind you as high as you can.
- Swing your arms side to side.
- “Skate” for one minute, rest for 15 seconds, and repeat.

The Owl

- Stand up and spread out.
- Turn head to the right and raise right shoulder up to your chin, then relax.
- Slowly turn head to the left and raise left shoulder up to your chin, then relax.
- Repeat 10 times on each side. Breathe deeply.

Grocery Shopping

Materials

- 2 reusable grocery shopping bags
- Index cards (at least one for each student)
- Markers
- Masking tape to mark off a start line*

*Use whatever you have to mark the start line - cones, playground equipment, chairs, etc.

Preparation:

On one side of each index card write down a food item, and on the other side write down an activity. For example, Tomato/15 jumping jacks, Apple/10 squats, Water/7 push-ups, etc. Make sure you have at least one card per student. Mark the starting line and place the reusable grocery bags as far away from the start line as your space allows. Place the cards into the two grocery bags, splitting them evenly between the bags. Divide the children into two teams and have them line up behind the starting marker.

Leader Cues:

“We are going to play a game called Grocery Shopping. When I say, ‘Go!,’ the first person in each line runs as fast as they can to their grocery shopping bag. You reach into the bag and pull out one index card. On that card, you will find one side lists a food item and the other side lists an activity. You will do the activity on your card and shout out a healthy way to eat the food on the card; for example, cut up in a salad, in a yummy sandwich, or fresh from the refrigerator! Then you run back to your team, tagging the next person in line so they can start their turn. The first team to bring all the cards back to the starting line will be the winning team!”

*To change up the activity, have children skip, hop, side-shuffle, etc. instead of running to the grocery bags.

Activity adapted from “After-School Energizers” East Carolina University School of Health and Human Performance.
Stand Up/Sit Down

- Instruct students to move their chairs back from their desks.
- Tell the group that you are going to read a series of questions. If their answer is “yes,” they should stand up and then sit down quickly.
- Sample questions: Do you like apples? Do you play a musical instrument? Did you put on shoes today? Do you speak a language other than English? Have you ever done the dishes? Have you ever traveled outside the country? Have you ever gone berry picking?

Double Doodle

- Instruct students to stand up and spread out.
- Tell students to pretend to scribble with both hands in front of their bodies in the air.
- Call out different things for students to doodle (e.g. shapes, their name, animals, etc.) OR
- Ask the students questions that they have to ‘write out’ in their doodle. For example: How do you feel? What are you doing after school?
- Encourage them to write in complete sentences.

Acting Out

- While reading a book out loud, have students act out each action verb that comes up.

Higher or Lower

Instructions:
Choose one child to be the guesser and have them turn away from the group so as not to see the number they must guess. Have children take turns writing down a number from 1 to 100 or 1 to 500 on the board or a piece of paper to show the rest of the group, making sure the guesser does not see. (Be sure to erase it from the board or turn over the piece of paper before the guesser turns around).

Leader Cues:
“This activity is called Higher or Lower. Each one of you will have the chance to choose a number between 1 and 100 (or 1 and 500) and write it down. You will then show it to the rest of the group, but make sure the guesser can’t see it! Once everyone else has seen the number, the guesser will turn around to face the group and start guessing numbers between 1 and 100 (or 1 and 500). If the number is higher, you will jump as high as you can! If the number is lower, you will bend down and touch your toes. You will continue to give the guesser clues (higher/lower) until they guess correctly.”

*This activity is especially helpful for younger children who are learning how to count to large numbers.
*To make this activity more challenging, instead of touching the toes to indicate a lower number, have children squat or sit all the way down on the floor and return to standing position. To indicate a higher number, have children jump on one foot.
Quiz Me

- While reviewing for a test, ask the students a series of true-or-false questions.
- If the question is true, students should jump in place for 15 seconds. If it is false, they should touch their toes.

Shake It

- Instruct students to remain seated and raise their hands in the air.
- Have them start shaking their right hand 10 times, left hand 10 times, left foot 10 times and right foot 10 times.
- Repeat, counting down the number of shakes from 9 to 1.
- Speed up or slow down the counting to keep it interesting.

Rainstorm

- Have students follow your lead. Begin by having students very lightly rub their hands together, then lightly snap, then slap their thighs, and then stomp their feet (the rainstorm is at its peak!).
- Then have the students stop stomping their feet, return to just slapping their thighs, return to lightly snapping, return to rubbing their hands and stop. Do each action for 20 seconds.

Obstacle Course

Materials:
Take a moment to look around your building, inside and outside, and think of ways to use existing equipment and structures to get your kids moving. Be creative! Most anything you may have can be used to construct a fun course.

Materials may include:
- Playground equipment
- Cones
- Masking tape to mark off starting and finishing lines
- Hula hoops
- Jump ropes
- Pillow cases to get in and jump to a designated spot

Instructions:
Take a few minutes before starting the obstacle course to demonstrate how children should go through each area of the course. Then have them line up in two teams at your designated starting lines.

Leader Cues:
“We are going to go through a super fun obstacle course today! I am going to break you up into two different teams and each team is going to line up behind this starting line. You will then…[Provide instruction and demonstrate each portion of the obstacle course you have designed]. The winning team will do a victory dance!”

*Don’t be discouraged during the winter months! Incorporate activities like making snow angels, throwing snowballs at a target (away from other students), climbing a massive snow bank, etc.
In Between Laps (Large Space Required)

- Have students run laps around a large space together and stop each time they reach you to receive a challenge (e.g. do 5 twirls, pat your head and rub your belly for 10 seconds, spell your name backwards while walking backwards, do a 30 second squat against the wall, do 10 jumping jacks).
- Have students continue running once they complete each challenge and give them a new challenge after each lap.

Follow the Leader

- Have the class form a single straight line and appoint the first person in the line as the leader.
- Tell the leader to begin moving around the classroom. They may use any movement they want, as long as they keep moving around the room.
- The rest of the class should follow behind the leader imitating their movements.
- Every so often, appoint the next student in line as the new leader, instructing the former leader to move to the back of the line.

Jump Rope

- Pretend to jump rope. Make sure you use your arms!
- Jump for 1 minute, rest for 15 seconds. Repeat.

Fun with Yoga Poses

Materials:

- Printed-out images of yoga poses or Yoga Pretzel Cards

Instructions:

Find images of individual yoga poses online*. Print the images out (feel free to cut the images out and paste them on an index card or other more durable type of paper to reuse them). Pair children up standing back-to-back and provide each child with an image. They are to look at the image on their own card, but they should not show their partner.

*If you have Yoga Pretzels, a set of cards by Tara Guber and Lean Kalsih, you can use those instead of the internet print-outs.

Leader Cues:

“This activity is called Fun with Yoga Poses. Each one of you has a card with an image of a yoga pose on the front. Standing back to back with your partner, study the front side of the card carefully making sure your partner doesn’t peek! Then, turning around, you will hold the card behind your back with both hands. I will give you 15-30 seconds to tell your partner how to get into the pose on your card. You must keep your hands behind your back, and you can’t use your arms or legs to show your partner how to get into the pose. You can only use your words! Smiling and laughing is encouraged!”

*For older children or to make this activity more challenging, cut down the amount of time they have (15 seconds or less) and provide them with more challenging poses.
Mighty-Mathletes

- Have students count off starting with “one.” (Make sure students remember their number.)
- Call out activities for the students to perform based on their numbers. Examples:
  - Numbers 1 to 10, do a lap. Numbers 10 to 20, run in place for one minute.
  - All even numbers, do jumping jacks for one minute. All odd numbers, pretend jump-rope for one minute.
  - All multiples of ___, skip around the room once. Everyone else, do one sideways lap.

*Vary the activities according to your needs.

Body Bingo

- Tell the students that you are going to call out various statements. They should move (e.g. jog in place or around the room, jump-rope, skip, hop, etc.) whenever one of the statements applies to them and freeze whenever something does not.
- Example statements: I have two brothers. I speak more than one language. I go to school. I have been to another country. I did my homework. I love summer. I can spell cat. My name has an ‘H’ in it. I eat vegetables. My favorite color is blue. I eat food. I have a dog. I have played basketball. I love to dance. I love winter. I like to sing. I am the youngest in my family.

Mad Math

Instructions:
Break students off into pairs. Instruct them to spread out across the room.

Leader Cues:
“This activity is called Mad Math. You and your partner will jump 5 times, as high as you can, while you count to 5, then you’ll each say a number between ______ * out loud. Then, you will write the two numbers down, work as a team to add them together, and write down your answer. When you are done, you will wait for my signal to start jumping again!”

*Tailor the range of numbers (e.g. 1 to 20, 1 to 100, etc.) and manipulation (addition, subtraction, multiplication or division) to what is relevant to the classroom.