

BREAK BOX

BACKGROUND:

It may seem counterintuitive that taking a break from intense concentration can actually increase our ability to pay attention. However, for diverse learners who may have difficulty focusing for long periods, it can be helpful to incorporate frequent breaks. To help your learner create a plan for breaks, use this Break Box Exercise to create a plan for the most productive and helpful breaks.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Download and print a .pdf copy of the break box cards. It can be helpful to have these printed on thicker cardstock paper or attach them to a 3x5 index card.
2. Prepare the cards by having your learner select activities that are useful in helping your learner relax, de-stress, and promote focused attention after taking a break. There are pre-made cards or an option to have your learner write their own cards. Be sure that activities take no more than 3-5 minutes and are easy to transition away from.
3. Gather the materials needed for each break card and place them in an easy-to-find location.
4. Place the cards in the "break box" storage container.
5. When your learner needs a break, randomly select a card from the break box and complete the activity listed on the box. Your learner can choose the same card multiple times or can remove the card until all options in the box have been completed.



MASTERY CRITERIA:

Mastery for break box includes learners selecting a card and taking a break from work that results in getting back on task later without disruption. Continue practicing different break box cards until your learner can take a break from work and come back to tasks later successfully.



Mastery looks different for everyone! As we learn and use different skills and strategies, improvement as continuous and success will depend on the day and circumstances surrounding the use of the skill.

EXPANSION IDEAS:

The Break Box is meant to be combined with other time management and task initiation techniques. Therefore, it works well with Fun Planner, Pomodoro, and Check-in & Check-Out.

SKILL AREAS:



ATTENTIONAL
CONTROL

SKILL LEVEL:

All

MATERIALS:

- Break Box Idea Cards
- Index card storage box
- Backpack or plastic tote to store break box materials
- Materials for break box

BREAK BOX IDEA

Go for a walk around the block.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Make a shopping list.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Drink a glass of ice water.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Watch your favorite music video.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Practice 5 yoga poses.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Check in with your pet.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Tidy up your desk space.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Give yourself a neck massage.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Come up with a weird record to break. See who can balance the longest on one foot or flick a paper football farthest.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Do 100 jumping jacks.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Look out the window at everything you can see. Identify and focus on one thing in detail.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Have a pillow fight.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Turn on some music and dance around.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Water the plants.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Put some pieces of a jigsaw puzzle together.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Switch seats to a new spot or change chairs in your current spot.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Have a quick snack.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Practice breathing exercises.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Wash your hands with a nice smelling soap or use a hand lotion.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Check in with a friend on social media.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Read a few pages of a favorite book.



BREAK BOX IDEA

Close your eyes and take a quick rest.



MY BREAK BOX IDEA



MY BREAK BOX IDEA



Break Box

Personalized January 09, 2026

PERSONALIZED FOR

CWH

TAILORED TO GOAL

Reading Comprehension with Self-Regulation

Why this helps

Taking a short, planned break can help CWH get back on task and finish reading work with better focus. The goal is to use breaks to:

- **Start reading when it's time**
- **Stick with it** (even when it feels annoying or hard)
- **Answer comprehension questions** (main idea, key details, vocabulary in context, and inferences)

Skill area

- **Attentional control**
- **Task initiation and persistence**
- **Self-regulation during reading**

Materials

- Small box, pencil pouch, or plastic tote labeled **CWH Break Box**
- Break idea cards (printed or handwritten on index cards)
- Timer (visual timer if available)
- Reading glasses (kept in a consistent spot)
- Short **Directions Checklist** card (included below)
- A few break materials (examples below)

Set-up (adult + CWH)

1. Choose **8-12 break cards** from the list below that CWH agrees are helpful.
2. Keep each break **3-5 minutes**.
3. Put any needed materials in the break box (stress ball, doodle paper, water bottle, etc.).
4. Decide where the break happens (examples: hallway walk route, water fountain, calm corner).
5. Teach the routine: **Work, Break, Back to Work**.

When CWH can use a break

Use the break box:

- **Before reading** if starting feels hard
- **During reading** if attention drops or frustration rises
- **Before comprehension questions** if he feels "stuck"

Note: Breaks are not used to avoid work. The job is to take a quick break and return to finish the reading and questions.

Directions Checklist (post/keep on desk)

CWH Reading Mission Checklist

1. **Glasses on** (if needed to see clearly).
2. **Read the directions** (or have them read once).
3. **Read the passage** (track with finger/bookmark if helpful).
4. **Stop and jot**: main idea and key details.
5. **Do vocabulary** using context clues.
6. **Do inference questions** and **cite evidence**.
7. **Check answers**.

How to use the Break Box during reading

1. Adult gives a brief prompt: **"Choose a break card, set the timer, then we'll come back to reading."**
2. CWH picks **one** card.
3. Set timer for **3–5 minutes**.
4. Do the break activity.
5. When timer ends, CWH returns to the reading spot.
6. Adult gives **1 prompt to begin**:
* "Start at Step 3: read the next paragraph."
7. If needed, adult gives **1 prompt to persist**:
* "Finish this section, then you can take another short break."

Break card ideas (CWH-friendly)

Choose options that are quick, quiet enough for school, and easy to stop.

Movement breaks (3–5 minutes)

- Walk a quick lap in the hall (staff-approved route)
- Wall push-ups or desk push-ups (10–20)
- Stretch routine: reach up, touch toes, shoulder rolls
- March in place for 60 seconds, then deep breaths

Calm and reset breaks

- Drink cold water

- 5 slow breaths: breathe in for 4, out for 4
- Close eyes and rest for 60 seconds
- Wash hands with cool water

Focus breaks (quiet hands)

- Tidy the desk area for 2 minutes
- Put together a few pieces of a small puzzle
- Doodle for 2 minutes (then stop)

"Law enforcement mission" breaks (motivating theme)

- **Case File Reset:** Organize materials like a detective (book, pencil, paper) in 60 seconds
- **Radio Check:** Whisper-read one sentence of the directions to yourself, then take 3 breaths
- **Evidence Scan:** Look out the window and name 5 things you see, then return and find 1 key detail in the text
- **Training Drill:** 10 jumping jacks (or approved movement), then sit and point to where to start reading

Reading comprehension connection (use after the break)

After a break, CWH returns to one clear reading action tied to the IEP goal.

Option A: Main idea + key details (Objective 1)

- Read the next section.
- Write:
- **Main idea** in one sentence
- **3 key details** from the text

Option B: Vocabulary in context (Objective 2)

- Pick **5 targeted words** from the passage (teacher-selected).
- For each word:
- Reread the sentence
- Look for a clue (example, definition, contrast)
- Choose or write the meaning

Option C: Inference + evidence (Objective 3)

- Answer the inference question.
- Add evidence by:
- Quoting a sentence, or
- Paraphrasing what the text says

Option D: Mixed questions (Objective 4)

- Complete the set of comprehension questions.
- Check answers using:
 - "Did I answer what it asked?"
 - "Did I use the text?"

Adult support plan (Structured Learning friendly)

- Use **teacher-read directions** once, then point to the checklist.
- Offer **one choice**:
- "Do you want your break first or after paragraph 1?"
- Keep prompts to **1–2 total** to begin and persist.
- Praise the exact behavior:
- "You took the break and came back to Step 4. That's strong self-control."

Mastery goal for this strategy

CWH demonstrates mastery when he:

1. Selects a break card appropriately (not to avoid work).
2. Completes the break within **3–5 minutes**.
3. Returns to the task and completes the next reading step with **no disruption**.
4. Uses the routine to improve performance on comprehension tasks toward:
* **80% accuracy** across **3 consecutive** weekly probes.

My Break Box (CWH's personal picks)

Write CWH's final break cards list here (aim for 8–12 total):

1. Write your break idea here:
2. Write your break idea here:
3. Write your break idea here:
4. Write your break idea here:
5. Write your break idea here:
6. Write your break idea here:
7. Write your break idea here:
8. Write your break idea here:
9. Write your break idea here:
10. Write your break idea here: