Break Cards

A break card can be used by a student or educator to initiate a break from class or an activity. The card can vary in size and have written language, icons, and/or pictures that symbolise a break.

Considerations when using a Break Card

- Break cards are best used as a preventative strategy. This means initiating a break when the student is just beginning to be off-task, disruptive, frustrated, or agitated. This can also mean using a break before an activity starts if the young person often becomes frustrated during that type of task for activity.
- Create a physical break card. Sometimes young people with self-regulation challenges have difficulty communicating their needs effectively, therefore making a physical break card beneficial. The card can be used by touching or pointing to the card, handing the card to an adult, putting the card in a marked spot, or holding the card up. Example break cards are attached.
- Create a physical space for the break to happen. This means identifying a safe and non-disruptive area to go, such as a corner of the room, another room (e.g., counsellor's office, library), or in the hallway – depending on the student. It can also help to have any calming tools that students might use during the break accessible in the space.
- Explain the process to the student(s) or class and have them practice it before implementation. This can be especially important for younger students. It may be helpful to provide a timer to help the young person keep track of their break time.
- Choose a place to keep the break cards so they are easily accessible for the student.
- Break cards can be initiated by the adult or the young person. As breaks are helpful preventative strategies, adults can also give the student a break card to initiate the break when they see anxiety or frustration developing.
- Sometimes it is important to set a limit on how many break cards a student gets per day (e.g., one per class period, 3 a day, etc.). Although break cards can be a very useful tool, there is the possibility that the break may become a way to escape certain expectations. One way to address this is to have the student return to the same activity or assignment after the break. Another option is to problem-solve with the student why these classes or activities might be difficult and identify strategies that might support their engagement.
- Thank or acknowledge the student for leaving and returning cooperatively for their break when they do so.
- Consider how to individualise the break and incorporate the student's perspective. For example, ask them if there are certain times in the day that they see it would be helpful to have a break, or what space they would find relaxing.

LANGUAGE DISORDER AUSTRALIA

Break	break	I need a break

Break 1	Break 2	Break 3