

• BRAIN BREAKS • MIDDLE SCHOOL

Brain breaks for *middle school*

25 brain breaks for Years 7–9 that don't feel babyish — and actually land.

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01 The 30-second name-around that becomes a class record

Get the class in a circle, time how fast they can say every name in order, then challenge them to beat it tomorrow. Middle schoolers love a leaderboard, even one with no prize. The competitive edge cancels out the "this is babyish" reflex.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: SPEED DEMON WARM UP

02 A silent counting challenge that's harder than it looks

The class has to count to 20 out loud, one student at a time, with no signals and no order. Two people speak at once and they restart. It looks simple. It's genuinely difficult, and the silence in the room when they're concentrating is something to behold.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: SILENT COUNT - NUMERACY GAME

03 Calculator vs brain — for the maths-confident kids

Pair them up. One uses a calculator, the other does it in their head. You read out the problem and see who finishes first. The kid who beats the calculator becomes a minor celebrity for the rest of the day.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: COMPUTER V HUMAN - NUMERACY GAME

04 A card game that disguises mental maths as strategy

Four cards face down, students take turns flipping and adding to hit exactly 25. It plays like a casino game, which is precisely why Year 8 will engage with it. They're doing arithmetic but it doesn't feel like arithmetic.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: MAGIC TWENTY-FIVE - NUMERACY GAME

05 The reaction game where the slowest kid is out

Students start behind a cone line. You call "out" and they step over; "in" and they step back. Add fakes. The last person to react sits down. It's fast, it's physical, and there's no choreography — which is exactly what middle schoolers want from a game.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: REACTION MOVEMENT TIME WARM UP

06 A pair-tag warm-up with the world's most ridiculous name

Half the class is "protein," the other half is "carbs." Call one and the other has to chase. The branding is silly but the gameplay is fast and physical, and Year 9 will play it without irony once they realise it's actually a workout.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: PROTEIN & CARBS WARM UP

07 The number-guessing game that teaches binary search by stealth

You're thinking of a number 1–100. They have to find it in as few guesses as possible. Within three rounds, even reluctant students will start asking "is it more than 50?" — which is exactly what you wanted them to do.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: NUMBER GUESSING - NUMERACY GAME

08 A whole-class mental warm-up they actually want to win

Start with a number, layer on operations, race for the answer. The kid who gets it first runs the next round. Three minutes, no equipment, and it sets a thinking tone for whatever comes next.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: THINKING STARTER - NUMERACY GAME

09 The card game that makes algebra feel like poker

Three players, two cards stuck to foreheads, the dealer announces the sum. Each player has to work out their own card from the others' faces. It's social, it's quick, and it requires real algebraic thinking — without the word "algebra" appearing once.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: SALUTE - NUMERACY GAME

10 A balloon game that's secretly about fractions

Groups of four, one balloon, keep it up. Every time it touches someone, they have to add to a running total or continue a sequence. It's loud, slightly chaotic, and pulls in the kids who normally check out of maths.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: UP UP & AWAY - NUMERACY GAME

11 The whisper game that exposes how badly humans listen

Yes, it's the playground classic. But run it with a sentence about whatever you're studying — "the mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell" — and watch it become a 90-second study tool. The garbled final version is always funnier than anything you could plan.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: CHINESE WHISPERS - LITERACY GAME

12 A team challenge that uses bodies as letters

Four teams, you call a word, they form the letters with their bodies on the floor. It's physical, cooperative, and requires actual strategy. Works particularly well for spelling-list revision when you've run out of ways to make Tuesday's spelling test interesting.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: LETTER SCRAMBLE - LITERACY GAME

13 Public speaking practice that doesn't feel like public speaking practice

Pull up a debate topic, give a student 60 seconds to argue one side. The time pressure removes the overthinking. Most kids who say they hate public speaking actually hate the prep — this format skips it entirely.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: PUBLIC SPEAKER - LITERACY GAME

14 The reading game with a microphone

Class opens to the same page. You walk around with a microphone (real or imaginary) and randomly hand it over. The novelty of the mic transforms reading aloud from torture into performance. Works especially well for reluctant readers who otherwise refuse to engage.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: RADIO ANNOUNCER - LITERACY GAME

15 A fitness-and-counting game disguised as a workout

Pairs hold a static plank or wall-sit, roll dice, do reps based on the total. It's PE and numeracy at once, and middle schoolers respect anything that's actually a bit hard physically. The shaking arms keep them honest.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: DECIMAL DICE FITNESS

16 The dice cricket revival

Roll dice, score runs, get out on a six. You can run it as a whole-class game with you bowling and the class batting. Cricket-loving classes will play this for the entire lesson if you let them.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: VIRTUAL DICE CRICKET

17 A roll-to-the-top race that turns dice into strategy

Students fill a pyramid grid by rolling dice and choosing where to place numbers. It's quick, it has just enough strategy to feel grown-up, and it works equally well as a one-off break or a full lesson activity.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: ROLL TO THE TOP

18 The thumb-war upgrade your screen-on classes will play

Old-school thumb wars, played virtually or across a desk. It takes 30 seconds, requires zero equipment, and gets every student to physically engage with the person next to them. Useful for hybrid lessons or classes that have gone too quiet.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: VIRTUAL THUMB WARS

19 A scavenger hunt with their phones and bags

Call out an item — "something blue," "something with a battery," "something that proves you ate breakfast" — and students race to produce it. Works in person or remote. The category is whatever you make it, which means you can theme it to the lesson.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: VIRTUAL SCAVENGER HUNT

20 The quick-thinking game that builds creative confidence

Hold up a paperclip. "Give me five things this isn't normally used for." Thirty seconds. Best answer wins. It's divergent thinking practice, but framed as a competition, which is the only way most middle schoolers will engage with anything labelled "creative."

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: CREATIVE USAGE

21 A revision game that makes them learn names of things they should already know

Stick a famous face — or muscle, or country, or element — on each student's forehead. They ask yes/no questions to figure out what they are. Brilliant for revising any topic with named items, which is most of secondary curriculum.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: FAST & FUN FAMOUS FACES

22 The dice game that's secretly a writing warm-up

Groups of 4–5, two dice, a pen and paper. Race to write single-digit numbers from 1 to 100 — first team there wins. The motor skill of fast handwriting plus the panic of the race makes it weirdly addictive.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: DICE 0 TO 100: RAPID WRITE EDITION

23 A Friday close-out that builds class culture

Four questions about the week, asked aloud. Best moment, biggest challenge, something they're proud of, something they're looking forward to. Skip if you've got a class that won't engage; lean into it if you've got one that will. Builds psychological safety over time.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: WEEKLY CELEBRATION

24 The compliment game that doesn't feel cheesy

Roll a dice, give a compliment to someone in the class based on what the number corresponds to ("something they did well this week," "something you noticed about them"). Works because the dice removes the awkwardness of choosing. Middle schoolers will protest. Then they'll secretly love it.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: THE COMPLIMENT GAME

25

The 21-reasons movement breaker for end-of-day energy

Twenty-one prompts, each tied to a movement or quick share. Burns through the post-lunch slump in under five minutes and leaves the class in a measurably better mood than when you started. Run it on Fridays and it'll become something they ask for.

TRY IN CLASSBREAK: 21 REASONS TO SMILE

YOUR NEXT BRAIN BREAK ↓

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