



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS

# Play Breaks 2.0

Quick, fun activities to add healthy movement and social-emotional skill building to any Club programming

Ages

**6-18**

**22**

Activities



## Play Breaks

The Play Breaks 2.0 Guide, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is designed to increase physical activity and improve emotional wellness in, and around the Club.

It includes a wide variety of fun, age-appropriate activities and emotional check-ins that can be used at a moment's notice, indoors or out.

Play Breaks are five-minute bursts of play designed to increase physical activity, provide opportunities to identify emotions, and make sure young people have the emotional support they need to be successful throughout the day.

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# About Play Breaks

This resource can help Club staff create a high-quality Club Experience and help members develop healthy lifestyles. Checking in with young people's emotions daily is critical to overall health. The intentional integration of mindfulness throughout this guide lets youth consider what they need emotionally. The integration of social-emotional learning with physical activity supports the whole child model and improves the overall well-being of young people.

Taken together, these “breaks” can improve physical and mental health – and work toward healthier cognitive outcomes, healthier relationships, a sense of purpose and a feeling of safety.

## How to Use this Guide

This resource guide can serve as your go-to toolbox for ideas and tips on Play Breaks, which are designed to help create and promote short physical activity breaks that help add up to 60 minutes of play daily, while intentionally focusing on emotional wellness.

## Sample Emotional Check-Ins

Emotional check-ins are designed to help participants recognize emotions in themselves and others and develop strategies for regulating or managing emotions.

### ***Moods and Movement***

1. Ask youth to think of a movement that demonstrates how they are feeling.
2. For example, if they're angry, they could stomp their feet; if they're happy, they could hop up and down.
3. Give everyone a chance to think, then have them share with the group.
4. Youth can choose to explain and elaborate on their feelings, or not.
5. Youth can complete this while traveling from the door to their seat, or as a large group activity.

### ***Energy Wave***

1. Instruct youth to represent their current mood by waving their hand to reflect their level of energy.
2. Little, slow waves represent low energy; big, fast waves represent high energy.
3. They can choose to explain and elaborate on their feelings, or not.

### ***Start the Wave***

1. Have one player start by waving their arms and shouting, then ask each subsequent player to wave their arms and shout.
2. The wave should rotate around the circle several times.
3. State that youth can give big waves if they have high energy, and little waves if they have low energy.

### ***Show Me Your Muscles***

1. Ask youth to pose like body builders.
2. Tell them they can pose with their arms up if they are pumped up, or pose with arms down if they are feeling less enthusiastic.

### **Reflection Questions**

Starting with an emotional check-in is a great first step. Another way to incorporate social-emotional learning is to use reflection questions after the activity. These reflection questions can be used independently or with any other high-yield activity or experience in the Club.

- How did doing this make you feel?
- What are three words that represent how you feel about this activity?
- Why do you think it made you feel that way? When do you want to feel that way? Why do you want to feel that way?
- How could you use this activity to feel better? Physically better? Emotionally better?



# Section 1

## Rhythm and Dance Play Breaks

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## Section 1:

# Rhythm and Dance Play Breaks

### Just Dance

1. **Purpose:** Youth demonstrate movements that reflect how they feel when different genres of music are played. This helps participants recognize the impact music can have on their feelings.
2. **Activity:** Play four-to-five song clips from a variety of music genres and have youth do a movement that matches how each song makes them feel. Then, ask youth to describe how each song makes them feel. Expand the activity by having them create a #LikeAClubKid challenge with their moves.
3. **Reflection:** Ask youth how music can help them identify how they are feeling.

### Shake Down

1. Have youth raise their hands in the air.
2. Ask them to begin by shaking their right hand 10 times. Next, they should shake their left hand 10 times, their right foot 10 times, and their left foot 10 times.
3. Instruct them to count out loud as they do it.
4. Repeat this cycle for nine shakes, eight shakes, etc., counting down to zero with each hand and foot.

### Variations

1. This can be done sitting or standing.
2. Count faster as the numbers go down.



## Dance Like

1. Participants will dance based on the descriptor you call out.
2. Every 30 seconds or so, stop the music and call out another descriptor.
3. Here are some examples:
  - › Dance like you have a sore foot
  - › Dance like you just woke up
  - › Dance like you are dizzy
  - › Dance like you are in jelly
  - › Dance like you are 90 years old

## Move With Feeling

1. Say a feeling (e.g., mad, sad, happy, worried, excited, scared, frustrated) and tell participants to act it out.
2. Add restrictions, like acting out the feeling using only one part of your body.
3. Add an animal to the feeling and ask participants to move like the animal while acting out the feeling (e.g., walk like a sad duck, walk like an excited tiger or slither like a nervous snake).

## **Do One, Teach One**

1. Have youth demonstrate their favorite dance – they can make it up or show one they’ve seen on social media.
2. Ask for volunteers to teach their dance to others.

## **Strike a Pose**

1. With youth in a line, pick one youth to be “it.” This person says, “1, 2, 3 ... strike a pose.”
2. The rest of the group makes a silly pose.
3. “It” chooses the player with the best pose; this player gets to be “it” next.



# Section 2

## Play Breaks for Partners and Small Groups

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8



**AGES**  
6-18



**GROUP SIZE**  
8 or fewer

## **Section 2:**

### **Play Breaks for Partners and Small Groups**

#### **Shadows**

1. Put the group into pairs and designate one player as the leader and the other player as the shadow.
2. While standing in place or walking, the leader chooses movements for the shadow to imitate (e.g., hopping, crawling, rolling, the robot, etc.).
3. Have participants change roles after each round.

#### **Elevator**

1. Participants begin by sitting in small groups.
2. Each group has a ball, stuffed animal or piece of paper.
3. Call out a body part and tell the group to use that body part to lift the ball off the ground (e.g., elbow, pointer finger, lower back, head, ankle, etc.).
4. The first group to keep the ball from dropping, while all the participants stand up, wins.

## Triangle Tag

1. Divide participants into groups of four.
2. Ask three of the four members to get into a circle and hold hands. Ask the fourth member to stand on the outside of the circle.
3. Tell the fourth member of the group who is outside of the circle that they are the tagger.
4. Ask the three youth in the middle to pick one of the three players to be the runner. This person runs from the tagger, but stays in the circle.
5. The other two players help protect the runner by moving the circle in different directions away from the tagger.
6. The tagger may not go inside the circle or lean on the arms of the two youth holding hands.
7. Once the tagger has tagged the runner, the positions change.

**Tip:** Keep an eye on the game and make sure groups are changing positions.

## Invisible Pictures

1. Have a participant draw a picture in the air while their partner guesses what it is.
2. Give them categories such as emotions, foods, locations or other ways to narrow their guesses.



# Section 3

## Play Breaks for Larger Groups

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## Section 3:

### Play Breaks for Larger Groups

#### Count-Off

1. The group attempts to consecutively call out numbers 1 to 20 with individual youth randomly saying one number at a time.
2. Participants have to do this without establishing a pattern or speaking over another person.
3. A person can only call out one number at a time (and may not call out two numbers in succession), but can call a different number on a subsequent turn.
4. If more than one person calls out the same number at the same time, the count goes back to zero.
5. No one may gesture or motion to another person; the sequence of calls must be purely chance.

#### ***Variations***

1. To give everyone an opportunity to speak at least once, increase the number the group has to count up to, especially if the group is larger.
2. Stand in a circle, facing outward.
3. Ask participants to close their eyes or stand on one leg.

## What Are You Doing?

1. Participants get in line and the first two face each other.
2. The first participant (Youth A) does a charade and the second participant (Youth B) asks, “What are you doing?”
3. Youth A must name a motion that doesn’t match the motion they are doing. Youth B then turns to face Youth C, and does the motion that Youth A named.
4. Youth C then asks, “What are you doing?”
5. The game continues down the line until one youth either describes their own action correctly or performs an incorrect action (e.g., not the action described by the previous player).
6. When this happens, the youth goes to the end of the line and the next youth steps up.
7. The goal of the game is for youth to get all the way through the line without making errors.

### ***Variations***

1. Ask participants to form more than one line so more can participate.
2. When a player makes an error, have them switch directions instead of going to the end of the line.
3. Play the game with youth in a circle rather than a line to make the game endless.
4. See how many times the group can make it around the circle without making any errors.



## This Is My Nose

1. Ask the group to form a circle.
2. Pick a leader to start in the center.
3. The leader starts in the center, walks up to a player in the circle, points to their own elbow and says, "This is my nose."
4. The player must point to their own nose and say, "This is my elbow."
5. The leader goes up to another player, points to another body part and misnames it.
6. When a player in the circle says or points to the wrong body part, they replace the player in the center, and the player in the center joins the circle.

### ***Variations***

1. Ask youth to form more than one line to allow more young people to participate at the same time.
2. When a player makes an error, have them switch directions instead of going to the end of the line.
3. Play the game with participants in a circle rather than a line to make the game endless. See how many times the group can make it around the circle without making any errors.
4. Instead of pointing to a body part, make a face that expresses an emotion and misname it. For example, smile big, with eyes wide and say, "This is my bored face."

## Follow the Leader

1. Select one participant to be the line leader and have the rest of the group line up behind them.
2. While standing in place or walking, the leader chooses movements that the group has to imitate.
3. Examples of movements include skipping, hopping, jumping, slow-motion running, etc.

## Spell Me

1. Choose a feeling or emotion word.
2. Have the group work together to spell the word using their bodies.
3. They can spell the word standing or sitting.
4. If participants are younger, give them one letter at a time.

## ***Variation***

Take turns having participants identify their current emotion as a color. Then have them work together to spell out that color.

## Knots

1. Have all youth come into a tight circle with their shoulders touching.
2. Ask them to close their eyes and reach their right hand into the circle and grab another player's right hand.
3. Then ask them to reach their left hand into the circle and grab ahold of another player's left hand.

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4. Make sure participants aren't holding hands with the people standing next to them.
5. Then ask participants to open their eyes and remain holding hands.
6. Tell them that they are now part of a Team Knot and must unknot themselves without letting go of anyone's hands.

### Tunnel Relay

1. Divide the group into evenly sized teams.
2. Give each team a ball. (The type of ball isn't important, as long as it rolls!)
3. Members of each team stand in a single-file line, arm's length apart, with their feet planted shoulder-width apart.
4. On "3, 2, 1, go!" the young person at the front of each line rolls the ball backwards between their legs to the teammate behind them.
5. Each teammate repeats the process until the ball reaches the end of the line.
6. The last player in line sprints with the ball to the front of line and starts the process over by rolling the ball between their legs to the teammate who is now behind them.
7. The game ends when the first player is back at the front of the line, or when the line reaches a certain point (established before the game begins), or when an established time limit has been reached.

## Add On

1. The group forms a circle.
2. One person (Youth A) will start by performing a task. For example, “clap hands twice” or “snap fingers three times.”
3. The next young person (Youth B) in the circle repeats the task performed by Youth A, then adds a new one of their own.
4. The next young person (Youth C) must repeat the tasks performed by Youth A, then Youth B, and then add their own.
5. This continues around the group, with each successive participant repeating the complete, growing sequence of tasks before adding their own.
6. Participants who cannot complete the sequence move to another location in a different part of the circle.

## Up, Down, Stop, Go

1. Have participants spread out in the play area.
2. Explain that they are to do the opposite of whatever command you call out.
3. Demonstrate the appropriate actions for “up,” “down,” “stop” or “go.”
  - › On “up,” squat down as low as possible.
  - › On “down,” jump, or stretch up as high as you can.
  - › On “stop,” run in place.
  - › On “go,” freeze.

4. When a player does not perform the correct movement, they must complete a special task (e.g., jumping jacks, give the facilitator a high-five, etc.) and then return to the game.
5. Do a practice round first to make sure all participants understand the commands and movements that go with them, and what to do if they get the movements mixed up. Call out the commands “up,” “down,” “stop” or “go” one at a time.
6. Watch the group for the first few minutes and stop them when they do the wrong movement. Prompt those youth to complete the correct command (e.g., up, down, etc.).
7. After the first few minutes, call out the commands without stopping – even when participants make a mistake. Continue calling out new commands as the player(s) who made mistakes complete the special task that allows them to return to the game.

### ***Variations***

1. For younger youth, use literal commands (e.g., “up” means “up,” “down” means “down,” etc.).
2. Use different movements for the “stop” command (e.g., walking, jogging, running, skipping, hopping, etc.).
3. Use emotions instead of movements (e.g., Say “sad” and youth act “happy”).

## Remote Control

1. Have participants spread out in the play area. This activity can be done in place, or moving toward a finish line.
2. Tell youth to listen to the following commands (e.g., Play, etc.) and then do the accompanying actions (e.g., jog in place, or walk toward the finish line, etc.).
  - › Play: jog in place, or walk toward the finish line.
  - › Fast forward: sprint in place, or run toward the finish line.
  - › Rewind: move backwards.
  - › Pause: freeze in whatever position they are in.
  - › Slow motion: move very slowly.
  - › Power off: squat down as low as possible.
  - › Power on: jump, or stretch up as high as they can.
3. If a participant makes a mistake, they must start back with the last player in the group.
4. The first player to the finish line wins and gets to call out commands for the next round.

## Go, Slow, Whoa

1. Mark out a playing area.
2. Line youth up in a straight line in the middle of a grid.

3. Explain that you will call out the name of a food and youth will move based on the food you call out.
  - › Youth run to the left sideline if the food that is called out is a “go” food (e.g., foods that can be eaten any time, such as fresh fruits and vegetables).
  - › Youth run to the right sideline if the food called out is a “slow” food (e.g., foods that can be eaten sometimes – like white bread or red meat).
  - › Youth freeze in place for “whoa” foods (e.g., foods that are an every-once-in-a-while treat such as desserts or deep-fried foods).

### Line Up!

1. Use this Play Break at the end of a session, experience or activity.
2. Explain that youth will use a line of continuum to show their opinions on the activity.
3. Use a line that already exists on the floor or describe an imaginary one.
4. Point to one end of the line, and explain that it represents “strongly agree,” then point to the other end as representing “strongly disagree.” The midpoints of the line represent opinions between “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree.”

5. After each of the following statements, have participants run to the spot on the line that corresponds to their opinion:
  - › This activity was fun.
  - › This activity was hard.
  - › I learned a lot from this activity.
  - › I would participate in this again.
  - › I would like to lead this activity in the future.

### ***Variation***

Rather than running to a new spot after each question, instruct youth to hop, jump, long step, tiptoe, etc.



Notes

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