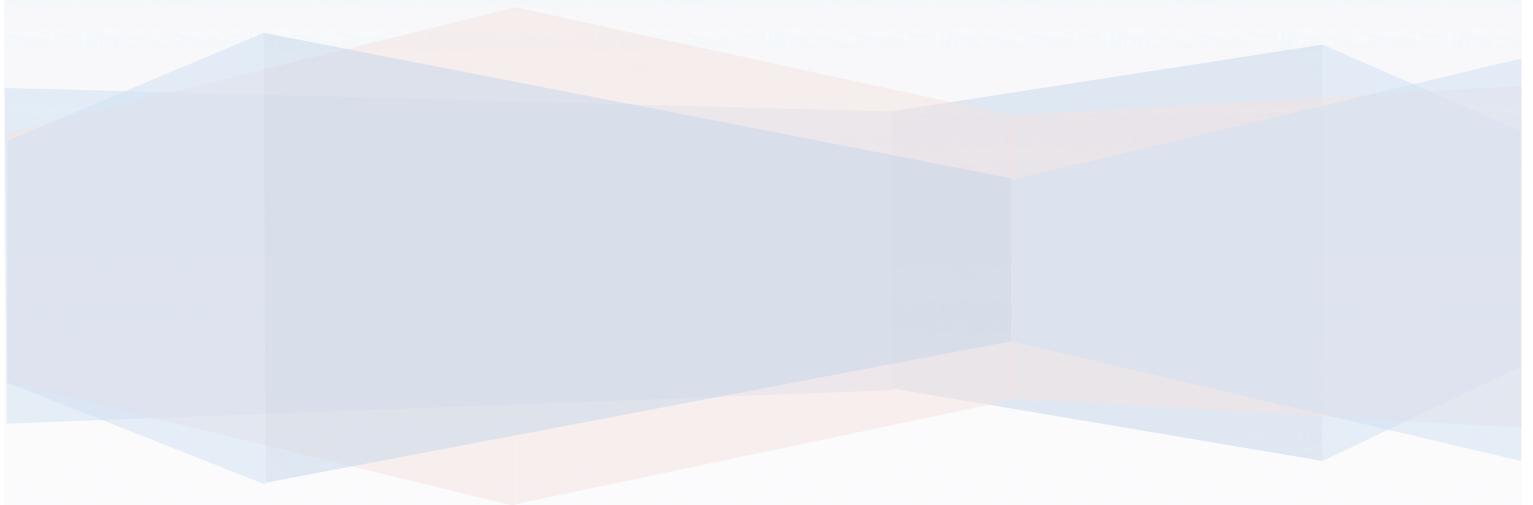# Breaks are Better

Implementation Manual

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Overview

Breaks are Better (BrB) is a modification of check-in/check-out for students who engage in problem behaviors maintained by escape or avoidance from academic activities, tasks, or assignments. Breaks are Better may be especially effective for students who frequently are off-task in class. The intervention builds off check-in/check-out as students:

1. Carry a point card and earn points for meeting school-wide expectations
2. Interact with students prior to and after class
3. Receive frequent feedback on in-class behavior
4. Meet with the intervention coordinator before and after school each day
5. Earn incentives for meeting school-wide expectations

The modifications that make BrB different from check-in/check-out are what make it effective for students who are motivated to escape or avoid academics. These modifications include:

1. Expected academic behaviors are defined and reinforced

Students are provided with explicit opportunities to take breaks in an appropriate way

Readiness

If a school has the following in place, then the school may be ready to implement BrB.

- Check-in/check has been implemented with fidelity for at least a year
- Most students on CICO are meeting their goals
- Most teachers (80% or more) implement CICO with fidelity
- The CICO coordinator has time allocated to CICO—approximately 2-5 minutes per student
- School staff agree that a significant number of students who exhibit non-dangerous behavior are attempting to avoid academic routines
- Academic interventions are available for students who are not successful in core academic programs.
- One or more individuals have allocated time to implement BrB, approximately 2-5 minutes per student
- The school has access to ongoing coaching in the implementation of BrB

Daily Cycle of Breaks are Better

The BrB program has four components that occur daily: 1) morning check-in, 2) daily feedback meetings with teachers, 3) afternoon check-out, and 5) home component. In addition, students have the opportunity to request breaks if needed throughout the day.

Morning Check-in:

- The morning check-in will look the same as for students on CICO; it is brief (1-5 minutes per student), positive, and focused on providing extra instruction in desired behavior
- As in CICO, students return the home note with parent signature and receive a new point card. Students also are given a break timer
- Students show materials to demonstrate that they have what they need for the day (e.g., paper, pencil)
- The coordinator asks the student to give an example of a time or situation when they will likely request a break that day (e.g., "when I get frustrated with the math worksheet, I will ask for a break instead of talking to my friend"). If necessary, a quick reminder of the routine to request a break can be reviewed with the student using the back of the student's point card as an aide

Daily Point Card:
- The daily point card should look very similar to the school's CICO card. The differences are that:
    - Expectations are defined in terms of academic behavior
    - Students monitor breaks taken appropriately on the point card and earn points for taking breaks appropriately
- The back of the point card depicts the break routine—it serves as a prompt for the student to take a break appropriately if needed

Afternoon Check-out:
- Just like in CICO, the afternoon check-out is brief, points earned throughout the day are reviewed, feedback is given, and the home note is completed
- Students turn in the break timer each afternoon

Home Component:
- Each day after school, students will show parents their home note for them to sign, just as in CICO. Students return the signed home note the next morning at check-in

Breaks
- Students can take up to three breaks during each academic routine. Breaks are two minutes in length and students use a timer to let them know when the break is over
- Students ask for a break by holding up their index finger. Teachers can give a thumbs-up or –down to indicate whether a break is appropriate
- Students have a variety of break options that are mutually acceptable to the teacher and the student
- Each time a student takes a break the student crosses off a "B" on the card

Materials Needed

The materials needed to implement the BrB program are listed below:
- BrB Daily Point Card (Appendix A)
- Break Routine Template (Appendix B)
- Acknowledgements/incentives (Appendix B)
- Timer
- Materials for academics
- Student agreement contract (Appendix C)

Planning for Breaks are Better

Implementing BrB in a school requires that teachers are familiar with BrB and agree to use it. Obtain buy-in at a school faculty meeting before you begin implementing the intervention. Making BrB work in your school will require you to (1) select the BrB coordinator and defining coordination roles, (2) define your school's expectations around academic routines, (3) identify acknowledgements and rewards to use in BrB, (4) develop the BrB point card, (5) develop a system for progress monitoring BrB, and (6) plan for introducing BrB to parents, students, and teachers.

Select the BrB Coordinator and Define Coordination Roles

Roles for successful implementation of BrB are described below. Use the template to identify individuals to fulfill each role in your school. Remember, more than one person can assume coordinator responsibilities. Select people for coordinator roles using the template below.

Role	Characteristics	Who is in Charge?
Oversee training and implementation		
	Fluent in BrB	
	Respected by students	
	Respected by adults	
	Communicates effectively with all in school	
	Time available to coordinate BrB and train others in implementation	
	Efficient and effective at task completion	
Check students in and out		
	Fluent in BrB	
	Respected by students	
	Respected by adults	
	In school every day	
	Flexible schedule in morning and afternoon	
Oversee data collection and progress monitoring		
	Fluent in BrB	
	Time available to collect and monitor data at least weekly	
	Understands data-based decision-making	
	Connected to IPBS team	

Modify School Expectations

In CICO, students goals are tied to meeting school-wide expectations developed as part of the school's Tier I intervention (e.g., "Be Respectful). In BrB, these expectations remain the same; however, they are defined in terms of academic behaviors. Thus, "be respectful" could be defined as raise your hand if you need help and "be responsible" could be defined as completing all assignments. Work with teachers in your school to define school-wide expectations around common academic behavior goals. Breaks are Better will be easiest to implement if students on BrB have the same academic expectations.

School Expectation	Academic Definition

Develop the BrB Progress Report

Student progress on BrB will be monitored daily using the BrB daily progress report. A sample BrB daily progress report is available in Appendix A; you can modify this report to fit the needs of your school. You will make several decisions regarding implementation of BrB; it will be easiest if the BrB point card is similar to your CICO point card. Determine the intervals in which students will receive feedback. In most schools students receive feedback after the end of each class period or at other logical breaks in the school day. Next, determine how many points will be on the rating scale. If you are using CICO-SWIS then this automatically is three points (2, 1, 0). Third, determine whether there will be a space for student comments. Although this may be useful for gathering more information, there are a couple of reasons to consider not having teachers record comments on the card. First, doing so will require more teacher time. Second, if comments are negative, students may be less willing to carry the card throughout the day. You also will want to determine how the BrB point card will be reproduced and where extra cards and used cards will be stored. Finally, determine how students will get a new card if they lose theirs or come in late to school.

	Determination	Who is in Charge/Next Steps
At what intervals with students receive feedback?		
How many points will be on the rating scale?		
Will there be a place for teacher comments?		
How will copies be made?		
Where will the DPR be stored?		
How does a student get a spare card if one is lost or the student is late to school?		

Determine Break Options

Students on BrB have the option of taking short, brief breaks during academic activities. You will need to determine (1) how many breaks a student can take during each academic routine and (2) how long breaks will be. An easy rule of thumb is to allow three breaks of about two minutes each per academic period (60-90 minutes).

When a student begins BrB the coordinator will meet with the student and the student's teacher to identify appropriate break options. These will be recorded on the back of the student's BrB card ("My break options are…"). To help teachers and students identify several options, brainstorm possible break options to offer teachers and students. A template for the break routine is in Appendix B.

Break Options to Consider

Develop the BrB Point Card

To develop the BrB point card, determine the number of opportunities a student will have to receive feedback and earn points. Opportunities will include morning check-in, feedback during the school day, taking breaks appropriately if needed (or working well without breaks), and afternoon check-out. Feedback typically occurs at the end of each class period. For example, if there are five academic periods then a student would receive feedback five times as well as at morning check-in and afternoon check-out. The table below outlines points earned during each activity as well as how students earn points. Use the template in Appendix A to develop the BRB point card for use in your school.

Activity	Points Possible	Activities Points Earned For
Morning Check-in	1	Student attends check-in
	1	Student has needed materials for the day (e.g., pencil, text books)
Feedback Throughout the day	Up to 2 points per expectation at each feedback session	Meeting behavioral and academic expectations
Break tracker	1 point at each feedback session	Taking breaks appropriately if needed
Afternoon Check-out	1	Attending check-out
	1	Teacher completed all ratings

on tracker

Break Trackers

Determine how students will keep track of breaks. One option is to have the student retain his or her point card and cross off breaks on the card. Although this may be a simple solution, it reduces the likelihood that the student will interact with the teacher upon entering the room as the student will not be handing the card to the teacher. Teachers and students also may be less likely to remember to provide feedback on the card at the end of the class. An alternative is for the coordinator or the child's teacher to provide the student with break cards (e.g., laminated B's) that can be exchanged for breaks. Work with your school team to determine what will be used to track breaks.

Breaks will be Tracked by

Identify Incentives For BrB

Students on BrB earn positive recognition throughout the day when teachers provide feedback on point accumulation. Students also earn positive recognition from the BrB coordinator. If your school provides tangible or intangible incentives for students on CICO, then you may want to include this for BrB. Using tangible and intangible incentives may increase student motivation to participate in the program and be successful. You might consider offering no or simple incentives for most student on BrB and increasing the value of incentives for students who aren't responding to Brb. Some common variations are below.

Students don't receive incentives. They receive frequent positive attention and interactions from adult through participation in BRB.
Students who participate in BRB by attending checks in and out and receiving teacher feedback on the point card earn periodic incentives.
Students who meet point goals for most days of the week or month receive incentives.
Students can purchase tangible and intangible incentives using accumulated points.

If an incentive system will be used, determine what will be used as incentives. Be sure to consider intangibles such as extra library time. One effective way to determine incentives is to poll students.

	Decision	Next Steps	Who is in Charge?
What incentives will be used?			
How are incentives earned?			
Where is the incentive system documented?			
How frequently are incentives earned?			

Progress Monitoring BrB

BrB can be progress monitored just as you progress monitor CICO, as students earn the same number of points at feedback sessions each day. In addition, students can earn up to two points at the morning check-in (for being prepared and having all assignments) and two points at check-out (for having a teacher signature for all feedback sessions). You may want to keep track of the students on BrB and CICO separately so you can evaluate relative benefits of each intervention. A spreadsheet for progress monitoring BrB is available on the Intensive Positive Behavior Support website at http://coe.uoregon.edu/ipbs/.

Progress monitoring requires behavioral goals to be set for students. In addition, teams must determine a timeline for making reasonable progress. In many schools, the goal is for students to be earning at least 80% of possible points for four out of every five days within the first three weeks of beginning BrB. If a student is far below that goal in the first week the team often meets to determine whether BrB is being implemented correctly and if another intervention might be needed. If a student is just under the point goal, then a slight modification might be needed. Because a goal of Tier II interventions is to help students learn skills to succeed without the intervention, it also is important to establish goals for "graduating" from BrB. Students who have succeeded on BrB often continue to check in and check out with coordinators but no longer have a daily progress report. Some schools hold graduation parties for students. Many schools set the graduation goal to be, "The student has earned 80% or more points for the majority of each week for at least 10 weeks."

Point Goal	Determination	Next Steps and Who is in Charge
What is the goal for making adequate progress?		
What happens if a student is far below the progress goal?		
What happens if the student is just below the progress goal?		
What is the goal for graduation from BRB?		
How does graduation occur?		

Beginning Students on BrB

Schools should have a standard process for selecting students to begin BRB. You could target students who have not succeeded on CICO or select students whose teachers indicate that their problem behavior seems motivated by avoiding work. As is the case with CICO, students who engage in dangerous or highly destructive behavior are not good candidates for BrB. Determine how students will be selected for BRB. Be sure that your criteria are objective and easily measured. When your school is implementing at "full capacity" all students meeting these criteria will be on BRB. This may require adding additional staff to assist in the check-in and check-out process or to graph data.

When you begin BRB you will not be able to implement well with all students right away. It will take time for staff and students to become fluent with implementing BRB and to problem-solve any potential snags in the process. We suggest you begin BRB with between 3 and 6 students. This will allow you to see how the system works and adjust as needed before adding more students. Once BRB is running smoothly and effectively with those students, add more students. We recommend against increasing students by more than about five at any one time.

Students Begin BRB Who:			
Have more than ____ office referrals in academic subjects	Have a teacher request for assistance suggesting work avoidance	A teacher, parent, or administrator has recommended BRB	Have not been successful on CICO

Implementing BRB

Introduce BrB to Parents

The role of parents in BrB is identical to their role in CICO. Parents are not asked to participate in the intervention beyond reviewing the student's home note at the end of the school day and

providing positive or neutral feedback based on the home note. When a child is to begin BrB the coordinator should call or meet with parents to describe BrB and talk to the parents about the goals for BrB and how it may help their child. The coordinator should stress the importance of not providing negative consequences if their child does not meet his or her point goal as BrB is supposed to be a positive program. If the coordinator is not confident that a child's parents will be able to support the home component than that portion of BrB should be omitted.

Introduce BRB to Students

As is the case with CICO, students beginning BRB meet briefly with the coordinator to learn about the intervention. Use the contract in Appendix C to secure student agreement and buy-in. A sample lesson plan for teaching BrB is in Appendix D. If the student is not sure about BRB but will agree to give BRB "an honest try", then you will agree to stop the intervention after two weeks or to modify it with the student's input, if he or she continues to not like the intervention. If the student refuses to even try BRB, you have a couple of options. First, you could work with the student to determine whether minor modifications might make the student willing to try the intervention. For example, if the student does not want to carry the BRB card, you could put the card in teacher's boxes each morning or distribute it on the school intranet or another electronic source. The student then would just carry the homework tracker. If a student refuses to participate even with modifications, then BRB is not an appropriate intervention—student buy-in is critical for success.

The goal of the overview meeting is to introduce the intervention to the students—this includes the components of BRB as well as how BRB will benefit the student. For each component of BRB, students should learn the rationale for the component, what they will be expected to do, what adults will do, and what incentives can be earned. When introducing BRB be sure to cover the following:

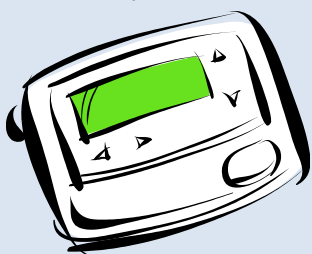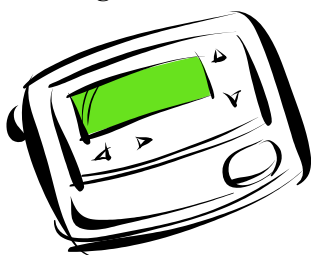| Morning Check-in |
| --- |
| Where and when check-in will occur and what to expect |
| Homework policy |
| **Daily Feedback Meetings** |
| Expectations targeted |
| How points are earned for meeting expectations |
| Giving the point card to the teacher at the start of class |
| Receiving feedback at the end of class |
| Completing the homework tracker |
| **Taking Breaks** |
| When to consider taking a break |
| How to ask for a break |
| What to do if the teacher says "no." |
| Recording breaks |
| Starting and ending a break |
| What to do on a break |
| **Afternoon Check-out** |
| Where and when check-out will occur and what to expect |
| **Home Component** |
| Giving home note to parents |
| Problem-solving homework completion |

Appendix A: Template for Point Card

Name			Date		
	Expectation	Expectation	Expectation		
	Academic Behavior	Academic Behavior	Academic Behavior	Breaks taken the right way (if needed)	2-min breaks I can take
1st	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	1 0	**B B B**
2nd	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	1 0	**B B B**
3rd	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	1 0	**B B B**
4th	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	1 0	**B B B**
5th	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	1 0	**B B B**
6th	2 1 0	2 1 0	2 1 0	1 0	**B B B**

Points
2   Met expectations (Great job!)
1   Met some expectations (Good work!)
0   Met few or no expectations (Room for improvement)

Check in Points	Attends check-in	1 0	
	Was prepared	1 0	
Check out Points	Attended check-out	1 0	
	Teacher completed ratings	1 0	

Bonus Points (breaks taken appropriately if needed)   _____

| **Today's Goal** ___ | **Today's Total** ____ | **Goal Met?**   Yes   No |

Parent Signature

All work due is complete   _____

All work due is not complete   _____

Appendix B: Break Routine Template

How I take a break	What if my teacher gives a thumbs-down?
1. Hold up my B	**1. Put your B on your desk**
2. Wait for a thumbs-up or down	**2. Start your timer but keep working**
3. After a thumbs-up give B to my teacher	**3. When the timer goes off, hold up your B**
4. Start my timer	
5. Take my break quietly	**My break choices are:**
6. Go back to work when the timer goes off	

Appendix C

Breaks are Better:
Student Responsibilities

Before School
- **Check in each morning with _____**
- **Earn points at check-in if you attend check-in and have your signed home note.**

During School
- **Carry your BrB card with you all day**
- **During class periods, make sure you are working to meet your goals. For example, turn in class assignments and participate in class.**
- **If you need a break ask for a break appropriately. Take a break if your teacher gives permission and get back to work when the timer goes off. If your teacher tells you to wait, continue working until a break is okay.**
- **At the end of each class period, show your teacher your BrB card.**

After School
- **Check out each afternoon with _____**
- **Review your BrB card.**
- **At home, show your parent(s) your homework tracker and have them sign the bottom. Return the signed portion to school the next day.**

Student Signature   **Da**

Appendix D: Teaching Breaks are Better to a Student

Materials Needed: Approximate Time: 12-15 minutes

- o BrB Point Card (front and back)
- o Timer
- o Work/Worksheets & Pencil (for role play)

Describe how points are awarded and what the points can be redeemed for
We want to help you do better in school by helping you remember the school expectations and being sure you can take breaks when you need them. You will be able to earn points throughout the day for _____ (expectations). [ask for examples and non-examples of each expectation]. **This part of the meeting should be just like in CICO but the expectations include academic behaviors.**

Requesting a Break the Right Way

1. **Identify and describe the skill**

Now, in addition to earning points for doing the right thing you get something else that very special. You're going to be allowed to ask for short breaks during class time. If you take a break, that means you can stop class work you are doing and do something else at your desk instead." When you ask for a break you will be able to stop working for a little bit and no one will be mad or bug you to get back to work. The reason for this is we all get frustrated with our work sometimes and need a break.

Things you could do during your break are: <u>look at a book</u> or <u>read a book</u>, <u>draw in a notebook</u>, or just <u>put your head down and relax</u>. (fill in break examples for this student).
So, if the teacher is having the class work on a worksheet and you want to stop working on the worksheet for a few minutes, you can take a break – and stop working.

2. **Discuss the importance and consequences of the skill**
Students can answer, the adult can provide answers (or both), for the following questions/prompts.

Now, it is going to be very important that you ask for a break the right way. If you ask for a break the right way:

- ✪ *The teacher will probably let you have a break*
- ✪ *You will be showing that that you are responsible and respectful*
- ✪ *You will get to earn lots of points on your point card*

*"If you **don't** ask for your breaks the "right way"*

- • *The teacher won't know you want a break*
- • *The teacher might not let you take a break right away*
- • *You might not get to earn lots of points on your point card for that period*

3. **Define/discuss the skill steps with examples/non-examples**
Showing the student the back of the point card with the break request steps

The right way to ask for a break is to raise your hand with a #1, like this (model for the student and show the visual aid on the point card), and wait for the teacher to give you a thumbs up or a thumbs down.

A "thumbs up" (showing student) means that you can take a break, and a "thumbs down" (showing student), means that you can't take a break. If the teacher gives you a "thumbs down", it's no big deal, it just means that you should keep doing the right thing and you can ask for a break again later. If you think you will want a break soon then set your timer for 2 minutes but keep working. When the timer goes off you can ask for a break again.

Review: So to ask for a break you. . .
- ✪ *Raise your hand with a #1*
- ✪ *Wait quietly and patiently*
- ✪ *If the teacher gives you a "thumbs up", can you take your break?*
- ✪ *And if the teacher gives you a "thumbs down", what should you do?*

4. Model the skill and role play with examples/non-examples
Now watch me carefully. I'm going to pretend to be working and I'm going to show you the right way, to ask for a break – I'm even going to let you pretend to be the teacher and you can give me a "thumbs up".

Right Way: *Adult pretends to be working for a few seconds and then models asking for a break the right way, allowing the student to give a "thumbs up"*

You gave me a "thumbs up", so can I take a break?
Did I ask for a break the right way?

Let's try again and you give me a "thumbs down" adult pretends to be working for a few seconds and then models asking for a break the right way, allowing the student to give a "thumbs down")

You gave me a "thumbs down", so can I take a break?
No big deal. So, should I just keep working?

Wrong Way: *Adult models a non-example (wrong way) such as talking out while they are raising their hand*

Is this the right way to ask for a break?
Do you think that the teacher would give me a "thumbs up"?
Do you think I would earn lots of points on my card if I asked for breaks the wrong way?

5. Student practice with feedback *Students only practice the "right way"
Now it's your turn to show me that you can ask for a break

I'm going to pretend to be your teacher and I want you pretend that you are working (like I did) and then show me how you will ask for a break, the right way (practice 2-3 times; give a thumbs-up at least once and a thumbs-down at least once)

Show the student how the card depicts steps for taking a break—remind the student to look at the card for help.

PART II: Tracking Breaks

Now I want to explain the rest of the BrB card and show you how to keep track of your breaks and take them the right way, okay?

Adult shows and explains the rest of the BrB card to the student.

1. **Identify and describe the skill**

After you ask for a break and the teacher gives you a "thumbs up" (just like we practiced), it's important that you take your break the right way.

2. **Discuss the important and consequences of the skill**

Taking a break the right way means that you are respectful while you're taking a break by keeping your voice and body calm and quiet so that you don't disturb others.

If you take your breaks the right way, you will be able to keep earning your BrB points on your point card and you'll be able to take breaks when you want to!

3. **Define/discuss the skill steps with examples and non-examples; ask student to generate examples and non-examples of the skill**

Good, so if you ask for a break (like we practiced, already) and the teacher gives you a thumbs up. I'm going to show you what to do.

The adult uses the back of the BrB card to explain the steps to the student.

   ✪ *First, you mark off a circle on your card*
   ✪ *Next, you start your timer for 2-minutes*
   ✪ *Then, you take your break the "right way" until the timer goes off*

When the timer goes off you should get back to work and do your best to keep doing the right thing and following the rules. This way, you can get to take breaks and keep earning lots of points on your card!

*Now I want to show you the right way – but remember, you would be taking your break the **wrong way** if you:*

   ✪ *Got out of your seat and walked around during your break*
   ✪ *Started talking to other students*
   ✪ *Didn't use your timer*
   ✪ *Or - Didn't get back to work when your timer goes off and your break is over*

4. **Model the skill and role play with examples and non-examples; and have student to label them as either appropriate or inappropriate**

Watch me carefully. I'm going to show you the right way to take a break when the teacher gives you a "thumbs up". So, I'm going to ask for break and I want you to pretend to be the teacher and give me a "thumbs up". [request and take a break appropriately and inappropriately; ask for feedback after each step]

5. Student practices with feedback

Now I want you to practice with me and show me that you can take a break the right way. I'll pretend to be your teacher and I want you to pretend to be working (like I did) and ask for a break. When I give you a "thumbs up", I want you to show me the right way to take a break. Can you do that; can you show me the right way to take a break? [have the student request and take a break—be sure to practice the right way and wrong way to take breaks at least once; provide feedback for each step.]