

EXERCISE & PHYSICAL FITNESS Collection

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HOW DO YOU WORK MOVEMENT INTO YOUR DAILY ROUTINE?

Math-infused jumping jacks, charades, and “Gonoodling” keep kids’ brains active during class.

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THE DOG ATE MY GYM SHOES (AND OTHER EXERCISE EXCUSES WE’RE JUST NOT BUYING)

We get it: You’re tired. You’re busy. And your shoes are way over there. But you can still get your move on!

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THE SURPRISING PERKS OF KIDDIE YOGA

It’s never too early for little ones to get their om on.

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NO GYM REQUIRED

Teachers and parents are launching new programs to get kids on their feet and back into shape.



The Physical Fitness Experts Polar has over 30 years of experience in sports, physiology and electronics. Polar offers a complete solution that promotes safety, motivation, and accountability among students, while bringing documentation and objective assessment to PE programs. Polar heart rate monitors, activity monitors, and fitness assessment data give physical educators the ability to evaluate efficiently and fairly. Polar helps students lead a healthy and active lifestyle while they gain a better understanding of their activity level.

The Dog Ate My Gym Shoes

(And Other Exercise Excuses We're Just Not Buying)

We get it: You're tired. You're busy. And your shoes are way over *there*. But you can still get your move on!

BY MARGARET KAMINSKI




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I just love being out of breath!" "I have all the time in the world!" "I look best when my face is red!" If you think "Hey! That sounds just like me!" then congrats—you're a fitness bot sent from space...go take a victory lap. But if you're more like the average teen, who doesn't get the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day, we understand. Maybe some days you really don't have a second to spare. Or you're running on fumes after a week of midterms and need a nap instead. Excuses are OK sometimes, but not every day—and especially not today. So lace up your sneakers, get up off the couch, and let us kick your go-to excuses to the curb.

"I...DESPISE... PANTING!"

Get Real Being really out of breath may mean you're trying too much too soon, which will kill your confidence. But you don't have to be huffing and puffing to get a workout. "Active doesn't have to mean high-intensity," says Anthony Wall, from the American Council on Exercise. "It's just about moving."

Get Going Struggling to find the right pace? Take the "talk test." If you're moving within your target heart rate zone, you should be able to say the Pledge of Allegiance without collapsing. Once you're comfortable, increase the pace until it's too hard to sing "The Star-Spangled Banner"—but you can still speak in short sentences. 



"I HATE EXERCISE."

Get Real It may seem unbearable, but you just have to get started. Exercise releases endorphins (your brain's own feel-good chemicals), which can be habit-forming. "Once you develop a routine, your body anticipates its daily boost," says Jenn Burke, a trainer for Crunch Gym.

Get Going What's the best exercise? The one you'll do. So you absolutely **detest** running—don't run! Ride your bike or host a *Just Dance* tournament. Even cleaning your room is active. As long as you're moving and getting your blood pumping, it counts—so get creative.

"I DONT HAVE TIME."

Get Real You may not have infinite time to spare when you're slammed with schoolwork, but we bet you can find 10 minutes. Bonus: An activity break will send oxygen to your brain, making you super-alert and more creative too. "Our brains are like computers," says Stacy Fowler of the National Association for Health and Fitness. "If you don't move the mouse every 20 minutes, the screen goes blank."

Get Going Famous thinkers like Aristotle and Steve Jobs swore by "walking meetings," and you can follow in their footsteps (literally) by bopping around while you brainstorm about a tough assignment or memorize your Spanish vocabulary. You can also take quick brain-boost-breaks. Study as hard as you can for 30 minutes, then plank for 30 seconds and do 10 jumping jacks.



"I NEVER SEE RESULTS!"

Get Real Even if you train with the discipline of a pro, you won't see results right away—but you will *feel* them almost immediately. "Any physical activity helps you do better in school, be more productive, and have a more positive self-image," says Wall. (You get an energy boost too!)

Get Going Don't focus on how your body looks—zoom in on how you feel. Keep a journal of when you exercise (or don't) and how you feel that day: Stressed? Focused? Hungry? Tired? When you start noticing the amazing effects of exercise, you'll have no excuses.

Abs!
Where are you?



3 More Exercise Excuses We're Just Not Buying

"I can't afford fancy equipment!"

All the necessary tools for exercise (willpower and a body) are completely free. Walking, running, crunches, push-ups, squats, and lunges are part of the same \$0 package too.

"I don't want to look stupid."

Are you working out in front of a mirror? Because the only person judging how you look while you exercise is you. So go ahead and get into it and get sweaty—that's the point!

"I have no motivation."

Getting started is the hardest part. The answer? Trick yourself! Say you only need to exercise for 3 minutes. You can stop then, but once you begin, we bet you won't want to quit!



HAPPY+ HEALTHY

THE SURPRISING PERKS OF kiddie yoga

It's never too early for little ones to get their *om* on, says yoga therapist Michelle J. Fury, who works with kids at Children's Hospital Colorado. Check out a few big benefits of striking a pose:

► **headache relief** Just one yoga class can teach kids stress-busting techniques to help them manage recurrent pain.

► **better school performance** After three months of twice-weekly yoga classes, children with anxiety or hyperactivity improved their focus in the classroom.

► **straighter spines** Doing a side plank for 90 seconds a day, six days a week for seven months can reduce lumbar scoliosis curves in adolescents by nearly 50 percent. (Be sure your kid performs the exercise on her convex side.) This simple routine can eliminate the need for a corrective brace or surgery later on.

► **stronger immunity** Stress causes an increase in cortisol, which can weaken a child's immune system, found a 2014 study in *The Journal of Immunology*. Since yoga is a proven cortisol reducer, it might lower your kid's odds of catching a cold or flu.





WHISTLE WHILE YOU WORK
 I use [movement breaks] during transitions. For example, I have a cleanup song. It's a couple of minutes long, so kids can clean up, boogie a bit, and be seated and ready to go by the time the song ends.
 —Lori P.

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CLASSROOM CHARADES
 I ask questions and have students respond by making certain movements to show their answers. It’s a great way to incorporate movement and whole-class response.
 —Victoria M.

THE NEXT ALEX TREBEK
 I made up a game I call “Stand Up If You Know It.” During math class, I’ll write out or say a problem, and students will stand up if they know the answer. Then I’ll wait a few seconds

and call on someone who is standing. It’s a good mental-math review, and if you keep it fast-paced, students are up, down, up, down, so it’s a good break!
 —Amanda T.

SURF THE WEB
 Gonoodle.com. It has great short videos for calming brain breaks as well as energizing ones.
 —Kristi M.


SPARE SOME TIME
 One of my math centers is a “bowling” center. I use it

to work on counting at the beginning of the year and subtraction toward the end. By incorporating centers and lessons that get the children up and moving, you won’t need movement breaks as often.
 —Jessica B.

CLAP ALONG IF YOU FEEL...
 I like to pop in “Happy,” “The Hokey Pokey,” or other videos and let the kiddos dance. I have older kids, so I try for an afternoon brain break.
 —Heather F.

2 X 2 = 4 JUMPING JACKS!
 I saw a cool thing when I subbed in a second-grade classroom. The kids would all stand and the teacher would pick someone to call out a times table and a movement to do with it, such as touching toes or jumping jacks.
 —Kathy D.

HOP TO IT
 I have students move around as needed. For example, I will ask them to jump 10 times or hop on one foot while they go get a new pencil.
 —Nicole L. □

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Your Goals



No Gym Required

Lace up your sneakers and start a walking program in your school today! *By Caralee Adams*

On your feet! That is the rallying cry being sounded at schools across the nation as walking and running become part of the daily routine. After a decade of budget cutbacks for physical education, teachers have noticed a negative impact on their students' academic performance. And they're doing something about it.

We spoke with organizers of some of the best school walking and running programs in the United States—including a group of former Olympic athletes—and asked how they did it. Time and again we heard how easy (and cheap!) it was to get started. Read on to find out their tips for success.

Jump Start the Day

Students at Clymer Central School, in rural western New York, ride the bus an average of 50 minutes to get to school. That's a lot of sitting before the day even starts. "We were trying to find ways to fight obesity," recalls Irvin King, phys ed teacher at the K-12 school. "So we had the idea of getting kids walking as soon as they got off the bus."

Two teachers volunteer for 20 minutes each morning to supervise the program. As music plays, walkers do a loop around the inside perimeter of the gym and runners take the outside. King says it took about a month to hammer out the details—getting permission slips, having everyone wear sneakers. Six years later, the program practically runs itself, and more than 200 of the 244 students take part.

Clymer fourth-grade teacher Pamela Morton helps out every



Give kids a writing prompt to mull over while they walk. They'll return with great ideas.

Monday. Before, her students were wound up when they came to class in the morning. "This takes care of it," she says. "They can settle right in because they've had time to socialize and get all that willy-nillyness out."

At Caldwell Heights Elementary School in Round Rock, Texas, phys ed teachers Charly Brown and Sandy DiBari have been running JAWS (Jogging and Walking Superstars) as their "morning duty" for 13 years. They invite students, and their families, to join them on the track before school for 20 minutes. "They don't have to sign up. They can just come," says Brown. "The rule is, they have to jog the first lap. They think they can't do it."

Many realize that they can. The "marathon kids" at Caldwell aim to log 26.2 miles over time; about 100 students do so every year. Their P.E. teachers recognize the achievement with a "circle of honor" at the beginning of gym class. "It's a big deal to them," says Brown.

PHOTO: GEOFF MANASSE/MEDIA BAKERY

in Lexington, Kentucky.) The athletes encourage kids to walk 40 minutes a day over the course of six weeks.

Usually, the 40 minutes comes in two 20-minute blocks taken from home-room, lunchtime, and parts of elective classes (but not from core classes, or from time before or after school). At first, Lynn Schaffer, a sixth-grade teacher at Beaumont Middle School in Lexington, didn't know how the program would fit into her science class, but she found a way. "The break is great for the kids," she says.

Students track their miles online and compete for awards locally and nationally. There's no cost to the school, other than teacher time. "It's sustainable, affordable, and doable," says King. The program expanded from 42 middle schools in 2011 to 80 this year.

Carve Out Class Time

The drawback of a voluntary program is that the kids who most need the exercise may be the least likely to seek it out. Making a walking program part of the school day gets everyone moving, says Robert Sweetgall, whose 11,000-mile walking trek across all 50 states in the mid-eighties kicked off a career as a walking and wellness guru.

Sweetgall suggests starting the day with a 10-minute walk around the school grounds after kids arrive. "Make the walk a time for kids to talk with their friends and for you to get one-on-one time with them," he says.

Give students a writing prompt to mull over while they walk, and tell them they'll have 10 minutes to write when they get back. They often return to the classroom with great ideas and in a better mood. "Walking is underrated," says Sweetgall. "It improves every part of the body."

Make Sport of It

Olympic gold medalist Micki King suggests tapping into kids' competitive spirit. She's on the board of World Fit (Olympians for Worldwide Fitness), which encourages former Olympic athletes to oversee a school walking program. (King works with 11 schools

Keep Them Moving

At California's San Ysidro Middle School seventh graders wear pedometers 24-7. Well, almost—students take them off when they shower and before going to bed. The Walkinator program was the brainchild of P.E. teachers Laura Duehring and Dee Connaghan, and is part of the curriculum. "We didn't have any resistance; they were thrilled about it," Duehring says.

Kids log their pedometer results online and engage in competitions for the most steps taken. Winners are recognized with prizes such as a pass on wearing their school uniform for a day. The program has spurred a higher level of activity, says Duehring. Students are walking more at lunchtime, and all those extra steps add up. The school found significant improvements in seventh graders' body mass index over the course of the year.

Tap Into Community

Parents have organized walking and running clubs as well. In 2009, Kathleen Tullie was inspired to bring exercise to her own children's school, Memorial Elementary, in Natick,



Massachusetts, so she organized local moms and dads to make the before-school fitness program a reality. Looking for a company to sponsor T-shirts, she turned to Reebok. That conversation led to the birth of BOKS (Build Our Kids' Success), and Tullie is now taking the program nationwide.

Each 40-minute before-school session consists of a warm-up period, a running activity, a "skill of the week" such as push-ups or sit-ups, a quick game, and a cooldown period. In the suburbs,

Tullie says, "ninety percent of these programs are run by parents. They are the advocates; they are the trainers. And they are the ones who are bringing it to the schools." That's proved a little trickier in urban areas, where parents make up only 15 percent of the program volunteers. "The other 85 percent are teachers," says Tullie.

At Nottingham Elementary School in Arlington, Virginia, PTA volunteer Joanne Guerrero oversees Knights in Motion every Friday. During recess,

students from first through fifth grade walk or run around a quarter-mile course that Guerrero has marked off with orange cones. The kids track their mileage by punching holes in index cards or adding plastic tokens to a bracelet or key chain.

"There are kids who are competitive runners timing themselves, there are girls holding hands and chatting, and there are even students who pass the soccer ball to each other the entire time," says Guerrero.

However it's organized—by parents, by teachers, by community volunteers, by former Olympians—starting a running or walking program at your school shouldn't be a hard sell, to the kids or the adults watching over them.

"I love the confidence that it gives kids," says Tullie. "Any mom or dad in the country would love to hear you say you could do something to make their child happier, more confident, more attentive. And our polling shows these programs do just that." □

PHOTO: HEIN VAN DEN HEUVEL/CORBIS

Partner Up!

Want to start your own program? You don't have to do it alone. These groups provide grants, materials, and good old motivation.

World Fit

Former Olympians across the country have worked together to launch this free walking program for grades 3–12. Each athlete adopts a school and oversees a six-week program that encourages classes to walk together throughout the school day. Students can log their miles online. worldfit.org

Just Run

This Web-based initiative comes out of the Big Sur International Marathon's youth running program. Teacher materials for grades 2–12, as well as training videos on coaching, are available online. Classes can compare their progress with the rest of the state or the nation. justrun.org

Alliance for a Healthier Generation

Visit the website for more on the national Healthy Schools program, and to find materials on fitness programs, healthy eating strategies, and wellness plans. Be inspired by students and teachers who are making healthy changes! healthiergeneration.org

Creative Walking

Robert Sweetgall specializes in custom walking and wellness programs. He has written numerous books, including *The Walking Wellness Student Workbook*, and conducts motivational workshops. Check out his website for educational resources and motivational tips. creativewalking.com

BOKS

Kathleen Tullie and her legion of moms started the nonprofit as a way to get kids active before school. BOKS provides parents with a free curriculum of activities and other resources via its website, including nutritional tips for kids, called "BOKS bits." bokskids.org

ING Run for Something Better

The focus of ING's initiative is on helping kids become fit through free, school-based running fitness programs. Grants are available to schools to sponsor events and provide supporting materials. ingrfsb.com