

Brain Gym® for Online Learning

The Brain Gym and Vision Gym movements can be useful when dealing with the stress of online learning, especially when there is the added pressure of having no choice in the matter.

Many children, parents and teachers are finding the stress of online learning a huge challenge. Having so much screen work switches-off the brain, eyes, thinking ability and negatively affects the brain.

Research shows excessive screen time can lead to eye dryness, irritation, fatigue, blurry vision, headaches, and eyestrain. We tend to blink less while staring at the screen, and the movement of the screen makes the eyes work harder to focus.

Brain research also shows screen time actually switches-off the brain's frontal lobes, where 'executive functioning' is located. Executive function controls emotional regulation, positive mental health, concentration, focus, learning, organization, working memory, planning, being engaged with lessons, and resilience. Not having adequate activation of the frontal lobes, puts you in a reactive mode, keeping your stress and anxiety levels elevated.

The Brain Gym movements are designed to improve learning, reduce screen fatigue, and switch-on all parts of the brain, especially the executive functioning (frontal lobes) and are easy to do.

The exciting thing about Brain Gym is that it often shows results in a short period of time, in most cases immediately.

The Brain Gym Movement Program is

- **Simple and Safe** as they are natural movements that prepare people of all ages to practice and master the skills required for the mechanics of learning. Many simulate early developmental movements. Brain Gym requires no special talents or coordination skills. Brain Gym is a good warm-up for all mental activities and exercise programs.
- **Distinctive** as Brain Gym addresses the physical, rather than just the mental components of learning which are so relevant and vital to the learning situation. Brain Gym gives you activities that can be useful in dealing with many learning and behavioral difficulties.
- **Flexible** in its application. There are times when a short session is all that is required to other situations when there is a need to devote more time. The Brain Gym program can be as simple or as elaborate as you wish. Most Brain Gym can be done sitting, standing and lying down.
- **Portable** and needs no expensive equipment, technology, testing or special space. It is accessible to every person.
- **Adaptable** to any curriculum or learning situation. It enhances current practices and curriculum. Brain Gym is as effective in health, especially mental health, aged care, business, sports and the arts, as well as in the classroom.

Brain Gym And Vision Gym Can Be Useful When Working in an Online Learning Situation

Begin the day and each session with Brain Gym. As soon as you see a student start to switch off, drink some water and do some Brain Gym. Students love incorporating Brain Gym into brain breaks. The more Brain Gym the student does, the less they need it!

Implementing Brain Gym

1. Start with PACE (Water, Brain Buttons, Cross Crawl and Hook-Ups) first thing in the morning, after each break, at the beginning of each session. Add Thinking Cap (for listening and auditory processing) and Lazy 8s (for sight and visual processing) for enhancement.
 2. Do any of the Brain Gym. Choose for the most relevant for the situation. Introduce the movements gradually and slowly increase the times. Most Brain Gym is done for about 15-20 seconds or 3 times each way.
 3. Can include the specific sets of Brain Gym for specific literacy and numeracy activities
- **Brain Gym Teachers Edition** by Paul and Gail Dennison.
 - **Hands On** - has specific chapters on learning readiness, handwriting, reading, spelling, and mathematics - also includes the most relevant Vision Gym™ movements. Hands On has excellent Brain Gym and Vision Gym pictures.
 - **Brain Gym for Business** – includes extensive numerous sets of Brain Gym for specific situations, e.g. reading without eye strain, listening actively and attentively, problem solving, speed reading, writing legibly, spelling with accuracy. Excellent for the secondary students.

More Brain Gym resources are listed at the end of this article.

Brain Gym to Reduce Stress and Anxiety and Improve Mental Health



Hook Ups and Positive Points

Both Hook-Ups and Positive Points reduce stress and anxiety. Both movements are calming and relaxing. They resolve emotional stress and reactivate the frontal lobes of the brain to switch-on for improved emotional regulation, positive mental health, focus and concentration. Both also improves the ability to listen, speak and learn in a more relaxed manner. Continued use of Hook-Ups and Positive Points keeps the students calm and focused.

Belly Breathing – Can be done with Hook-Ups and Positive Points

Under stress, we tend towards shallow chest breathing which reinforces the flight and fight reflex that keeps us in a stressed and anxious state. Belly Breathing calms the central nervous system, improves oxygen consumption and blood circulation to the brain and switches on focus and concentration. It improves diaphragmatic breathing which has been found to improve both reading and speaking abilities.



Belly Breathing

Balance Buttons Balance Buttons restores your sense of equilibrium, relaxes the eyes and rest of the body and freeing attention span for easier thought and action. This improves the ability to make decisions, concentrate and problem solve.

Claire Hocking, Educational Kinesiologist & Brain Gym and Vision Gym Instructor
Phone: (03) 5282 5985

Mobile: 0419 569 071

Email: claire@wholebrain.com.au
www.wholebrain.com.au



Balance Buttons

Brain Gym to Switch-on Learning and Fighting Screen Fatigue

Water

Plain water **is vital** to keep the brain switched-on and for optimal brain fitness. Brains dehydrate rapidly and even before we are aware of being thirsty, concentration lapses, and boredom, drowsiness and confusion takes over. Stress and anxiety can increase a person's need for hydration up to three times more than normal. Being in front of a screen is a very dehydrating activity so have a supply of water to sip regularly.



Sipping Water

Positive Point Palming – Vision Gym

Positive Point Palming **is vital** to prevent and reduce vision switching off in online learning sessions. Positive Point Palming relaxes eyes and releases visual related stress, especially working in front of a screen for prolonged periods of time. Start the online session with Positive Point Palming, repeat every time the student starts to switch off, becomes distracted or eyes begin to hurt. Continued use of Positive Point Palming prevents the eyes becoming sore.



Butterfly Blinks – Vision Gym

Butterfly Blinks relaxes, cleanses and lubricates the eyes, encourages the eyes to refocus, and to relax the staring habit. It also stimulates hand-eye coordination.



Brain Buttons



Brain Buttons and Eyes Side to Side

Brain Buttons can be done on their own or in combination with eye movement. Brain Buttons improves digital and hand-eye coordination for writing and computer work. It assists with crossing the visual midline and coordinates the eyes to reduce the effects of staring and eye fixation. Brain Buttons with eyes side to side switches on the brain and eyes for reading and writing.

Thinking Cap

The Thinking Cap switches on listening and thinking abilities, short-term memory, and abstract thinking skills. It also helps the brain tune out distracting sounds and noises and tune into meaningful information.



The Thinking Cap



Knee Hugs (Vision Gym) with Footflex (Brain Gym)

Doing Knee Hugs with Footflex (moving foot up and down) for at least 20 seconds is excellent for focus and concentration and accessing language. The Footflex also increases communication, concentration, and finishing tasks.

Cross Crawl

Vital to keep the brain switched on for more efficient learning and motivation by promoting the left and right side of the brain and body to work together in an integrated fashion. Repeat any time the student is feeling switched-off, concentration and focus is fading, and boredom setting in.



The Cross Crawl

Earth Buttons and Looking at the Screen (near focus)

Earth Buttons can be done on their own or in combination with eye movement. Holding these points stimulates the brain and relieves mental fatigue and increases organizational skills. It also enhances the eye's ability to focus for near/screen work by reducing visual stress.



Earth Buttons

Space Buttons with Eyes Near and Far (near and distance focus)

Space Buttons can be done on their own or in combination with eye movement. Space Buttons improves attention, focus, motivation and intuition for decision making and enhances near-to-far and far-to-near vision. Placing the computer screen in front of a window, mirror, or picture of nature to help reduce staring and eye fixation.



Space Buttons

Sit as far back as you can from the screen and make sure you look away at least every 15-20 minutes, have a sip of water and do some Brain Gym Buttons.



The Energy Yawn

Energy Yawn

Energy Yawn assists with releasing muscular tension in the jaw and face and allows ease of speaking and reading.

The Owl

The Owl assists with relaxing tight neck muscles commonly associated with prolonged screen use. It also improves listening comprehension and memory as well as thinking, speaking abilities and the use of a computer.

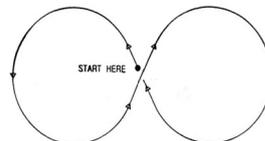


Lazy 8s

Lazy 8s are excellent to make both eyes work together for enhanced binocular vision. Reading, writing, and comprehension skills improve as these tasks become easier.



Lazy 8s



Drawing Lazy 8s on paper assists writing and typing skills. Doodling Lazy 8s reduces writers block.

Double Drawing

Double Drawing is drawing with both hands which develops hand-eye coordination for improved learning, writing, spelling and maths skills. It improves the ability to skim and scan what is being read.



The Energizer

Too much on screen sessions can result in poor, slumped posture with tight muscles that switches off learning and concentration. The Energizer assists with promoting correct upright posture.



The Energizer

Arm Activation

Arm Activation releases muscular tension to sustain handwriting and typing and allows the student to write/type for longer periods of time. It also improves focus and concentration, enhances one's ability to express ideas, and helps for longer attention span doing paper and computer work.



The Lengthening Movements

Stress contracts muscles, and over time it can shorten tendons in the back of our body, affecting posture and interfering with vestibular balance, including auditory processing. The Lengthening Activities gives messages to the muscles and tendons in the back of our body to relax and lengthen back to their natural flexible state, thus relaxing the muscles which tighten when anxious or stressed. This results in a more comfortable body.

All the Lengthening Activities re-engage the frontal lobes of the brain for increased concentration and focus. They will also improve emotional regulation, positive mental health and resilience. The Lengthening Movements are: The Owl, Arm Activation, The Gravity Glider, The Grounder, The Calf Pump and The Footflex.

Brain Gym for Students Who Are Having Difficulty Sitting Still

Cross Crawl

The student who is restless and wriggling is instinctively knows they need movement to switch back on again. Cross Crawl takes the brain and body out of a stressed state to feel more comfortable and switch-on again.

The Rocker

The Rocker helps stimulate the cerebral spinal fluid to the brain to switch-on concentration and focus.

The Gravity Glider

The Gravity Glider relaxes the hips and muscles at the back of the body making sitting more comfortable.



Brain Breaks are Important!

Brain research show brain breaks are as important as academic learning itself. During a break or alternative activity, neurons and brain structures that were challenged during the working period have a chance to integrate, strengthening the pathways for learning and remembering.



Include Brain Gym into Brain Breaks!

Have a Brain Gym break anytime you notice:

- the students getting restless
- after any break to refocus and get organised
- when you notice lack of attention, concentration, or tiredness

Put on some favourite music/songs and do some Brain Gym! Singing is a fun whole brain activity.

Useful Brain Gym Resources

Brain Gym (PACE) CD by Tessarose

The six different versions of music and song to encourage people to complete the PACE movements of Brain Gym. Each version has its own musical style. The drum or 'Rapp' version is the most popular.

Children's Song & Dance Book and CD Set by Brendan O'Hara

Delightful compositions to aid children with their Brain Gym exercises. Includes cassette of Brain Gym songs with accompanying book of words and music. The book also includes drawings and descriptions of the activities accompanying the songs, plus 10 pages of theory relevant to brain integration.

Wombat & His Mates Song Book & CD Set by Brendan O'Hara

This songbook and cd contains more delightful songs and activities and movements to enhance learning and co-ordination for 3-8-year-olds to support their Brain Gym exercises. Whilst there is focus on the midline and cross crawling this book and CD also focuses on the pre-crawling and crawling developmental stages. The book once again is set out clearly with music, words, illustrations, explanations and theory.

Bean Bag Ditties CD & 2 Beanbags by Brendan O'Hara

The Beanbag Ditties are simple melodies and tunes to be sung whilst performing the beanbag games & activities. Besides being fun and helping with co-ordination generally, these games & activities help to integrate the Brain Gym and developmental movements.

Brain Gym Stickers

Colourful stickers for each Brain Gym movement.

Brain Gym Teachers Edition by Paul and Gail Dennison

It covers in detail all the 26 Brain Gym movements including instructions on how to do each movement, what it activates the brain for, targeted academic skills, how to vary the movement to keep it fresh and exciting, teaching tips to help students perform each Brain Gym properly and how the movement relates to the behaviour and posture of the student. The second part gives the sets of Brain Gym needed to switch on for effective thinking, reading, spelling, maths, writing, listening, speaking and sport.

Learning to Learn by Christine Ward & Jan Daley

This book contains exciting new knowledge about learning and contains dozens of brain friendly way to improve learning including showing where Brain Gym fits into the whole realm of whole brain learning and brain friendly learning techniques. You can help your students be the best they can be at learning in school and life by using this book. This book is suitable for all pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary teaching.

Making The Brain Body Connection by Sharon Promislow

This is a fantastic book blending leading brain research with simple techniques from Brain Gym. Set out in clearly identifiable sections with copious illustrations for children and adults alike, This is a marvelous book for children, parents, teachers and kinesiology personnel. It is very easy to read & follow.

Brain Gym Activity Cards

A set of laminated cards, including one for each of the 26 Brain Gym® activities, a PACE card, and 6 blank cards for photos of your child (students) doing the movements. Suggestions for group and individual use are offered.

For a Brain Gym catalogue see www.wholebrain.com or contact Claire Hocking for more details.