

FOSTERING ACADEMIC TENACITY: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity can improve both mental and physical health, impact academic and professional success and contribute to wellbeing in meaningful ways. Physical activity is shown to reduce stress and promote enjoyment, and enhance social interactions (Taylor et al., 2013). Research suggests university settings can play a key role in promoting frequent breaks in sedentary time as a great starting point to improve academic performance and reduce mental fatigue (Felez-Nobrega et al., 2018).



PLAN

Creating opportunities for physical activity can be done in a variety of ways.

- How can you facilitate opportunities for physical activity throughout your course?
- How can you design opportunities to be inclusive and inviting?

IMPLEMENT

When implementing this strategy, consider spaces, timing, and activities as different areas that you can adapt.

- Are there certain times in the course that make sense for different kinds of activities?
- What kinds of activities can be both meaningful for your students and make sense within the context of your learning environment?



REFLECT

As you try this strategy, make time to reflect on your practice.

- How has the strategy been working for you?
- How has it been working for your students?
- What might you try next?

Scan here to view this toolkit online.



PLAN

As you consider how you would promote physical activity in your course and what tools and activities might work best, consider the following.



WHAT

- What would you like students to take away from these activities?
- What kinds of connection would you like to facilitate?
 - With you?
 - With the TA(s)?
 - With each other?

WHEN

- When choosing the activity you'd like to use to facilitate physical activity, consider:
 - How familiar are students with the activity?
 - Can every student participate in the activity?
 - Are these activities a required component of your course?
 - Are there certain points of the term that you would like to have these activities?
 - How does this activity fit with the other components for your course?
 - How does it fit within each lesson plan?

HOW

- UBC has a variety of tools and resources to help you bring physical activity into your classroom environment - explore [Get Moving with UBC Recreation](#). 
- Ever Active Schools has many resources to help you think about getting moving in the classroom such as their [daily physical activity ideas](#). 



IMPLEMENT

Implementing a new approach for the first time is an experiment. Here are some examples of activities that you could use to embed physical activity within your course. Consider how you might use or adopt these ideas to your learning environment.

Schedule a walking meeting

- Explore [UBC's walking meeting maps](#).
- Hold a portion of your office hours for walking meetings.
- Provide students with the option of a walking discussion.
- Consider taking your next phone call for a walk.
- Explore other opportunities to [take learning outdoors](#).



Incorporate 5-10 minutes of physical activity throughout your class



- Make time for a movement break:
 - During a topic change - this is a great time to refocus your audience with a physical activity break.
 - In the last five minutes to end class on a high note with some fun and energy.
- There are different ways to incorporate movement breaks:
 - Experiment with [progressive muscle relaxation](#).
 - Take time for mindful breathing or [explore chair yoga](#).
 - Invite the [Move U Crew](#) into your class.
 - Play videos (i.e., [Random Acts of Exercise](#)).
 - Students can sign up to lead movement breaks for their peers.

Encourage students to plan movement breaks beyond the classroom

- Remind students of the benefits of movement breaks:
 - [Learn about resources to embed into your classroom](#).
- Share resources that students can access outside of class time:
 - [Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines](#).
 - [Get Moving with UBC Recreation](#).



REFLECT

As you reflect on how this strategy is working for you and your students, consider gathering feedback to inform what you might try next.

How are students engaging with the activities?

Ask students:

- How do you feel these active breaks relate to your experience in this class?
- How do you feel these active breaks relate to your wellbeing as a student?
- As a result of participating in active breaks, have you tried incorporating activity in your routine outside of the classroom?
- What opportunities did you have throughout the course that helped you build relationships with peers?

REFERENCES

- Felez-Nobrega, M., Hillman, C. H., Dowd, K. P., Cirera, E., & Puig-Ribera, A. (2018). ActivPAL™ determined sedentary behaviour, physical activity and academic achievement in college students. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 36(20), 2311-2316, DOI: 10.1080/02640414.2018.1451212 .
- Taylor, W. C., King, K. E., Shegog, R., Paxton, R. J., Evans-Hudnall, G. L., Rempel, D. M., ... & Yancey, A. K. (2013). Booster Breaks in the workplace: participants' perspectives on health-promoting work breaks. *Health Education Research*, 28(3), 414-425.

