

Student Break Cards

Mermaids



4 Break Supports + Progress Charts



Clear Visuals for Predictable
Break Routines

TEACH STUDENTS TO
ASK FOR A BREAK
AND RETURN TO
LEARNING

SCROLL
to take a look inside!

STUDENT BREAK CARDS

More Than Just a Card to Hand Out

When a student becomes overwhelmed, knowing how to ask for a break can be a skill we need to teach.

Teach and practice the routine—not just how to use the card.

✓ 4 Break Card Formats + Optional Progress Charts



Needing a Break Is Not a Failure

Adults ask for a moment or step away when they need space.

Some students need us to teach them how.

✓ **Asking for support is a skill worth teaching.**



BEFORE FRUSTRATION ESCALATES

Teach students to

- 1 Recognize when they need a break.
- 2 Show or give the card to an adult.
- 3 Follow the break routine and rejoin.



✓ **Practice when calm—not only when overwhelmed.**

SOMETIMES ADULTS NOTICE FIRST

Offer a visual cue when a student does not yet recognize or communicate that they need a break.

✓ **Offer support—
not punishment.**

Offer a
Break



Offer a
Movement Break



MAKE THE BREAK ROUTINE PREDICTABLE

Teach the student what to expect before, during, and after a break.

How: Request or accept a break.

Where: Go to the agreed place.

What: Use the agreed break options.

When: Recognize when the break is ending.

Return: Rejoin with support as needed.

✓ **Model and practice—not just explain.**



WON'T STUDENTS USE BREAKS TO AVOID WORK?

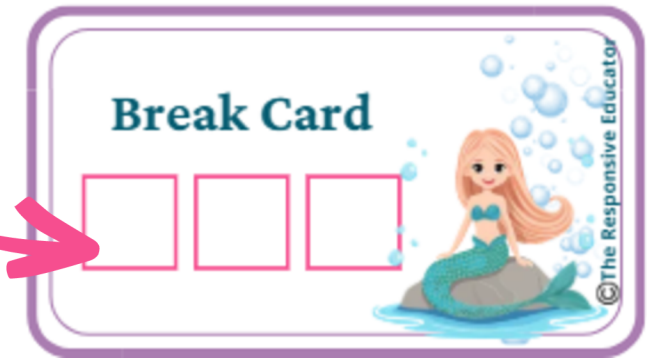
- ★ **Teach that asking works** - When teaching a break request to replace escalation, initially honor each request for the agreed break. Students need to trust that asking gets them support.
- ★ **Recognize progress** - Several appropriately requested breaks can mean less lost learning time than a meltdown and lengthy recovery.
- ★ **Build coping skills at the same time** - Teach ways to handle frustration and reinforce staying with manageable tasks. As readiness grows, breaks may become shorter or happen closer to the activity.

WHEN IS THE 3-BREAK CARD APPROPRIATE?

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Consider it when the student:

- Consistently requests breaks and follows the routine.
- Is developing ways to manage frustration and return to tasks.
- Has a support plan and observation data that support a planned limit.



Set a time frame that fits the student

- Three breaks per hour, half day, or full day—based on individual need.
Teach when the boxes reset.

Needed breaks remain available after all three boxes are marked.

The adult-offered card can help cue a break when a student is becoming overwhelmed.

REINFORCE THE BREAK ROUTINE

Use the optional progress charts to recognize one skill at a time.

1 Choose a skill, such as:

Asking for a break.

Using a coping strategy.

Rejoining the activity with support.

2 Add a sticker or mark when the student demonstrates the chosen skill.

A progress chart for reinforcing the break routine. It features a 6x5 grid of boxes. The first three rows are partially filled with yellow stars: the first row has 5 stars, the second row has 5 stars, and the third row has 3 stars. The remaining three rows are empty. To the left of the grid are several blue bubbles. At the top right of the chart is a small illustration of a girl with pink hair and a green dress. Below the grid, the text '©The Responsive Educator' is visible.

★	★	★	★	★
★	★	★	★	★
★	★	★		

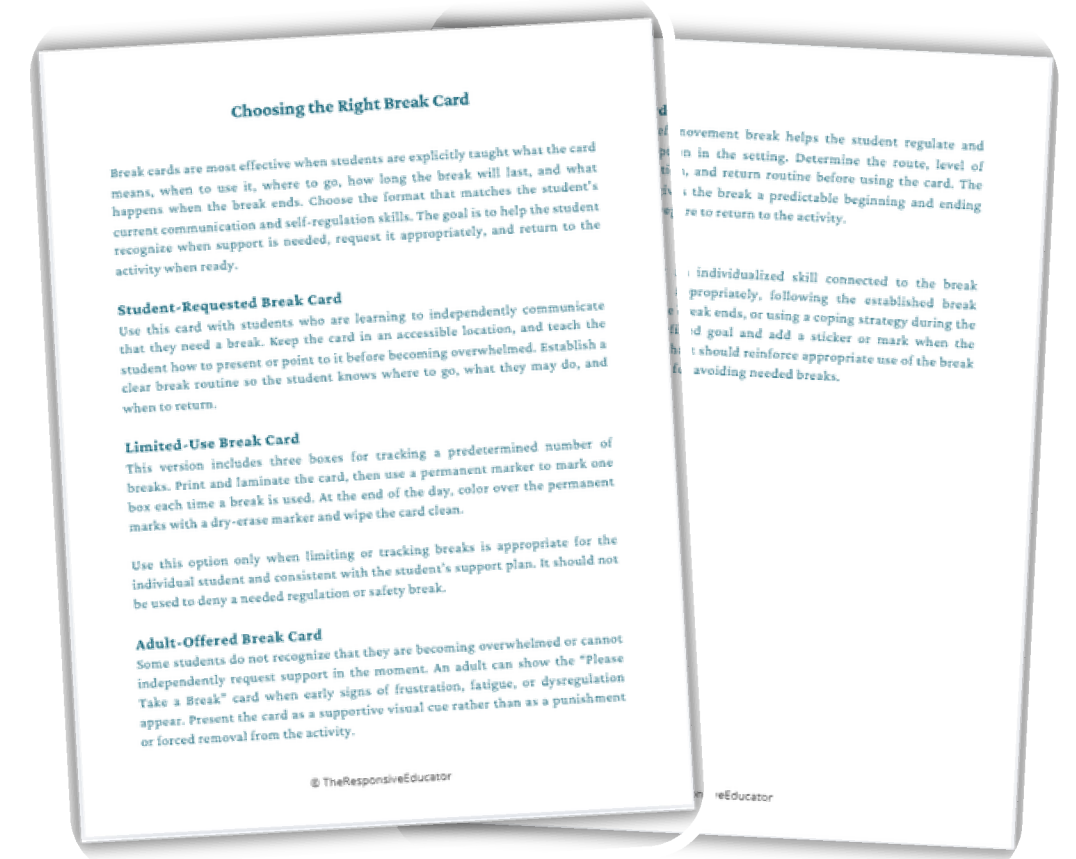
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Recognize successful use of the routine—not going without needed breaks.

What's Included

Multiple designs for each break card type

- Student-requested break cards
- Three-box break cards
- Adult-offered break cards
- Five-minute walk cards
- Coordinating progress charts
- Directions for choosing and using the formats



Printable PDF • Not Editable • Print, Cut, and Laminate Cards