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!

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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



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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.**



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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.**

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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



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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.**



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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.

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Honor the need for a break while building skills to handle challenges.

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.

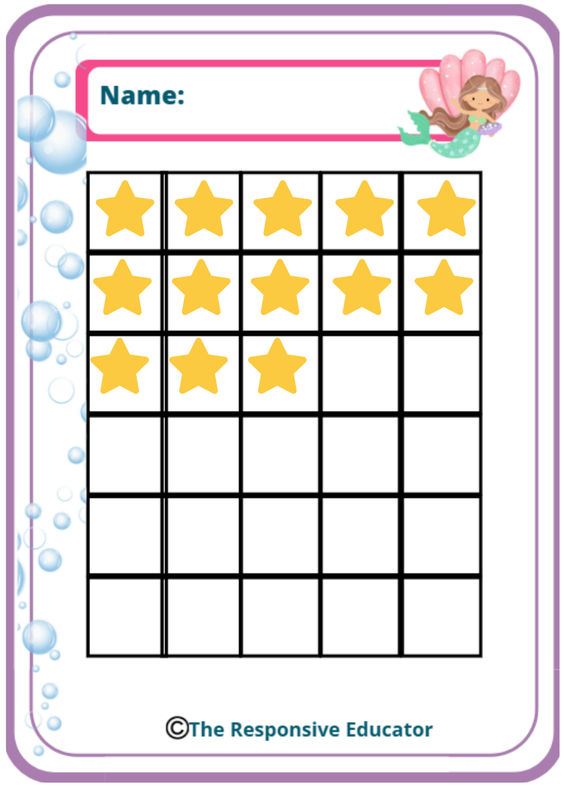
1 **Choose a skill, such as:**

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.**

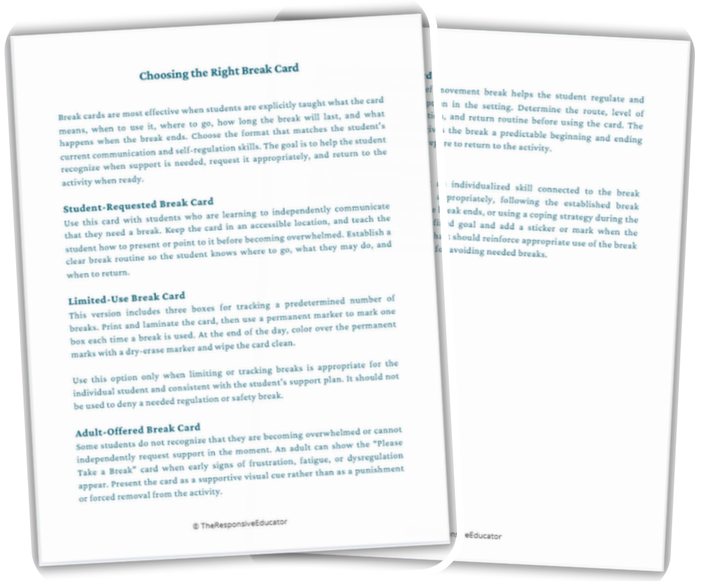


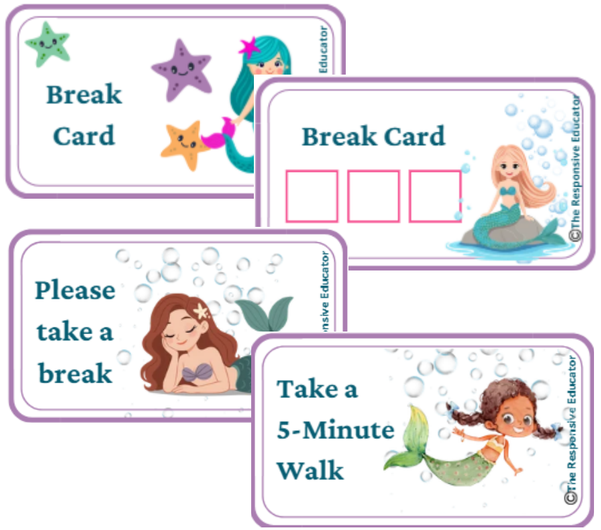
Recognize successful use of the routine—not going without needed breaks.

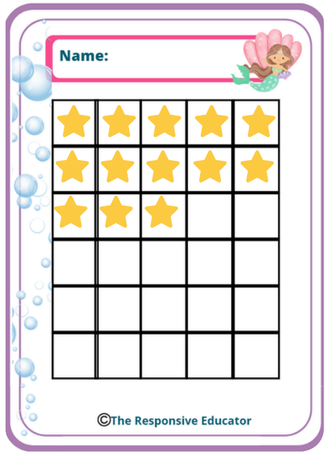
What's Included

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