Suggestions for Using Nature Pause Partners Cards

24 simple outdoor brain breaks for pausing, connecting, and resetting together.

Nature Pause Partners are short, nature-based brain breaks designed for two students to complete together. Each card guides partners through a simple 3-5 minute experience involving noticing, gentle movement, imagination, cooperation or quiet connection.

Nature Pause Partners activities have been selected to offer students the opportunity to pause, focus, reconnect, and prepare for what comes next, while naturally practising social skills of communication, cooperation, and perspective taking.

They can be used across the school day, including:

- as part of your class Morning Meeting routine
- before returning to class after recess or lunch
- during transitions between lessons
- before starting challenging learning tasks or
- whenever students would benefit from a short outdoor brain break.

Using the Pause Partners Cards

1. Decide student pairings
The unique partner element of the Nature Pause Partners Cards provides students with low-pressure opportunities to practise social emotional skills as part of the school day.

2. Take students outdoors
You don't need a dedicated nature space. A garden, playground, oval edge, courtyard or space under a shady tree will work.

3. Choose a card
Select a card based on the time available, your students and the kind of pause that might be useful. There is no need to work through the cards in any particular order.

Provide each pair a card or read one prompt aloud for everyone.

3. Allow 3-5 minutes for the activity
Encourage students to take time to notice, think, communicate and work things out together.

4. Bring students back together
Use a familiar classroom signal to bring students back together.

Creating Inclusive Nature Processes

Small adjustments can make the Nature Pause Partners process accessible to more students.

This might involve not requiring students to touch natural materials, sit still or speak aloud, and considering individual preferences regarding noise, texture, light, movement and personal space.

Adapting Cards to Suit Your Students

The same card can work in different ways, depending on your group, setting, and available time. Adaptions include:

Make it shorter: Reduce the activity time.

Make it simpler: Focus on just one part of the prompt.

Make it more active: Let partners move through the space as they explore.

Change the communication mode: Students point, demonstrate, gesture, or draw, instead of explaining verbally.

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NATURE PAUSE PARTNERS

INSTRUCTIONS

Students work in pairs to complete a 3-5 minute brain break outdoors.

1. Decide student pairings.
2. Take students outdoors.
3. Provide each pair a card or read one prompt aloud for everyone.
4. Allow 3-5 minutes for the activity.
5. Use a familiar classroom signal to bring students back together.

MIMIC ME

Listen for an interesting sound nearby.

SHARE:
Take turns to try to make the sound you hear with your own voice or body. Did you both notice the same sound?

TAKE FIVE

Each partner collects three small, natural objects of the same colour and lines them up from lightest to darkest.

SHARE:
Combine all six items to make a pattern.

THREE CLUES

Choose something you can see in nature. Give your partner three clues without naming the object. Can they find it?

SHARE:
Swap roles.

NATURE OPPOSITES

Together, spot something high, then something low. Take turns choosing another pair of opposites and see if you can spot an example of each.

SHARE:
What did looking for opposites help you to notice?

WHERE IS THAT SOUND?

Listen carefully to the sounds around you. Listen for one sound that really catches your attention.

SHARE:
Without telling your partner what you hear, point in the direction of the sound. Can they hear it too?

I SEE, YOU SEE

Partner A begins, saying, "I see a ..." and naming something they can see. Partner B repeats the item and adds something new, "I see the ... and I see ..." Keep taking turns to add new items.

SHARE:
How long can you keep the conversation going?

WEATHER REPORT

Take 30 seconds to notice the sky, wind and temperature. What can you see, hear or feel that tells you about today's weather?

SHARE:
Give your partner a one sentence weather report.

THE SIZE OF THINGS

Look for three things in nature that are bigger than you. Now look for three things that are smaller than you.

SHARE:
Describe one object to your partner without naming it. Can they find what you were looking at?

NATURE'S TEXTURES

Together, find three safe, natural objects. Arrange them on a touch scale - softest to hardest, smoothest to roughest, or coolest to warmest.

SHARE:
How did you decide where each object belongs?

NO WORDS

Without talking (use gestures and facial expressions to communicate), work together to build a sculpture from small sticks and leaves you find on the ground.

SHARE:
Discuss what helped you to understand each other.

SLOW LOOK

Together choose one natural object to notice. Both look carefully at it for 30 seconds.

SHARE:
Take turns to share one word to describe the object. How many descriptive words can you share?

NATURE MIRROR

Sit or stand facing your partner. One partner makes slow movements inspired by something moving nearby. The other partner mirrors their actions.

SHARE:
Swap roles.

NATURE SHAPES

Look around and choose a shape you can see. Use your bodies together to make your own version of the shape. Take turns choosing shapes to make.

SHARE:
Which was the trickiest shape to make?

UP, DOWN, AROUND

Take turns being the leader. The leader calls 'up' or 'down' or 'around'. Both partners immediately make a movement to match the word called.

SHARE:
Which word gave you the most ideas for movement - up, down or around?

FIVE MOVE RESET

Together, plan a sequence of five quick movements, for example, stretch up high, turn or jump on the spot, shake your body, etc. Repeat your five move reset twice more.

SHARE:
Which movement makes your body feel most ready to learn again?

MIRROR STRETCH

Stand facing your partner. One partner slowly stretches their body in different ways while the other mirrors their movements. Try stretching tall, making your body wide or really small.

SHARE:
Tell your partner which stretch felt the best.

10 TOGETHER

Choose a movement, such as star jumps or marching on the spot. Take turns leading as you try to complete 10 movements, matching each other's time and rhythm.

SHARE:
What helped you to keep in time?

MOVE BY MOVE

Make one simple movement. Your partner copies your move and adds one of their own. Keep taking turns, repeating the movements in order and adding a new one each time.

SHARE:
Which movement was your favourite?

TEXTURE DETECTIVES

Find a natural object with an interesting texture. It might be rough, smooth, soft, hard, prickly or bumpy!

SHARE:
Describe the texture without showing your partner the object. Can they find something that feels similar?

NATURE NICKNAMES

Choose something nearby and invent a fun nickname for it based on what it looks like or does. Tell your partner the nickname and why you chose it.

SHARE:
Which name made you smile?

NATURE SUPERPOWERS

Choose a plant, tree, rock, or another element of nature that you can see. Decide what its superpower would be.

SHARE:
Which superpower would you like to borrow for a day?

TINY ADVENTURE

Imagine you suddenly became as tiny as an ant. Take turns to add to a story about an exciting adventure through the nature around you.

SHARE:
What do you think would be most challenging about being as small as an ant?

CASTING AGENT

Look up at the sky. Imagine you are choosing a cloud to play a character in a movie. Together, decide what character it will play. (No clouds? Choose a tree!)

SHARE:
Each share one thing about the cloud character's personality.

MEET IN THE MIDDLE

Stand several large steps apart. Each choose a fun way to move. Start at the same time and see if you can meet exactly in the middle at the same moment!

SHARE:
What helped you to arrive at the same time?