



OPTIONS CENTER EDUCATION TOPIC



Activities for Enhancing COMPREHENSION

If a student has processing problems, one main result is that the student will experience a more difficult time comprehending information. Comprehension difficulties lead to 1) misperceptions about what the teacher wants them to do, 2) the student being unable to retain and access information, and/or 3) the student is unable to synthesize information to make it understandable and relevant to new situations. Being able to fully comprehend information requires us to access both hemispheres of the brain (also called the neo-cortex). In order to access both right and left hemispheres of the brain, we must have an integrated brain, meaning the right and left hemispheres are able to communicate between each other. Most people have a dominant hemisphere that they utilize more often than the other. If this is the case, they do not have an integrated brain, which in turn makes comprehension more difficult. A definition of comprehension is deciding a priority and then the ability to have enough focus to maintain that priority. In order for successful listening and reading comprehension to take place, the student must be able to decode what the student hears or reads and then be able to internalize the information and attach a meaning to it. The student must be able to focus his/her attention on the words in order to actively process information. Stress due to processing problems, poor diet, and/or anxiety-producing situations can prevent full comprehension because it weakens the student's focusing abilities. Many of Brain Gym's® lengthening activities decrease a student's stress level, allowing the student to better comprehend new information.



The Owl [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 17] also increases relaxation while studying. The directions for The Owl are the following: 1) Grasp the right shoulder with your left

hand and squeeze the muscles firmly. 2) Turn your head to look back over the right shoulder. 3) Breathe deeply and pull both shoulders back. 4) Turn your head to look over the left shoulder, opening the shoulders again. 5) Drop your chin to your chest and breathe deeply, letting all neck and shoulder muscles relax. 6) Repeat with left hand squeezing right shoulder. Variations of The Owl include making a "woooing" sound while exhaling and doing the head turns while a partner massages the student's neck and shoulder muscles. The Owl relieves any tension while performing mathematical calculations and helps with memorization.

The next exercise is **The Footflex** [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 19], which is done by grasping the tender spots in the ankle, calf, and behind the knee, one at a time, while slowly pointing and flexing the foot.

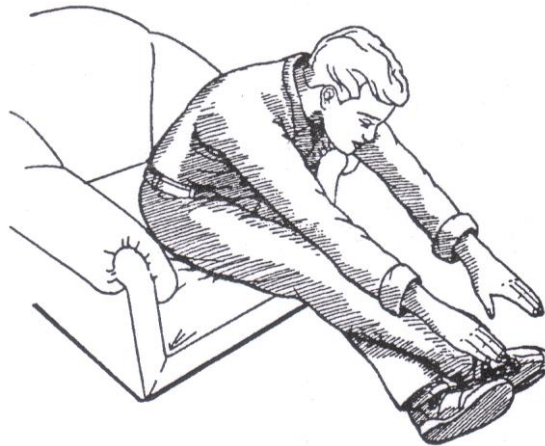
The Grounder [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 22] is done by the following: 1) Stand with your legs comfortably apart. 2) Point your right foot towards the right. 3) Keep the left foot pointed straight ahead. 4) Bend the right knee as you exhale and then inhale as you straighten the right leg. 5) Keep your hips tucked under. 6) Repeat three times on the right, and then repeat on the left side.

Arm Activation [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 18], is a lengthening exercise performed using the following directions: 1) Hold your right arm up next to your ear using your left hand. 2) Exhale gently while activating the muscles by pushing the arm against the left hand in four directions (front, back, in, and away from the ear). 3) Repeat with left arm up, being held by the right hand. Arm Activation can also be done with a partner. The teacher stands behind the student (who is sitting or standing) and activates each of the student's arms in all four directions (away from head, forward, backward, and toward the ear). The student can exhale on the exertion (or activation stage) and inhale in the resting stage. Arm Activation improves gross-motor and fine-motor skills by lengthening the muscles of the upper chest and shoulders. This in turn improves handwriting. Arm Activation also increases attention span and focus for written work, improves breathing and relaxed attitude, and enhances the student's ability to express ideas.

The Calf Pump [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 20] is done by the following: 1) Stand and lean forward on one leg and exhale. 2) Press the back heel gently to the ground. 3)

As you lean forward, lift your heel up and take a deep breath. 4) Repeat three times on each side. 5) The more you bend the forward knee, the more lengthening you feel in the back of the calf.

The Gravity Glider is a movement re-education activity to restore the integrity of the hamstrings, hips and pelvic area. The movement uses balances and gravity to release tension in the hips and pelvis, allowing more comfortable standing and sitting postures. It is done by the following: 1) Sitting comfortably, cross one foot over the other at the ankles and bend forward, letting gravity take over. 2) Really stretch. Feel the upper body as fluid and separate from your legs and hips. 3) Reaching forward from the ribcage allows the legs and muscles of the back to lengthen and relax. Exhale as you reach down and forward. 4) Let your arms glide and explore all areas you can reach...to the left, right and center. Inhale as the arms and upper body are raised. 5) Repeat three times, and then reverse position of the feet.



Source: Cox, Helen K., Blaine Patino. *Alternative Health Care, Space Age Interpretations of Age-Old Truths*, M. Press. 1994. p. 139

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