



Break Cards

And How to Use Them

Introduction:

When children don't have a way to communicate with us what they want or need, they tend to use inappropriate behaviors like tantrums to tell us instead. Often, children use behaviors to tell us that they don't want to do something. When a child is just learning to communicate, we can teach him to use a break card to let us know he's done with something instead of crying, screaming, hitting, or using other unwanted behaviors.

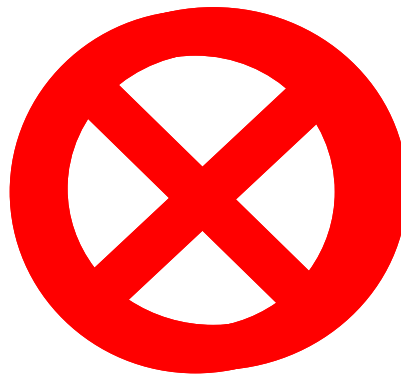
Instructions:

1. Print out these break cards on sturdy paper and laminate them. Place them around the room in places where the child will likely want to get out of something.
2. When the child starts to misbehave and you suspect it is because he doesn't want to do something, help him pick up a break card and hand it to an adult. The adult that he hands it to should say "Break. You want a break. Ok, you may take a break" and then allow the child to leave the activity immediately.
3. Keep doing this until the child starts to use the break card on his own without using the unwanted behaviors.
4. Once the child is consistently doing this on his own, start to prolong the break slightly. To start, say "you can take your break in 5 seconds" and then count calmly to 5. Then, the next time you can count to 6. Then, later on, you can make it so that the child has to do one small part of the activity before leaving. The idea is to prolong it a little longer than he's used to but not so long that he reverts back to the unwanted behaviors. It can be tricky to get this timing so some trial and error will be required.

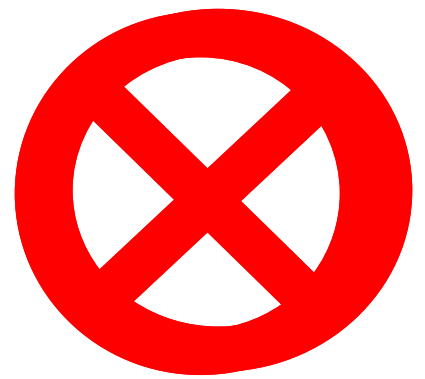




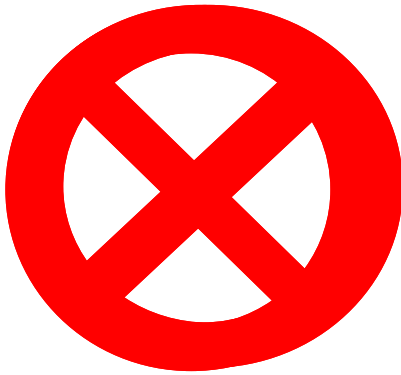
I need a break!



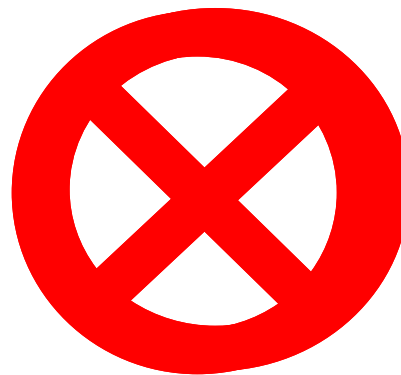
I need a break!



I need a break!



I need a break!



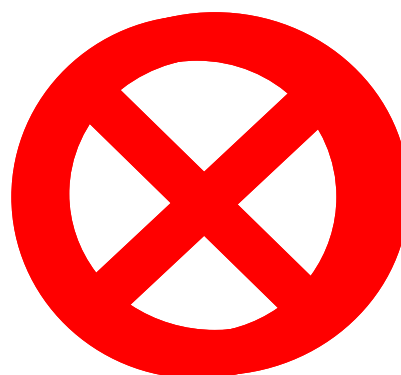
I need a break!



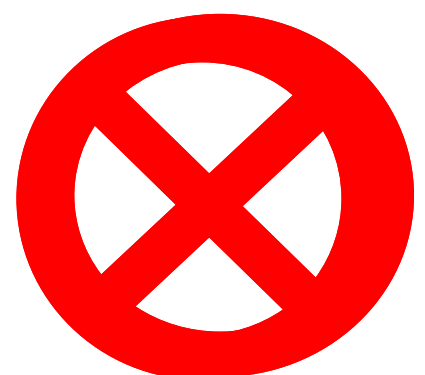
I need a break!



I need a break!



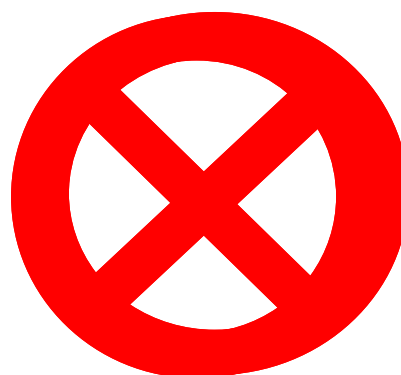
I need a break!



I need a break!



I need a break!



I need a break!



I need a break!