

**TEST READINESS - EXERCISE**

What would you think if your teacher said it was time to get ready for a big test by taking a 10-minute walk? It might sound a little silly, but studies suggest that short bursts of exercise are important for school success.

The brain isn't a muscle, but like a muscle, it needs exercise to grow. According to Harvard psychologist John Ratey, exercise doesn't make you smarter. Instead, it makes your brain more ready to learn. Getting out of your seat and moving around improves mental sharpness. Movement increases the flow of blood to the brain. With more oxygen in the brain, your brain works better. During exercise, your body also produces more brain chemicals that help you pay attention better.

Many studies have shown how exercise improves learning. In one Illinois high school, students did physical activities before they went to math class. The result? Student test scores improved! At another school, walking or running for thirty minutes raised problem-solving scores by 10 percent. In a North Carolina school program, ten minutes of physical activity helped students stay on task longer. Another study showed that 20 minutes of walking improved student reading scores.

What kind of exercise works? You can try any activity that raises your heart rate and makes you breathe a bit harder. It can be as easy as a ten-minute brisk walk. Dancing to some lively music does the trick too. Mixing exercise with schoolwork is another way to help you learn. For example, practicing spelling or math facts while marching around the room builds connections in the brain.

What might happen to test scores if your class did a 10-minute movement activity before a test?

**»Discuss, Record and Share:**

- 1** What does exercise do to the brain?
- 2** List examples from the text showing how exercise has been proven to help learning.
- 3** Using what you've just read about exercise and learning, how might exercising before you take a test help you get a better score?