



The big debate

Should recess be totally free time?

Some people say students should get to choose what to do on their break.

What you need to know

- Traditionally, school recess is unstructured time for students to play and exercise outdoors, choosing their own activities.
- Many schools are moving to structured recess. That's when adults lead students through one activity or offer them a small number of activities to choose from.
- Some schools have gotten rid of recess altogether to focus on academics, reduce disciplinary issues, and prevent injuries.



HAPPY TRADITION
 Recess breaks were first introduced for students in England in the 1600s and became standard in the US in the 1940s.

Recess is more than just a break from sitting in the classroom—it's one of the most fun parts of the school day. It also gives kids a chance to blow off steam, clear their heads, and be active. Whether students choose to play tag, talk to friends, or simply sit in the sun reading a book, recess offers freedom. Many educators believe that letting kids do whatever they want is the best use of that time. At some schools, however, kids have to choose from a set of specific activities during recess, and often they participate in them together. Some educators say this is better for kids and prevents other issues from arising. What do you think? Should recess be totally free time?

Yes—choice is important for kids

Kids spend so many hours a day in class, doing homework, and going to after-school lessons or practice. They deserve some free time with no pressure. And not every student loves playing four square or climbing on the jungle gym. Letting them choose what they want to do empowers them and lets them engage in activities that interest them. Sure, sometimes kids can argue or get frustrated when they play together. But that also gives them a chance to develop their problem-solving and social skills and learn how to get along with others. Teachers or staff can always be nearby to help out if necessary and keep recess safe for everyone.

No—structure makes things fair

Not every student feels comfortable joining games on the playground. That's not a problem when adults are around to help manage recess. They can make sure everyone gets a turn and no one is left out, regardless of their ability or skill level. Structured recess also helps prevent kids from getting into arguments about the rules of a game or whose turn it is. They are also less likely to skin a knee or bump their head, which makes it more fun for everyone—and isn't fun the point? If everyone takes part in certain activities, they can all return to class refreshed and able to focus on schoolwork, making them better learners.

YES Three reasons recess should be totally free time

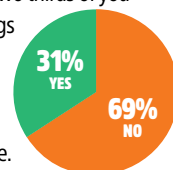
- 1 During a long, structured day at school, students deserve the time and freedom to choose their own activities.
- 2 Not every child enjoys sports or games like tag. Some just want to read a book or talk to their friends at recess.
- 3 When kids figure out how to play together, they develop important life skills.

NO Three reasons recess should not be totally free time

- 1 Structured recess means everyone gets a turn and no one feels left out.
- 2 When recess is monitored, kids are less likely to get into arguments or hurt themselves.
- 3 If all students take part in the activities, everyone gains the benefits of recess and returns to class ready to learn.

LAST WEEK'S POLL

Last week, we asked whether lip-synching should be allowed. More than two thirds of you said no, songs should be sung live at a concert performance.



What do you think?

Now that you've read a bit more about this issue, visit kids.theweekjunior.com/polls so you can vote in our debate. Vote **YES** if you think recess should be totally free time or **NO** if you don't. We'll publish the results next week.

The goal of the big debate is to present two sides of an issue fairly in order to stimulate discussion and allow our readers to make up their minds. The views on this page do not reflect those of *The Week Junior*, and the page is not funded by third parties.