

Teaching can have a heavy and demanding workload. That's why it's important for your own health and safety – as well as your students' learning – that you have the opportunity to take regular breaks.

Give me a break



Breaks ARE productive

Regular breaks give you a chance to reflect, to have the essential informal professional discussions and, of course, to make sure you are getting the sustenance you need for the next set of lessons.

What is a break?

A break for teachers means that you are free of workplace responsibilities, such as duty, departmental meetings, study groups or supervision of students. It means that you have the chance to sit down, have your lunch, use the bathroom, or chat to colleagues. Under the law you have the right to a reasonable chance to rest, refresh and take care of personal matters. This usually means two paid ten minute rest breaks and one unpaid lunch break.

Non-contact time does not count as a break

Teachers use non-contact time for individual duties, such as lesson plans, marking, research or pastoral care of students. You are entitled to both non-contact time and rest and meal breaks.

Breaks for breastfeeding

There are also separate legal entitlements to have appropriate facilities and breaks for employees who wish to breastfeed (including expressing and storing breast milk).

Your rights

You still have a right to rest and meal breaks in law. This is best practice and helps boards to avoid liability for health and safety concerns. There are a lot of different ways for how this can work in schools to balance the needs of students and staff. Further advice, including model timetables for schools are available on the PPTA website.

Flexibility around breaks

Any changes to your rest and meal breaks need to be:

- Reasonable and necessary or reasonable and agreed;
- Subject to consultation with staff;
- Developed having regard to the good faith principles in the Employment Relations Act 2000;
- Subject to compensation for staff;
- Not in breach of health and safety obligations; and
- Not inconsistent with your timetable policy.

This applies every time there are any changes – at an individual or group level.

Nothing in the law changes your right to non-contact time in the collective agreement. There have been no changes to the law relating to infant feeding breaks.

For more information and to seek advice about rest and meal breaks at your school or developing a timetable policy, visit www.ppta.org.nz or contact your local field officer.

