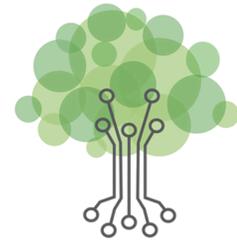# Tips for
CS Lab Rules

CSTeachingTips.org/Tips-for-lab-rules

☑ **1 Request eyes, ears, & monitors off**
to ensure students listen to announcements.

> I have an announcement. Please turn off your monitors.

☑ **2 Count down before breaks**
to avoid "just one more thing" negotiations.

> We will have monitors off in 30 seconds.

☑ **3 Explain food and drink restrictions**
to help students understand computers.

> We have to be careful because water could ruin the computer.

☑ **4 Set the default homepage**
to enable students to get started quickly.

> Type in your login after you open your web browser!

☑ **5 Schedule breaks for stretching**
to encourage sustainable ergonomics.

> Give your eyes a rest and look around the room!

☑ **6 Facilitate showing off work**
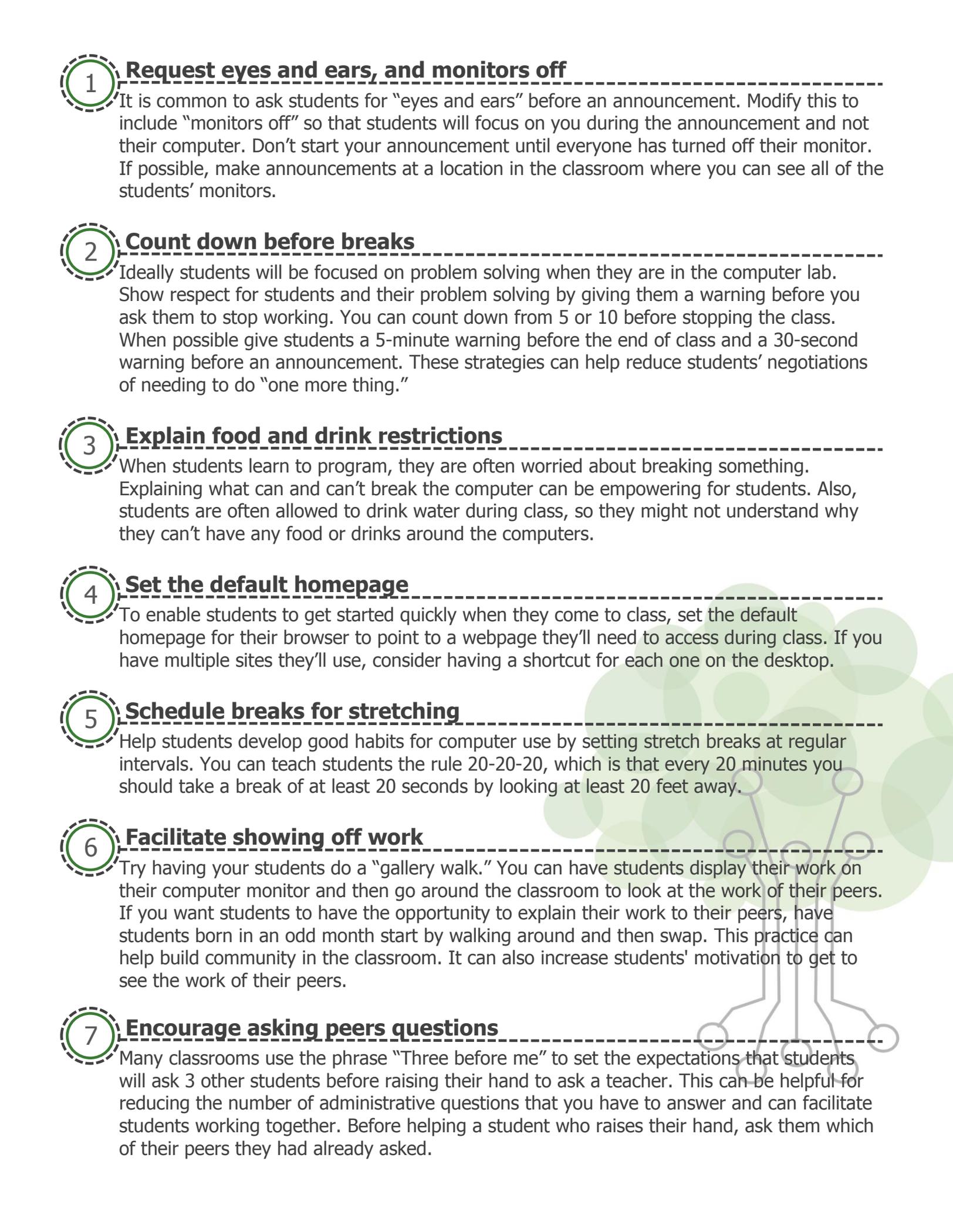to motivate students and build community.

> In 30 minutes we'll do a gallery walk to share our work!

☑ **7 Encourage asking peers questions**
to encourage collaboration and minimize roadblocks.

> Ask three before me!

csteachingtips

1 Request eyes and ears, and monitors off

It is common to ask students for "eyes and ears" before an announcement. Modify this to include "monitors off" so that students will focus on you during the announcement and not their computer. Don't start your announcement until everyone has turned off their monitor. If possible, make announcements at a location in the classroom where you can see all of the students' monitors.

2 Count down before breaks

Ideally students will be focused on problem solving when they are in the computer lab. Show respect for students and their problem solving by giving them a warning before you ask them to stop working. You can count down from 5 or 10 before stopping the class. When possible give students a 5-minute warning before the end of class and a 30-second warning before an announcement. These strategies can help reduce students' negotiations of needing to do "one more thing."

3 Explain food and drink restrictions

When students learn to program, they are often worried about breaking something. Explaining what can and can't break the computer can be empowering for students. Also, students are often allowed to drink water during class, so they might not understand why they can't have any food or drinks around the computers.

4 Set the default homepage

To enable students to get started quickly when they come to class, set the default homepage for their browser to point to a webpage they'll need to access during class. If you have multiple sites they'll use, consider having a shortcut for each one on the desktop.

5 Schedule breaks for stretching

Help students develop good habits for computer use by setting stretch breaks at regular intervals. You can teach students the rule 20-20-20, which is that every 20 minutes you should take a break of at least 20 seconds by looking at least 20 feet away.

6 Facilitate showing off work

Try having your students do a "gallery walk." You can have students display their work on their computer monitor and then go around the classroom to look at the work of their peers. If you want students to have the opportunity to explain their work to their peers, have students born in an odd month start by walking around and then swap. This practice can help build community in the classroom. It can also increase students' motivation to get to see the work of their peers.

7 Encourage asking peers questions

Many classrooms use the phrase "Three before me" to set the expectations that students will ask 3 other students before raising their hand to ask a teacher. This can be helpful for reducing the number of administrative questions that you have to answer and can facilitate students working together. Before helping a student who raises their hand, ask them which of their peers they had already asked.