

Executive Function Strategies for Academic Success



Executive Function	Tips and Strategies
1. Organization of Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Begin with the end in mind.” • Give homework a home • Create organizational checklists • Determine a scheduled time for organization
2. Organization of Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graphic Organizers • Paragraph templates • Cornell Notes • K-W-L Charts
3. Planning and Time Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop daily and monthly planners/calendars • Create agendas and monitor real vs. estimated time on task • Prioritize assignments by due date, difficulty, & estimated time on task • Model time management with a family calendar
4. Initiating Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break down assignments into manageable chunks • Get started on something concrete • Use digital tools like timers and alarms • Understand why the student is procrastinating
5. Flexibility and Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a consistent, predictable environment • Use preview and review techniques to move through transitions • Create visual cues for routines and schedules • Encourage multiple ways of problem-solving
6. Working Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help students interact with the material in multiple ways • Chunk material into manageable and/or “like” pieces • Relate content to something personal • Employ mnemonics: jingles, rhymes, acronyms, trigger charts
7. Self-monitoring and Follow-through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check work in multiple ways (Is it done? Is it done well? Silly mistakes?) • Use checklists for editing, revising, managing workload • Self-advocacy and problem solving when stuck • “Your homework is not done until it is filed away and ready to turn in.”
8. Impulsivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicit teaching of acceptable vs. unacceptable behavior • Use of fidget tools • Positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior • Use visual and verbal cues to redirect
9. Emotional Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a plan in advance to handle “off” moments • Teach self-advocacy skills • Use pre-planned motor breaks • Suggest alternatives for behaviors, actions and words

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Five Key Take-Aways

1. One size does not fit all.

- a. Determine your child's best way.

2. Getting unstuck is an important life skill.

- a. Ask: What can you do?

3. Procrastination is not laziness.

- a. Diagnose the root issue, then problem-solve accordingly.

4. "If they could, they would. If they can't, we need to help them."

- a. No student wants to feel the weight of the world on their shoulders.

5. There is not a magic pill or remedy.

- a. New habits aren't formed in a few hours. Practice, practice, practice.

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Recommended Reading

- Harvard University: Center on the Developing Child
 - InBrief: Executive Function
 - <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-executive-function/>
- Harvard University: Center on the Developing Child
 - InBrief: Executive Function: Skills for Life and Learning
 - <https://harvardcenter.staging.wpengine.com/resources/inbrief-executive-function-skills-for-life-and-learning/>
- Understood.org
 - E-Book: Executive Function 101
 - <https://www.understood.org/en/learning-attention-issues/child-learning-disabilities/executive-functioning-issues/ebook-executive-function-101>
- Late, Lost, and Unprepared: A Parents' Guide to Helping Children with Executive Functioning -- by Cooper-Kahn and Dietzel
 - <https://www.amazon.com/Late-Lost-Unprepared-Executive-Functioning/dp/1890627844>
- Smart but Scattered: The Revolutionary “Executive Function Skills” Approach to Helping Kids Reach Their Potential – by Dawson and Guare
 - https://www.amazon.com/Smart-but-Scattered-Revolutionary-Executive/dp/1593854455/ref=pd_lpo_sbs_14_img_0?encoding=UTF8&pvc=1&refRID=FWNTGNJYD4PNV1VADVS7