



Accommodating Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

There are three main components to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): problems with inattention, and problems with impulsivity-hyperactivity. Not all students will have all three problems: some may be primarily inattentive and some may be primarily impulsive-hyperactive.

Students with ADHD may also have other conditions or challenges that are likely to significantly impact educational performance, such as executive dysfunction (EDF), what appear to be oppositional behaviors (ODD or Conduct Disorder), mood lability, tics or Tourette's Syndrome, and obsessions or compulsions or full-blown Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD).

Because executive functions are an often overlooked contributor to the difficulties these students encounter, some suggestions are incorporated in this handout, but teachers are also encouraged to see the separate handout on tips for accommodating students with EDF. If the student has any comorbid conditions (such as tics or mood disorder), also consult those handouts.

The following suggestions are organized by theme rather than by type of problem. As you will probably note, many of these suggestions are not just appropriate for students with ADHD or executive dysfunction, but will work well for the entire class. You can use this checklist to check off accommodations you want to try for a particular student, or you can use it to get ideas for classroom ideas that you may want to incorporate if you're not already using the strategy.

Some of these strategies really should be classroom-wide or building-wide, starting with kindergarten or first grade.

<i>Classroom Environment and Layout:</i>	
	Is the weekly schedule posted in a spot clearly visible to all students? Do you have meetings to point out changes in the weekly routine and enter them on a wipe-off board?
	Is the daily schedule posted in a spot clearly visible to all students? Include all parts of the daily routine and not just topics or assignments.
	If students are nonverbal, did you use pictorial representations of the schedule?
	Do you have a system for checking off each item on the schedule as it's completed?
	Does each student have a copy of their own schedule on their desk?
	If there are schedules within schedules, are there visual cues for the class and on the student's daily schedule?

	Are there visual cues posted for upcoming intermediate deadlines where all students can see them?
	Have you arranged to seat students who need frequent refocusing closer to you and next to a student who's a good role model?
	Have you insured that students who have visuomotor integration problems are seated so that they can look directly at the blackboard or your presentation area?
	Have you set up different spots in your room where students can go to work if they need to avoid too much visual or auditory stimulation? Have you created areas in your room that are shielded and cozy, e.g., a piece of carpeting with bookcases around it?
	Do you cluster your students' desks, and if so, have you made provision for students who tic and who don't want to be "on display" or who can't handle the close proximity and need more space?
	Have you allowed sufficient pathways and clear areas in the room so that students can get from their desk to yours without coming into close contact with other students?
Transitions:	
	Do you have a routine or system for cueing transitions? Your routine should have both visual and auditory cues.
	Do you have a routine or system if there's an unexpected change in routine (such as a fire drill)?
	Do you use repetitions and rituals to foster greater ease of transitions?
	Directly teach transition skills such as lining up (for younger students) and "planning for the unexpected."
	When there's a change in routine and the student needs to hurry, did you remember to give them added adult support and a whispered cue such as "Joey, can you help me get the other kids out of here quickly by getting on line and setting a good example?"
	Have you provided cognitive (and even humor cues for some things) to help the student remember the sequence?
	Some students will benefit greatly by having a larger table or a second desk to work at. The second desk gives them a change in environment, and may help them leave the previous task "behind" so that they can start the new assignment.
Organizational Skills:	
	Directly teach all students required but "hidden" skills such as chunking larger assignments into smaller, intermediate tasks and deadlines. Have them check each other to see that intermediate deadlines are entered in their homework log/assignment book.
	Have a daily routine for when homework assignments are recorded and for when books and materials are packed -- and show that on the visual cues for daily routine.
	Have a daily routine for turning in homework and notes from parents.
	Does every student have at least some responsibility for recording their own homework to whatever level they are capable of?
	Have a visual organizer that allows sufficient space for large, sloppy handwriting and that enables the student to look ahead.
	Have a homework buddy system in place for the class so that they check each other's recording of assignments; make it part of the daily routine.
	Have a buddy system in place for the class so that they check and help each other pack up necessary papers and materials; make it part of the daily routine.
	Have a system in place that all students routinely and immediately identify each piece of paper as either class work or homework and date due. Walk around the classroom to make sure that the student enters the code and due date.
	Have a color-coding system in place for prioritizing papers or for different topics/subjects.
	Have a system in place that all students routinely highlight important instructions on handouts. Have them also color highlight operations symbols on all math worksheets.
	Have a weekly routine for cleaning out desks.

	Have a weekly routine for cleaning out folders and book bags.
	Have a weekly routine for cleaning out lockers.
	Have all students bring in an extra supply of pens, pencils, tissues, or whatever they tend to lose or use up most frequently. Schedule a date on which they all check their "stash" and write notes to replenish. Follow up to see that they have.
Prosocial Skills:	
	Use lavish praise for desirable behavior. Tape record yourself for one full day or score: how many times do you give the class compliments as opposed to corrections or reprimands?
	Use private signals to cue behavior -- no "public hangings."
	Do you have some "graceful exit" systems in place?
	For students who need permission to leave the room as needed, do they have their own permanent pass so that they don't disrupt the class?
	Preview upcoming events with students and discuss expectations and plans. Role play how they might handle situations, using the POSE technique.
	Use "instant replay" to teach appropriate responses and/or to reinforce desirable behavior.
	Have the class develop a team sense of capitalizing on each other's strengths while working around weaknesses or symptoms.
	Have classroom/curricular units devoted to embracing diversity.
	Have classroom/curricular units devoted to conflict resolution skills and appropriate verbal communications -- rehearse these skills and role play.
	Model ignoring minor "infractions" and directly teach students to do the same.
	Teach self-advocacy to all students.
	Model and teach respect for individual "boundaries."
	Have one set of rules for the classroom that can work for all students; have the rules allow for accommodations so that students feel that they are all held to the same standard ("Each of us gets what s/he needs and is expected to do what s/he is capable of.")
	Have every student in the class have some assigned task or responsibility as part of the community.
	Have some group or class-based rewards and teach the students how they can encourage and assist each other in reaching those goals.
	Use proactive rather than reactive discipline, and remember that "discipline" means "training" and not "punishment."
	Teach the students how to show you that they're listening to you.
Materials and Presentations:	
	Do worksheets allow sufficient space for large, sloppy handwriting? Are there vertical guidelines for lining up columns of numbers or graph boxes to facilitate alignment?
	Are instructions color-highlighted? If not, teach the students to highlight instructions. Review instructions and check for understanding.
	Doing math? Take a moment and have all the students color highlight the operation symbols in each problem.
	For multi-step projects, introduce one step or concept at a time, and check for understanding.
	Provide study guides, outlines, and copies of any overheads.
	Doing a multi-step or big project? Show students a sample of what completed project should look like. Organize your presentations so that they work for both part-to-whole and whole-to-part learners.
	Use a visual organizer (mind map) and a template to help students organize their materials and thoughts for essays or written expressive language tasks. Have that same template used in all of their courses.
	Use as many modalities as possible. If the student's attention drifts, will they have other cues to help them find out what they missed? Plan each lesson as if you have at least one blind student and one deaf student in the class.

	Have visual cue strips on the student's desk for sequential tasks (such as editing strips).
	Teach cognitive cues and humor cues for sequential tasks, as well as providing visual cues. Teach students to develop their own mnemonics and cues.
	For students with severe problems in sustaining attention, reduce the length of the assignment and stress accuracy or quality over quantity.
Teaching Style:	
	Walk around the classroom during times when the students should be reading and discreetly tap on the page or place in the book where the student's attention should be focused.
	Privately consult with the student and ask whether the student would find it more helpful to be called on randomly or to be pre-cued that you will call on him or her. Some students maintain attention better if they know they will be called on, while others find that not knowing is a better technique.
	Develop a private joke with the ADHD student that you can use to help him or her reconnect or refocus.
	Walk around the classroom during times when you are presenting material and discreetly tap on the student's task or shoulder to refocus them.
	Use more humor in your presentations. We are all more likely to attend to something that is funny.
	When possible, incorporate comments in your discussions with the child emphasizing similarities between you and the child.
	Create some suspense in your presentations by pausing for about 10 seconds before you ask a question and/or before you answer a question.
Testing	
	Extend time on tests.
	Use test forms that allow sufficient space for large, sloppy handwriting.
	Allow student to record answers directly in test booklet.
	Highlight the directions and make sure the student understands the directions before they start their answers.
	If student has significant handwriting problems, allow them to respond orally, to dictate their answers to a scribe, or to use a word processor.
	Teach test-taking skills.
	Provide word bank or use multiple-choice rather than fill-in-the-blank format.