

# 101 TIPS FOR TEACHERS

Research shows there is an estimated 3-5% of school aged children with Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder. In response to the needs expressed by teachers for teaching strategies that work with these children, the US Department of Education has supported research in classrooms to determine successful teaching techniques to be employed by elementary school teachers to keep children focused and on task.

The following tips, for experienced and inexperienced schoolteachers alike, are tried and trusted methods for teaching children with AD/HD.

Children with AD/HD typically have problems with attention, impulsiveness, and hyperactivity. They often have difficulty paying attention in class and seem to drift aimlessly from one unfinished task to another. These children generally appear restless, fidgeting constantly in their seats, playing with pencils or other objects, often disturbing nearby students. Many children with AD/HD also have difficulty following their teacher's instructions and forming friendships with other children in the class.

Like other children with disabilities, children with AD/HD learn best when their teachers understand their special needs and individualise their educational programme to meet these needs.

*"101 Ways to Help Children with AD/HD Learn"* is a how-to guide with instructional practices you can use to help children with AD/HD in your class. The practices themselves should be part of an educational programme based around three key components - classroom accommodations, behaviour management, and individualised academic instructions.

To make this as valuable a resource as possible, you should consider these steps in developing an effective educational programme for your students with AD/HD:

- Evaluate the child's individual needs. Assess the unique educational needs of a child with AD/HD in your class. Working with a multi-disciplinary team, consider both academic and behavioural needs, using formal diagnostic assessments and informal classroom observations.
- Select appropriate instructional practices. Determine which instructional practices will meet the academic and behavioural needs you have identified for the child. Select practices that fit the content, are age appropriate, and gain the co-operation of the child.
- Integrate appropriate practices within an individualised programme. Combine the practices you have selected into an individualised educational programme. Plan how to integrate the educational activities provided to other children in your class with those selected for the child with AD/HD.

## **ACADEMIC INSTRUCTIONS**

Children with AD/HD often have difficulty learning and achieving academically in school. Effective teachers constantly monitor the child and adapt and individualise academic

instructions.

## GENERAL INSTRUCTIONAL PRINCIPLES

Effective teachers help to prepare their students to learn when they introduce, conduct, and conclude each academic lesson. These principles of effective instruction, which reflect what we know about how to educate all children in the class, will especially help a child with AD/HD to stay focused on his assigned tasks as he transitions from one lesson to another throughout the school day.

Students with AD/HD benefit from clear statements about their teacher's expectations at the beginning of the lesson. Consider these strategies:

1. **Review Previous Lessons.** Review information about previous lesson on this topic. For example, remind children that yesterday's lesson focused on learning how to regroup following subtraction. Review several problems before describing the current lesson.
2. **Set Learning Expectations.** State what students are expected to learn during the lesson. For example, explain to students that a language arts lesson will involve reading a story about Paul Bunyan and identifying new vocabulary words in the story.
3. **Set Behavioural Expectations.** Describe how students are expected to behave during the lesson. For Example, tell children that they may talk quietly to their neighbours as they work on a seat work assignment, or raise their hands to get your attention.
4. **State Needed Materials.** Identify all materials that the child will need during the lesson. For example, specify that children should use their pencils and journals for journal writing or their crayons, scissors and coloured paper for an art project, rather than leaving children to figure out for themselves the materials they may need.
5. **Explain Additional Resources.** Tell students how to obtain help in mastering the lesson. For example, remind children to refer to a certain page in a textbook to get help in completing a work sheet.

When conducting an academic lesson, effective teachers use some of the following strategies:

6. **Use Audio Visual Materials.** Use a variety of audio visual materials to present academic lessons. For examples, use an overhead projector to demonstrate how to solve an AD/HDition problem involving regrouping. The students can work on the problem at their desks, while you manipulate counters on the projector screen.
7. **Check Student Performance.** Question individual students about their mastery of the lesson. For example, you can ask a student doing seat work to demonstrate how he/she arrived at the answer to a problem, or ask individual students to state, in their own words, how the main character felt at the end of the story.
8. **Ask Probing Questions.** Probe for the correct answer before calling on another student and allow children sufficient time to work out the answer to a question. Count at least 15 seconds before giving the answer and ask follow up questions that give the child an opportunity to demonstrate that he/she knows.
9. **Perform On-going Student Evaluation.** Identify students who need AD/HDitional assistance. Watch out for signs of lack of comprehension, such as day dreaming or visual or verbal indication of frustration. Provide these children with extra explanation

or ask another student to act as a peer tutor for the lesson.

10. **Help Students Self Correct Their Own Mistakes.** Describe how students can identify and correct their own mistakes. For example, remind students that they should check their calculations in mathematics problems and reiterate how they can do that, remind students of particularly difficult spelling rules and how students can watch out for “easy to make” errors.

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11. **Focus Dawdling Students.** Remind students who dawdle to keep working and redirect these students to focus on their assigned task. For example, you can provide follow-up directions to an individual child or the entire class.
12. **Lower Noise Level.** Monitor the noise level in the classroom and provide corrective feedback if necessary. If the noise level exceeds the level appropriate for the type of lesson, remind all students, or individual students, about the behaviour rules stated at the beginning of the lesson.

Students with AD/HD often have difficulty refocusing their attention as they end one academic lesson and move on to the next lesson. Effective teacher's help their students prepare for these transitions when concluding a lesson.

13. **Provide Advance Warnings.** Provide advance warning that a lesson is about to end. Announce 5-10 minutes prior to the end of the lesson (particularly for seat work and group projects) how much time remains. You may also want to tell students at the beginning of the lesson how much time they will have to complete it.
14. **Check Assignments.** Check completed assignments for at least some students. Review with some students what they have learned during the lessons, to get a sense of how ready the class was for the lesson and to prepare for the next lesson.
15. **Preview the Next Lesson.** Instruct students how to begin preparing for the next lesson. For example, inform children that they will need to put away their text books and come to the front of the classroom for a large group spelling lesson.

## INDIVIDUALISED INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Effective teachers individualise their instructional practices based on the needs of their students in different academic subjects. Students have different ways of getting information, not all of which involve traditional reading and listening. Individualised lessons in language arts, mathematics, and organisational skills benefit not only from varying practices.

## LANGUAGE ARTS READING COMPREHENSION

To help children with AD/HD who are poor readers improve their reading comprehension skills, try the following practices:

16. **Silent Reading Time.** Establish a fixed time each day for silent reading (e.g. DEAR - Drop Everything And Read).
17. **Follow Along Reading.** Ask the child to read a story silently while listening to the teacher or another student read aloud to the whole class.
18. **Partner Reading Activities.** Pair the child with AD/HD with another student who is a strong reader. The partners take turns reading orally and listening to each other.
19. **Story Boards.** Ask the child to make story boards that illustrate the sequence of main events in a story.
20. **Storytelling.** Schedule "storytelling" sessions where the child can retell a story he/she has read recently.
21. **Play-acting.** Schedule "play-acting" sessions where the child can role play different characters in a favourite story.

22. **Word Bank.** Keep a word bank or dictionary of new or “hard to read” sight vocabulary words.
23. **Board Games for Reading Comprehension.** Play board games that provide practice with target reading comprehension skills or sight vocabulary words.
24. **Computer Games for Reading Comprehension.** Schedule computer time for the child to have “drill and practice” with sight vocabulary words.

## PHONICS AND GRAMMAR

To help children with AD/HD master phonics and grammar rules, the following are effective:

25. **Mnemonics for Phonics and Grammar.** Teach the child mnemonics that provide reminders about hard to learn grammatical rules such as (a) correct punctuation, (b) irregular verb tenses, and (c) correct capitalisation.
26. **Word Families.** Teach the child to recognise and read word families that illustrate particular phonetic concepts (e.g. “ph” sounds).
27. **“Everyday” Examples of Grammar Rules.** Take advantage of naturally occurring events to teach grammar rules skills in the context of everyday life. For example, ask a boy and a girl who are reading a story together questions about the proper use of male and female pronouns.
28. **Board Games for Phonics and Grammar.** Play board games that practice phonetically irregular words.
29. **Computer Games for Phonics and Grammar.** Use a computer to provide opportunities to have “drill and practice” with phonics or grammar lessons.
30. **Structured Programmes for Phonics and Grammar.** Teach phonics and grammar through a structured programme such as Sandy Rief’s “Simply Phonics” programme.

In composing stories or other writing assignments, children with AD/HD benefit from the following practices:

31. **Standards for Writing Assignments.** Identify and teach the child classroom-wide standards for acceptable written work.
32. **Recognising Parts of a Story** (e.g. plot, main characters, setting, conflict and resolution).
33. **Post Office.** Establish a “Post Office” in the classroom and provide students with an opportunity to write mail and receive letters to and from their classmates and teacher.
34. **Visualising Compositions.** Ask the child to close his/her eyes and visualise a paragraph that the teacher reads aloud. Another variation of this technique is to ask a student to describe a recent event while the other students have their eyes closed.
35. **Proof Reading Composition.** Require that the child reads his/her work before handing in written assignments. Provide the students with a list of things to check when reading his/her own work.

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To help children with AD/HD who are poor spellers master their spelling lessons, the following have been found to be helpful:

36. **Teaching Frequently Used Spelling Words.** Assign spelling words that the child routinely uses in his/her speech each day.
37. **Creating a Dictionary of Misspelled Words.** Ask the child to keep a personal dictionary of frequently misspelled words.
38. **Using Partner Spelling Activities.** Pair the child with another student. Ask the partners to quiz each other about how to spell new words. Encourage both students to guess the correct spelling.
39. **Working with Manipulatives.** Use cut out letters or other manipulatives to spell out hard to learn words.
40. **Using Colour Coded Letters.** Colour code different letters in hard to learn words (e.g. receipt).
41. **Using Movement Activities.** Combine movement activities with spelling lessons (e.g. jump rope while spelling words out loud).
42. **Using Every Day Examples of Hard to Spell Words.** Take advantage of naturally occurring events to teach difficult spelling words in context. For example, ask a child eating a cheese sandwich to spell cheese.

## HANDWRITING

Students with AD/HD who have difficulty with manuscript or cursive writing benefit from these instructional practices:

43. **Individual Chalkboards.** Ask the child to practice copying and erasing the target words on a small, individual chalkboard. Two children can be paired to practice their target word together.
44. **Quiet Places for Handwriting.** Provide the child with a special “quiet place” (e.g. on a table outside the classroom) to complete his/her handwriting assignment.
45. **Spacing Words on a Page.** Teach the child to use his/her finger to measure how much space to leave between each word on a written assignment.
46. **Special Writing Paper.** Ask the child to use special paper with vertical lines to learn to space words and letters on a page.
47. **Tape Recorders.** Ask the child to dictate writing assignments into a tape recorder.
48. **Dictating Writing Assignments.** Have the teacher or another student write down a story told by a child with AD/HD.
49. **Structured Programmes for Handwriting.** Teach handwriting skills through a structured programme such as Jan Olsen’s “Handwriting Without Tears” programme.

## MATHEMATICS

There are several individualised instructional practices that can help children with AD/HD improve their basic computation skills. The following are just a few:

50. **Recognising Patterns in Mathematics.** Teach the student to recognise patterns when adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing whole numbers.
51. **Partner Mathematics Activities.** Pair a child with AD/HD with another student and provide opportunities for the partners to quiz each other about basic computation skills.
52. **Mnemonics for Basic Computation.** Teach the child mnemonics that describe basic steps in computing whole numbers. For example, “Don’t Miss Susie’s Boat” can be used to help the student recall the basic steps in long division (i.e. divide, multiply, subtract and bring down).
53. **Real Life Examples of Money Skills.** Provide the child with naturally occurring “real life” opportunities to practice target money skills. For example, ask the child to calculate his/her change when paying for lunch in the school cafeteria.
54. **Colour Coding Arithmetic Symbols.** Colour code basic arithmetic symbols such as +, -, x and = to provide visual cues for children when they are computing whole numbers.
55. **Using Calculators to Check Basic Computation.** Ask the child to use a calculator to check his addition, subtraction, multiplication or division.
56. **Board Games for Basic Computation.** Ask the child to play board games to practice addition, subtraction, multiplication and division of whole numbers.
57. **Computer Games for Basic Computation.** Schedule computer time for the child for drill and practice with basic computation focus.
58. **Structured Programmes for Basic Computation.** Teach through a structured programme such as Innovative Learning Concepts “Touch math” programme.

## SOLVING WORD PROBLEMS

To help children with AD/HD improve their skill in solving word problems in mathematics, try the following:

59. **Rereading the Problem.** Teach the child to read the problem two times before beginning to compute the answer.
60. **Using Clue Words.** Teach the child clue words that identify which operation to use when solving word problems, for example, words such as “sum”, “total” or “altogether” may indicate an Addition problem.
61. **Mnemonics for Word Problems.** Teach students mnemonics that help remind them of basic questions to ask when solving word problems (e.g. what is the question asked in the problem, what information you have to figure out the answer, and what operation should you use to compute the answer).
62. **Real Life Examples of Word Problems.** Ask the student to create and solve word

problems that provide practice with specific target operations such as Addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. These problems can be based on recent real life events in the child's life.

63. **Using Calculators to Check Word Problems.** Ask the child to use a calculator to check his/her answer to word problems.

## **SPECIAL MATERIALS**

Some children with AD/HD benefit from using special materials to help them complete their maths assignments.

64. **Number Lines.** Provide a number line for the child to use when computing whole numbers.
65. **Manipulatives.** Use manipulatives to help students gain basic computation skills such as counting poker chips when adding single digit numbers.
66. **Graph Paper.** Ask the child to use graph paper to help organise columns when Adding, subtracting, multiplying or dividing whole numbers.

## **ORGANISATIONAL SKILLS**

Many students with AD/HD are easily distracted and have difficulty focusing their attention on assigned work. However, there are several practices that can help children with AD/HD improve their organisation of homework and other daily assignments.

67. **Assignment Notebook.** Provide the child with an assignment notebook, to help organise homework and other seat work.
68. **Colour Coded Folders.** Provide the child with colour coded folders to help organise assignments for different academic subjects, (e.g. reading, maths, social science and science).
69. **Record Homework.** Record Homework and other seat work in the correct folders and assignment notebooks.
70. **Cleaning Out Desks and Book Bags.** Ask the child to sort through and periodically clean out his/her desk, book bag and other special places where written assignments are stored.

Children with AD/HD who have difficulty finishing their assignments on time can also benefit from individualised instruction that helps improve their time management skills.

71. **Using a Wristwatch.** Teach the child how to use and read a wristwatch to manage his/her time when completing assigned work.
72. **Using a Calendar.** Teach the child how to read and use a calendar to schedule his/her work.
73. **Practising Sequencing Activities.** Provide the child with supervised opportunities to break down a large assignment and sequence of short interrelated activities.
74. **Creating a Daily Activity Schedule.** Tape a schedule of planned daily activities to the child's desk.

## STUDY SKILLS

75. **Using Venn Diagrams.** Teach a child with AD/HD how to use Venn diagrams to help illustrate and organise key concepts in reading, maths or other academic subjects.
76. **Note Taking Skills.** Teach a child with AD/HD how to take notes when organising key academic concepts that he/she has learned with a programme such as Anita Archer's "Skills for School Success".
77. **Developing a Checklist of Frequent Mistakes.** Provide the child with a checklist of mistakes that he/she frequently makes in written assignments (e.g. Addition or subtraction errors), or other academic subjects. Teach the child how to use this checklist when proof reading his/her own work at home or school.
78. **Using a Checklist of Homework Supplies.** Provide the child with a checklist that identifies categories of items needed for homework assignments (e.g. books, pencils and homework assignment sheets).
79. **Preparing Uncluttered Workspace.** Teach a child with AD/HD how to prepare an uncluttered workspace to complete his/her assignments. For example, instruct the child to clear away any unnecessary books before commencing a seat assignment.
80. **Monitoring Homework Assignments.** Keep track of how well your students with AD/HD complete their assigned homework. Discuss and resolve with them and their parents any problems in completing these assignments. For example, evaluate the difficulty of the assignments and how long the children spend on their homework each night.

## BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Children with AD/HD are often impulsive and hyperactive. Effective teachers use behaviour management techniques to help these children learn how to control their behaviour.

### VERBAL REINFORCEMENT

Students with AD/HD benefit from frequent reinforcement of appropriate behaviour and correction of inappropriate behaviour. Verbal reinforcement takes on the form of praise and reprimands. In Addition, it is sometimes helpful to selectively ignore inappropriate behaviour.

81. **Verbal Praise.** Simple phrases such as "good job" encourage a child to act appropriately. Praise children frequently, and look for a behaviour to praise before, not after, a child is on task.
82. **Verbal Reprimands.** Do not hesitate to request that a child change his/her behaviour. The most effective reprimands are brief and directed at the behaviour and not the child.
83. **Selective Ignoring of Inappropriate Behaviour.** Carefully evaluate whether to intervene when a child misbehaves. In some instances, it is helpful to ignore the child's inappropriate behaviour, particularly if a child is misbehaving to get your attention.

## BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Effective teachers also use behavioural prompts with their students with AD/HD, as well as with other children in the class. These prompts help remind students about your expectations for their learning and behaviour within the classroom.

84. **Visual Cues.** Establish simple, non intrusive visual cues to remind the child to remain on task. For example, you can point at the child while looking him/her in the eye, or hold out your hand palm down, near the child.

85. **Proximity Control.** When talking to a child, move to where the child is standing or sitting. Your physical proximity to the child will help the child to focus and concentrate on what you are saying.

## COUNSELLING

In some instances, children with AD/HD need counselling to learn how to manage their own behaviour.

86. **Classroom Interviews.** Discuss how to resolve social conflicts with classroom interviews. Conduct impromptu counselling with one student or a small group of students in the classroom where the conflict arises. In this setting, ask two children who are arguing about a game to discuss how to settle their differences. Encourage the children to resolve their problem by talking to each other, while you quietly monitor their interactions during the interview.

87. **Social Skills Class.** Teach children with AD/HD appropriate social skills using a structured pull-out class. For example, you can ask the children to role play and model different solutions to common social problems. It is critical to provide for the generalisation of these skills, including opportunities for the children to use the social skills they learn.

In some children with AD/HD, behavioural contracts, tangible rewards or token economy systems are helpful in teaching them how to manage their behaviour.

Because students' individual needs are different, it is important for teachers to evaluate whether these practices are appropriate for their classrooms.

88. **Behavioural Contract.** Identify specific academic or behavioural goals for the child with AD/HD. Work together with the child to co-operatively identify appropriate goals such as completing homework assignments on time and obeying safety rules on the school playground.

Take the time to ensure that the child agrees that his/her goals are important to master.

89. **Tangible Rewards.** Use tangible rewards to reinforce appropriate behaviour. These rewards can include (a) stickers such as happy faces or sports team emblems or (b) privileges, such as extra time on the computer or lunch with the teacher. In some cases, you may be able to enlist the support of the parents by rewarding the children at home.

90. **Token Economy Systems.** Use token economy systems to motivate a child to achieve a goal identified in a behavioural contract. For example, a child can earn points for each homework assignment completed on time. In some cases students also lose points for each homework assignment not completed on time. After earning specified number of points, the student receives a tangible reward such as extra time on a computer or a "free period" on a Friday afternoon.

## CLASSROOM ACCOMMODATIONS

Many children with AD/HD benefit from accommodations that reduce distractions in the classroom environment. These accommodations which include modifications within both the physical environment and learning environment of the classroom, help some children with AD/HD stay on task and learn.

Accommodations of the physical environment include determining where a child with AD/HD will sit within the classroom. There are two main types of special seat assignments.

91. **Seat Near The Teacher.** Assign a child a seat near your desk or at the front of the classroom. This seat assignment provides opportunities for you to monitor and reinforce the child's on task behaviour.
92. **Seat Near a Student Role Model.** Assign a child a seat near a student role model. This seat arrangement provides opportunities for children to learn co-operatively and learn from their peers in the class.

Effective teachers also use different environmental prompts to make accommodations within the physical environment of the classroom.

93. **Hand Gestures.** Use hand signals to communicate privately with a child with AD/HD. For example, ask the whole class a question and find out if the child with AD/HD knows the answer to that question through hand gestures. A closed fist can indicate that the child knows the answer, an open palm can indicate that he/she does not know the answer. You would call on the child to answer only when he/she makes a fist.
94. **Egg Timers.** Note for the child the time at which the lesson is starting and the time at which it will end. Set a timer to indicate to children how much time is left in the lesson and place it at the front of the classroom; the children can check the timer to see how much time remains. Interim prompts can be used as well. For instance, children can monitor their own progress during a 30 minute lesson if the timer is set for 10 minutes three times.
95. **Classroom Lights.** Turning the classroom lights on and off prompts children that the noise level is too high and that they should be quiet. This practice can also be used to indicate that it is time to start preparing for the next lesson.
96. **Music.** Play music on a tape recorder or chords on a piano to prompt children that they are too noisy. In Addition, playing different types of music on a tape recorder communicates to children that the level of activity is inappropriate for that particular lesson. For example, play quiet classical music for quiet seat activity and jazz for active group activities.

Effective teachers make accommodations in the learning environment by guiding children with AD/HD with follow up directions.

97. **Follow Up Oral Directions.** After giving directions to the class as a whole, provide Additional, oral directions for a child with AD/HD. For example, ask the child if he/she understood the directions and repeat them again together.

Effective teachers also use special instructional tools to modify the classroom learning environment and accommodate the special needs of their AD/HD students.

98. **Follow Up Written Directions.** Provide follow up directions in writing. For example, write the page number for an assignment on the blackboard. You can remind the child to look at the blackboard if he/she forgets the assignment.
99. **Highlighting Key Words.** Highlight the key words in the instructions on worksheets to help the child with AD/HD focus on directions. You can prepare the worksheet before the lesson begins or underline key words as you and the child read the directions together.
100. **Using Pointers.** Teach the child to use a pointer to help visually track written words on a page. For example, provide the child with a bookmark to help him/her follow when students are taking turns reading aloud.
101. **Adapting Worksheets.** Teach a child how to adapt instructional worksheets. For example, help a child fold his/her worksheet to reveal only one question at a time. The child can also use a blank piece of paper to cover the other questions on the page.