

# Tips for ADHD kids for school

## **Managing distractibility**

Students with ADHD may be so easily distracted by noises, passersby, or their own thoughts that they often miss vital classroom information. These children have trouble staying focused on tasks that require sustained mental effort. They may seem to be listening to you, but something gets in the way of their ability to retain the information.

Helping kids who distract easily involves physical placement, increased movement, and breaking long work into shorter chunks.

- Seat the child with ADHD away from doors and windows. Put pets in another room or a corner while the student is working.
- Alternate seated activities with those that allow the child to move his or her body around the room. Whenever possible, incorporate physical movement into lessons.
- Write important information down where the child can easily read and reference it. Remind the student where the information can be found.
- Divide big assignments into smaller ones, and allow children frequent breaks.

## **Reducing interrupting**

Kids with attention deficit disorder may struggle with controlling their impulses, so they often speak out of turn. In the classroom or home, they call out or comment while others are speaking. Their outbursts may come across as aggressive or even rude, creating social problems as well. The self-esteem of children with ADHD is often quite fragile, so pointing this issue out in class or in front of family members doesn't help the problem—and may even make matters worse.

Reducing the interruptions of children with ADHD should be done carefully so that the child's self-esteem is maintained, especially in front of others. Develop a "secret language" with the child with ADHD. You can use discreet gestures or words you have previously agreed upon to let the child know they are interrupting. Praise the child for interruption-free conversations.

### **Managing impulsivity**

Children with ADHD may act before thinking, creating difficult social situations in addition to problems in the classroom. Kids who have trouble with impulse control may come off as aggressive or unruly. This is perhaps the most disruptive symptom of ADHD, particularly at school.

Methods for managing impulsivity include behavior plans, immediate discipline for infractions, and ways to give children with ADHD a sense of control over their day.

**Make sure a written behavior plan is near the student.** You can even tape it to the wall or the child's desk.

**Give consequences immediately following misbehavior.** Be specific in your explanation, making sure the child knows how they misbehaved.

**Recognize good behavior out loud.** Be specific in your praise, making sure the child knows what they did right.

**Write the schedule for the day on the board** or on a piece of paper and cross off each item as it is completed. Children with impulse problems may gain a sense of control and feel calmer when they know what to expect.

### **Managing fidgeting and hyperactivity**

ADD causes many students to be in constant physical motion. It may seem like a struggle for these children to stay in their seats. Kids with ADD/ADHD may jump, kick, twist, fidget and otherwise move in ways that make them difficult to teach.

Strategies for combating hyperactivity consist of creative ways to allow the child with ADHD to move in appropriate ways at appropriate times. Releasing energy this

way may make it easier for the child to keep his or her body calmer during work time.

**Ask children with ADHD to run an errand** or do a task for you, even if it just means walking across the room to sharpen pencils or put dishes away.

**Encourage a child with ADHD to play a sport**—or at least run around before and after school—and make sure the child never misses recess or P.E.

**Provide a stress ball**, small toy, or other object for the child to squeeze or play with discreetly at his or her seat.

**Limit screen time** in favor of time for movement.

### **Dealing with trouble following directions**

Difficulty following directions is a hallmark problem for many children with ADHD. These kids may look like they understand and might even write down directions, but then aren't able to do what has been asked. Sometimes these students miss steps and turn in incomplete work, or misunderstand an assignment altogether and wind up doing something else entirely.

Helping children with ADHD follow directions means taking measures to break down and reinforce the steps involved in your instructions, and redirecting when necessary. Try being extremely brief when giving directions, allowing the child to do one step and then come back to find out what they should do next. If the child gets off track, give a calm reminder, redirecting in a calm but firm voice. Whenever possible, write directions down in a bold marker or in colored chalk on a blackboard.

### **Tips for making learning fun**

One positive way to keep your child's attention focused on learning is to make the process fun. Using physical motion in a lesson, connecting dry facts to interesting

trivia, or inventing silly songs that make details easier to remember can help your child enjoy learning and even reduce the symptoms of ADHD.

### **Helping children with ADHD enjoy math**

Children who have attention deficit disorder tend to be “concrete” thinkers. They often like to hold, touch, or take part in an experience in order to learn something new. By using games and objects to demonstrate mathematical concepts, you can show your child that math can be meaningful—and fun.

**Play games.** Use memory cards, dice, or dominoes to make numbers fun. Or simply use your fingers and toes, tucking them in or wiggling them when you add or subtract.

**Draw pictures.** Especially for word problems, illustrations can help kids better understand mathematical concepts. If the word problem says there are twelve cars, help your child draw them from steering wheel to trunk.

**Invent silly acronyms.** In order to remember order of operations, for example, make up a song or phrase that uses the first letter of each operation in the correct order.

### **Helping children with ADHD enjoy reading**

There are many ways to make reading exciting, even if the skill itself tends to be a struggle for children with ADHD. Keep in mind that reading at its most basic level made up of stories and interesting information—things that all children enjoy.

**Read to children.** Read with children. Make reading cozy, quality time with you.

**Make predictions or “bets.”** Constantly ask the child what they think might happen next. Model prediction: “The girl in the story seems pretty brave—I bet she’s going to try to save her family.”

**Act out the story.** Let the child choose his or her character and assign you one, too. Use funny voices and costumes to bring it to life.

How does your kid like to learn?

When children are given information in a way that makes it easy for them to absorb, learning is a lot more fun. If you understand how your child with ADHD learns best, you can create enjoyable lessons that pack an informational punch.

- **Auditory learners** learn best by talking and listening. Have these kids recite facts to a favorite song. Let them pretend they are on a radio show and work with others often.
- **Visual learners** learn best through reading or observation. Let them have fun with different fonts on the computer and use colored flash cards to study. Allow them to write or draw their ideas on paper.
- **Tactile learners** learn best by physically touching something or moving as part of a lesson. For these students, provide jellybeans for counters and costumes for acting out parts of literature or history. Let them use clay and make collages.

### Tips for mastering homework

Sure, kids may universally dread it—but for a parent of a child with ADHD, homework is a golden opportunity. Academic work done outside the classroom provides you as the parent with a chance to directly support your child. It's a time you can help your child succeed at school where you both feel most comfortable: your own living room.

With your support, kids with ADHD can use homework time not only for math problems or writing essays, but also for practicing the organizational and study skills they need to thrive in the classroom.

### Helping a child with ADHD get organized

With organization, it can help to get a fresh start. Even if it's not the start of the academic year, go shopping with your child and pick out school supplies that include folders, a three-ring binder, and color-coded dividers. Help the child file his or her papers into this new system.

- Establish a homework folder for finished homework and organize loose papers by color coding folders and showing the child how to file appropriately.
- Help your child organize his or her belongings on a daily basis, including backpack, folders, and even pockets.
- If possible, keep an extra set of textbooks and other materials at home.
- Help your child learn to make and use checklists, crossing items off as they are accomplished.

### **Helping a child with ADHD get homework done on time**

Understanding concepts and getting organized are two steps in the right direction, but homework also has to get done in a single evening—and turned in on time. Help a child with ADHD to the finish line with strategies that provide consistent structure.

Pick a specific time and place for homework that is as free as possible of clutter, pets, and television.

- Allow the child breaks as often as every ten to twenty minutes.
- Teach a better understanding of the passage of time: use an analog clock and timers to monitor homework efficiency.
- Set up a homework procedure at school: establish a place where the student can easily find his or her finished homework and pick a consistent time to hand in work to the teacher.

### **Other ways to help your child with homework**

**Encourage exercise and sleep.** [Physical activity](#) improves concentration and promotes brain growth. Importantly for children with ADHD, it also leads to [better sleep](#), which in turn can reduce the symptoms of ADHD.

**Help your child eat right.** Scheduling [regular nutritious meals](#) and snacks while cutting back on junk and sugary foods can help manage symptoms of ADHD.

**Take care of yourself so you're better able to care for your child.** Don't neglect your own needs. Try to eat right, exercise, get enough sleep, [manage stress](#), and seek face-to-face support from family and friends.