ADHD Symptoms, Impairments and Accommodations in the High School Environment

DSM-5 Symptom	Possible Resulting Impairments in High School	Possible Accommodations
Inattention		
Fails to give close attention to details OR makes careless mistakes	☐ Difficulties with including details such as name and date and misses spelling mistakes ☐ Misses details in test questions and assignments ☐ Rarely checks for errors, proof reads or edits ☐ Poor quality of work – inaccurate, careless mistakes ☐ Poor time management so doesn't leave time to complete details or check for mistakes	☐ Allow to write exams on computer with spellcheck software or do not deduct marks ☐ Work with education staff to review assignment, check details, assist with time management & due dates ☐ Flexibility in due dates – with opportunity to complete details & correct mistakes ☐ Allow clarification of questions on an exam or test and clarification of an assignment
Difficulty sustaining attention	☐ Difficulties remaining focused during class, conversations, or when reading lengthy material ☐ Day-dreaming or mind-wandering during lectures or reading text books etc. ☐ Difficulty focusing on & completing large amounts of written work (essays, reports etc.) ☐ Gaps in learning due to inability to stay focused during class etc.	☐ Allow student to audiotape lectures, use audiotaped textbooks, receive notes & copies of PowerPoint presentations ☐ Allow use of a note-taker ☐ Use of a computer for tests or exams ☐ Allow testing/exams to be completed over several shorter sessions rather than one long session ☐ No more than one exam per day
Difficulties listening when spoken to directly	☐ Mind often wanders when discussing something with peers ☐ Often misses social cues or key words during one-on-one or small group interactions	☐ Provide notes from class discussions & presentations ☐ Work with educational staff or mentor to learn strategies for keeping mind on conversations, watching for social cues ☐ Allow clarification of instructions of an assignment
Difficulties following through on instructions AND fails to finish	☐ Begins but unable to remain focused to complete assignment or task, easily side-tracked ☐ Moves from one incomplete assignment to another	☐ Work with staff to chunk & review progress on assignments ☐ Allow clarification of questions on an exam or test and clarification of an assignment
Difficulty organizing tasks & activities	☐ Unable to chunk assignments into manageable pieces – easily overwhelmed ☐ Difficulty organizing thoughts	☐ Ability to access 'prompt' sheets with outline of steps, formulas etc. ☐ Allow clarification of questions on an exam or test and

	☐ Difficulty sequencing or organizing steps in complex projects, creating and following outlines and schedules ☐ Difficulty getting things together for school, organizing things needed for the day ☐ Has to go over and over instructions and still cannot organize what needs to be done in their heads	clarification of an assignment ☐ Provide organizational/planning software plus instruction & support in its use ☐ Work with education staff to set up work plan, lists of essential items to bring to class etc. & review steps ☐ Allow student to keep their belongings with them
Avoids, dislikes OR reluctant to engage in effortful tasks	☐ Puts off starting assignment – procrastinates ☐ Leaves assignments to the last minute then runs out of time to complete & hand in ☐ Gets anxious about procrastinating ☐ Overwhelmed and unable to identify how to start an assignment ☐ Can't get started and articulate ideas in their head or on to paper	☐ Work with education staff to review assignments and discuss first steps, chunk assignments and review progress ☐ Additional time for assignments if too many due at same time ☐ Flexibility on due dates when the load of assignments are overwhelming ☐ Allow clarification of questions on an exam or test and clarification of an assignment
Often loses things necessary for tasks or activities	☐ Loses essential belongings ☐ Loses things that are vital to completing assignments, duties, life activities	☐ Provision of additional copies of course material ☐ Work with education staff to develop effective habits or strategies for keeping needed items in one place & how to retrace steps to remember where item was last
Easily distracted by extraneous stimuli	☐ Distracted by noise, visual distractors and movement ☐ Daydreams or gets distracted by own thoughts ☐ Unable to remain focused during academic or social activities ☐ Misses educational information and instructions due to distractibility	☐ Allow the use of (noise-cancelling) headphones when working in distracting environments ☐ Priority seating away from sources of distraction ☐ Take tests/exams in quiet environment ☐ Provide description of assignment in written format ☐ Allow extra time on timed-tests (usually time and a half)
Often forgetful in daily activities	☐ Often forgets to bring things to specific classes ☐ Forgets to record and misses key appointments & due dates ☐ Over-reliance on adults to remind ☐ Mixes up days so ends up missing classes of other important appointments ☐ Forgets commitments resulting in difficulty sustaining work, social/friendship, academic activities	☐ Provision of electronic organizers & visual reminders ☐ Ability to access reminder sheets with steps, formulas etc. ☐ Teach reminder strategies, provide access to online class schedules, liaison with parents on important due dates and appointments

Hyperactivity / Impulsivity

Often fidgets with or taps hands or feet OR squirms in seat	☐ Particularly when having to sit long periods ☐ Fidgets to the point of distracting others ☐ Fidgets with objects, leg-jiggling, shifting positions frequently ☐ Bites nails, twirls hair, chews pencils	☐ Permit preferred seating so squirming & shifting position will not distract others ☐ Allow use of stress balls to help control fidgetiness ☐ Allow for more frequent breaks to stand & move around
Often leaves seat in situations when remaining seated is expected	☐ When there is no provision to move around in class they get up and leave class or walk around	☐ Allow student to stand or move at side or back of class when required ☐ Provision of standing desk or allow to stand as needed
Often 'on the go', acting as if 'driven like a motor'	☐ When working at desk or computer feels compelled to get up and move about ☐ Get bursts of energy and just have to move around ☐ Unable to function, remain still in quiet environment, such as exams, libraries, confined work spaces ☐ Anxious when unable to move – compelled to move ☐ Cannot shut off creative side, streams of ideas, so constantly writing notes or muttering, records voice notes because they cannot write as fast as they think	☐ Allow frequent movement breaks, send on errands ☐ Develop signal to request movement break ☐ Allow preferred seating so pacing or leaving area will not distract others ☐ Allow controlled movement such as use of stress balls ☐ Provision of standing/elevated desk ☐ Allow for independent work so movement will not distract others ☐ Encourage mindfulness or meditation classes
Often blurts out, unable to await turn, interrupts or intrudes	☐ May be disruptive in class & annoy others ☐ May become ostracized by instructors & peers	☐ Educators to ignore minor disruptions ☐ Gentle reminders of social rules and reward attempts to comply ☐ Actively teach, model and practice social skills ☐ Allow to work independently –excuse from group work

Please Note: The possible accommodations included in this chart are based on expert consensus opinion,[i, ii] . While certain accommodations are beneficial for some students with ADHD [iii][iv] the listed accommodations are not uniformly beneficial for all students with ADHD. Therefore, medical experts should use the charts as a tool to assess functional impairments while reviewing possible accommodations that would likely be helpful.

[i] Froelich & Brinkman 2017
[ii] Fabiano & Pylr 2018
[iii] Jansen et al, 2017
[iv] Lovett et al 2018