

ADHD Tips for Teachers

Patient Name:

Today's Date:

Teacher:

School:

Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is the name given to a clinical condition that is characterized by short attention span with or without a high level of activity and impulsivity. This disorder is the result of a complex set of genetic, developmental, and environmental conditions. Many of the children affected with ADHD have difficulty with the demands for sustained concentration and independent work in the face of the usual distractions of the classroom. They pay attention sometimes when their motivation is very strong. However, they cannot reliably plan and concentrate to the extent expected for their age.

Some of the children have additional problems such as excessive worries, depression, aggression, defiance and learning problems. These additional problems also complicate the child's adjustment to the classroom and success in school. Most of these children would like to perform better than they do. Though they may act like they do not care or may draw attention to themselves by serving as the class clowns, they are all too aware of their struggles and limitations. They need our support and understanding.

Children with ADHD benefit greatly from certain modifications and support in the classroom. The following list is provided to help you think about how to help _____ to succeed in your classroom.

- Always foster good teacher-student relationships. Acknowledge when the child has followed your instructions or completed a task. Identify the child's strengths and assets and allow the child to build on them. Encourage self-esteem and pride. Be firm and kind when the child has difficulties. Involve the child in classroom activities.
- Provide structure in the classroom:
 - Follow a predictable schedule for the day. Prepare children for transitions ("We will finish this task in 5 minutes."). Post the daily schedule so that the children can follow along. Alert children to changes in the schedule.
 - Use a quiet voice at all times. If children misbehave, speak to them firmly but quietly.
 - Present instructions slowly and clearly. For children who can read, provide both verbal and written instructions, particularly for long assignments and for homework.
 - Try to keep distractions to a minimum. Keep the classroom quiet and physically uncluttered. Consider rugs if room is very noisy.
 - Establish clear and posted rules for misbehavior. Apply these rules consistently, fairly, and kindly.
 - Allow children with legitimate opportunities to move or stretch between tasks and assignments.
 - Praise children for the efforts and work habits as well as for the accuracy of their work.
 - Provide parents with frequent information about the child's behavior.

- Provide supports and modifications in the classroom for the child with ADHD.
 - Assign _____ a seat in the front of the room, possibly near your desk.
 - Establish eye contact with _____ when speaking to him/her.
 - Establish a private signal between you and _____ that reminds him/her to pay attention or sit still.
 - Present instructions slowly and clearly. Break complex instructions into smaller components. Ask _____ to repeat back instructions to assure that his/her comprehension was good.
 - Break long work assignments into short chunks. For example, if a math exercise is 3 pages long, give _____ one page at a time and ask the child to return the page to you to get the next one.
 - Help _____ to organize his/her desk and back-pack.
 - Give _____ legitimate opportunities to get out of the seat, stretch, and relax so that the child does not do these disruptive behaviors during work.
 - Make sure that _____ has the homework assignments ready to take home. Request parent signatures on assignment sheets and on completed work so that the parent can also provide support.
 - Consider the use of a daily report card, a summary of the child's attention and behavior in the classroom that day. Let the parent know about any consequences, positive or negative, that you used during the day.
 - Consider individual testing so that the testing procedures do not tax the child's abilities to attend and sit still. For example, if the test is on 3 pages, give the child one page at a time. Modify expectations as a function of the child's learning profile.
 - Offer the child classroom assignments and homework that play to the child's strengths, such as energy and creativity. Children with ADHD may do better building a model or drawing a picture and writing a short essay rather than writing a long essay.
- Consider the use of behavior contracts.
 - Choose a behavior you would like to see change.
 - Discuss with the child the positive consequences for showing the desired behavior.
 - Discuss with the child the negative consequences for failing to show the behavior.
 - Choose reinforcers that are immediate, meaningful to the child, and feasible within your classroom.
 - Commit to this plan in writing. Ask the child the contract. Ask the parents to acknowledge in writing that they understand the contract and consequences.
- Find opportunities to give honest praise to _____ for concentration and work habits, as well as products or test performance.
 - Offer rewards for independent and accurate work. Reward for approximations toward the ultimate goal
 - Do not embarrass or shame the child in front of other children or adults.
- Allow the child to turn in assignments as they are completed rather than on a set date.
- Assist the child in making friends, negotiating conflicts, understanding the social signals of other children, and becoming a good citizen of the school.
- Seek support from others if the child's attention and behavior are extremely challenging for you. Psychologists, counselors, behavior specialists, and the principal can consult in the classroom to identify modifications and supports.
- Cooperate with families and physicians regarding other aspects of the care plan.