

Attention-General Teaching Recommendations



Remember, each child has individual strengths and needs. Whenever possible, **capitalize on strengths** to build areas of difficulty.

Relationship

- Establish a strong relationship with child
 - Show them you are interested in them
 - Notice their strengths
 - Make them feel like they matter (share interests, make personal connections, etc.)

Minimize distractions

- Remove distracting objects, minimize visual clutter, position close to instructor
- Enlist a “buddy” to help the child focus on task at hand

Minimize demands on working memory

- Break tasks into small parts
- Provide steps and goals or timelines for completion.
- Take frequent but brief breaks
- Highlight and review important directions
- Externalize when possible- use visual guides, technology, etc.

Ensure the child has fully understood instructions

- Establish eye contact,
- Make directions clear, concise, and multimodal (visual/auditory)
- Check for comprehension,
- Encourage student to ask for clarification and assistance,
- Repeat instructions as needed (in a patient manner)
 - Provide a buddy to assist in reminding child of directions
 - Directions should be short and specific
 - Be prepared to repeat yourself



Reward Systems/ Behavior Modification

- A reward system to reinforce on-task behavior is very useful. Kids often respond well to this because immediate gratification is needed.
 - Explain the process to child in advance. (...When you are listening while I am talking...)
 - Provide feedback/rewards immediately
 - Provide concrete incentives for every on task behavior. They need to know they are doing well or the rewards of “misbehaving” will be more motivating
 - Begin with consistent reinforcement and progress to intermittent (less often) as child becomes more compliant and confident. Be sure not to move to intermittent too fast.
 - Ensure rewards are motivating. The reward will not work if the child does not want it. Use a menu, provide choices, ask the child what would work.
 - Pair concrete reinforcement with verbal praise and non-verbal reinforcement
 - As behaviour becomes more internally controlled, **gradually** move to using prompts, private signals, or hand gestures as rewards (instead of concrete “prizes”)
- Provide gentle unobtrusive reminders, such as a tap on the shoulder, or a mutually agreed upon cue during “space outs”.

Behavioral Issues

- Consider an incentive system (reinforcement program- see above)
- Plan instruction to include breaks and movement

- Make expectations reasonable and build in opportunities for success
 - Help students to plan achievable goals and celebrate their attainment
- Share success with others (this helps to build esteem and build a success identity)
- Reinforce success and subtask completion frequently
- Use clear language and explain desired behaviors **and consequences** in advance
- Use novel teaching methods. The child with ADHD responds well to stimulating activities and often needs this type of motivation to learn.
- **Catch them being good!** Positive reinforcement is one of the most powerful methods to change behavior. Kids with ADHD are used to hearing what they do wrong, but are not as often noticed for that which they do right. Make sure you notice even the little things (e.g. sub-tasks of larger tasks) to gain cooperation.
- Recognize that a number of emotional issues are often connected with ADHD. Be conscious of this, particularly when it comes to teaching in a way that does not exacerbate problems such as anxiety or depression.
- Be aware of behaviors that may be safety issues. More serious consequences such as a time out or parental involvement may be warranted in these cases.
- Use behavior contracts. These are usually written documents promising a specific consequence or reward if the child engages in appropriate behavior. Consequences of misbehavior will also be outlined. You may negotiate this with child if age appropriate. If used, teacher's roles and responsibilities should be outlined. These are not intended as tools to justify punishment, rather learning approaches for kids who are capable of a reasoned approach. Target behavior needs to be appropriate, specific, and feasible if using a contract.

Visual Cues

- Modeling (the instructor or other students can demonstrate desired skill) is extremely powerful.
- Visual presentation of directions.
- Present information visually and (use engaging pictures, puppets, symbols) with clear, concise verbal instruction
 - Break down the steps- externalize planning
- Post commonly repeated rules where child can refer to it
 - Use symbols rather than words for the younger child

Planning

Children with ADHD often have difficult planning actions. Thus instruction should follow a sequence such as:

- 1) Define the skill to be taught
- 2) Model skill
- 3) Have student use verbal and active rehearsal
- 4) Guide practice
- 5) Independent practice with follow-up or use of a "coach"
- 6) Externalize where possible- Use agendas, computer technology, lists, etc.

