

ADHD:

Symptoms & Tips for Modifying the Environment

Below are some classroom expectations that children with a diagnosis of ADHD may have trouble meeting without support. It is important to be mindful of ADHD symptoms that may interfere with a child effortlessly following classroom expectations.

Classroom Expectations	ADHD Symptoms That Interfere
"Wait until you are called on." "Don't interrupt." "Read the directions carefully."	Impulsivity
"Keep your desk/backpack orderly." "File your homework."	Organizational problems
"Stay in your seat." "Play/talk/work quietly."	Hyperactivity
"Drill, drill, drill." "Be patient."	Low frustration level
"How many times have I told you..." "Follow the rules."	Inability to learn from experience
"Watch those careless mistakes." "Listen closely."	Inattention
"Adhere carefully to due dates." "Estimate how long it will take you to..."	Impaired sense of time

Often times, the focus can be on trying to change interfering symptoms. However, the key to motivating a child with attention problems is to modify and adjust the learning environment. The following tips may be helpful:

- 1. Provide a structured, predictable environment.**
- 2. Give simple single-step instructions.**
- 3. Simultaneously provide verbal and visual input** (dictate instructions as you write them on the board).
- 4. Clearly outline rules, limits, and expectations.** Post them.
- 5. Allow for an occasional break to let the child relax and reenergize.**
- 6. Legitimize the child's need for movement and activity** by designing classroom activities that allow and encourage movement.

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7. Have the child's attention before giving him a direction or instruction. This can be done by calling his name or using a hand signal. After the instruction has been given, have him repeat it back to you before carrying it out. Many children with ADHD are adept at appearing to understand when they do not.

8. Use a cue or a private signal that you can send to the child if her behavior or attention is beginning to deteriorate.

9. Do not emphasize quality and quantity at the same time. Lengthy, complex assignments are difficult for a child with attention challenges. It is better to assign five math problems and emphasize/expect accuracy than to assign 20 problems that will overwhelm the child and result in 20 inaccurate responses.

10. Provide the child with several (10 to 15) seconds to respond to verbal questions. It may take him that long to process and comprehend the question. Whenever possible, supplement verbal questions with visual input.

11. Avoid attributing judgmental reasons for the child's inconsistency and impulsivity. Remember that these behaviors occur through no fault or choice of the child's.

12. Remember that hyperactive behaviors during seat work (drumming fingers, pencil tapping, squirming in seat) are a release for a child's hyperactivity. Unless the movements are distracting or disruptive to others, ignore them.

13. Provide the child with ADHD opportunities to show divergent, creative, and imaginative thinking and to receive recognition for his originality.

14. Follow difficult activities with more interesting or rewarding activities: "Joseph, when you finish the math worksheet, you can feed the gerbil."

15. Try alternative methods of assessment, such as oral testing or demonstration testing. Written tests and assessments are difficult for children with attention problems because of their language and organizational weaknesses.

16. Never take good behavior for granted. Praise and reinforce the child for not interrupting, for working patiently, remaining in his seat, and cooperating.

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