

Supporting
Your Child's
Executive Skill
Development

**Tonight's
Presenters**

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Tonight's Agenda

1. What are executive functioning skills?
2. What executive functioning skills should I expect for my child's age?
3. What does it look like when my child struggles with executive functioning?
4. How can I support my child's executive skill development?

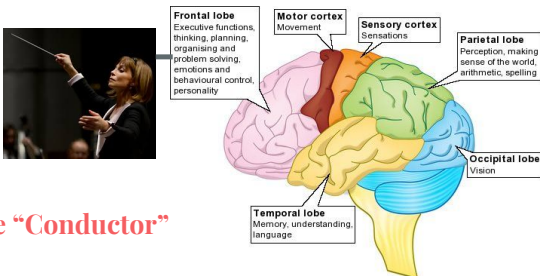
What are executive functioning skills?

Executive skills are . . .

The brain-based skills required for us to effectively complete tasks and solve problems.



The “Conductor”



Multiple Executive Functioning Skills



Time Management, Planning, & Prioritizing

The capacity to estimate how much time one has, how to allocate it, and how to stay within time limits and deadlines. It also involves a sense that time is important.



The ability to create a roadmap to reach a goal or to complete a task. It also involves being able to make decisions about what's important to focus on and what's not important.



Emotional Regulation

The ability to manage emotions in order to achieve goals, complete tasks, or control and direct behavior.



Organization and Routines

The ability to create and maintain systems to keep track of information or materials.



What executive functioning skills should I expect for my child's age?

Time to Kahoot!

Kahoot Quiz

Step 1. Grab your phone or computer.

- If you don't have one, share with your neighbor.

Step 2. Go to your internet (FHSD-GUEST)

Step 3. Type in the website address: **www.kahoot.it**



Time to Kahoot!

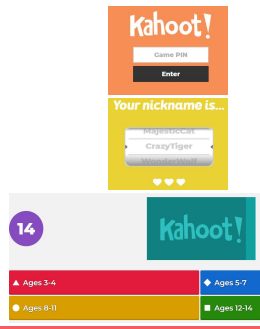
Step 3. Enter the Game PIN:

Step 4. Select your nickname

Step 5.



Step 6. Select your answer - 20 seconds



How did you feel?

We initially asked you to do something about which you were unfamiliar.

- Did you feel stress? Confusion? Frustration?
- Was it easy for you to move past these feelings and focus on the task expectation, or did you get lost?
- When we first told you verbally, did the task make sense? When we repeated the verbal direction again did it help?
- When we broke down the task, and added a visual, how were those supports helpful?
- Let's do some task analysis! What things did you have to do in order to succeed in this task? What EF skills did you have to use?

What does it look like when my child struggles with executive functioning?

Through Their Eyes...

What does it feel like to struggle with organization and attention?

Attention-
through my child's eyes
hands on lab

At home it may look like...

- Acting without thinking
- Interrupting others
- **Overreacting to small problems**
- Becoming upset by changes in plans
- **Becoming overwhelmed by large assignments**
- Talking or playing too loudly
- Not seeing their behavior as part of a larger issue
- **Resisting change of routine**
- Becoming easily overstimulated and having trouble calming down
- **Getting stuck on one topic or activity**
- Difficulty coming up with more than one way to solve a problem
- **Having a low tolerance for frustration**
- Acting wild or out of control

At school it may look like...

- Not bothering to write down assignments
- Forgetting directions
- Forgetting to bring materials home
- Putting off homework
- Running out of steam before finishing work
- Passive study methods (or doesn't study)
- Rushing through assignments
- Forgetting homework/forgetting to turn it in
- Leaving long-term assignments or chores until last minute
- Difficulty breaking down long-term assignments
- Messy notebooks
- Losing or misplaces things (books, papers, notebooks, mittens, keys, cell phones, etc.)
- Difficulty finding things in backpack

Ask...



- Is your child generally meeting expectations at school?
- How is your child doing compared to typical range of development?
- What is the frequency, duration, and intensity of the problem?
- Do you notice a definite pattern of strengths and weaknesses? Do weaknesses tend to cluster together?
- To what extent do the weaknesses interfere with your child's ability to successfully solve problems, complete tasks, or interact socially?
- Will the weaknesses interfere with future school performance, driving, getting and maintaining a job, handling a busy schedule, or managing money?
- What observations or thoughts does your child's teacher or pediatrician have?

The ultimate goal is to teach children to develop their own executive skills sufficiently so they can function independently.



BREAK TIME!



How can I support my child's executive skill development?

General Strategies

Change the physical environment, such as online parental controls or having a structured homework time or providing labeled bins for toys

Change the nature of the task, such as making it shorter or breaking it up into baby steps or making the steps more explicit

Change the way you interact with your child, such as verbal versus written reminders, prompts, rehearsing, and increased positive praise

Teach and model the skill - the more you practice, the better you get

Provide just enough support for your child to be successful and gradually fade support over time

Motivate your child to use the skill - Offer your child something she wants in exchange for something that you want; First... then strategy



Parent-Child Problem Solving

Kids do well if they can.

Difficulties occur when the demands of the environment exceed a child's capacity to respond adaptively.

~ Ross Greene, Creator of [Collaborative and Proactive Solutions](http://www.livesinthebalance.org) - www.livesinthebalance.org

Step 1. Gain empathy - see the problem from your child's perspective

Step 2. Share your concerns

Step 3. Invite your child to come up with a solution that is realistic and mutually satisfactory in that it addresses the concerns of both child and parent

Time Management, Planning, & Prioritizing

Time Management

- Maintain a predictable daily routine
- Talk to your child about how long it takes to do things
- Plan a weekend activity involving several steps
- Model using calendars and schedules yourself and encourage your child to do the same
- Visual Timers
- Time Robbers
- Alarm clock
 - Not cell phone!



Time Management, Planning, & Prioritizing

Planning & Prioritizing

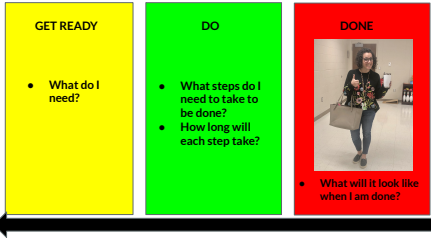
- Create plans for your child when young. "Let's make a plan!"
- Model the behavior - write it down or make a checklist.
- Involve your child as much as possible in the planning process.
 - After writing down each step, think about rating difficulty 1-10
 - Decide on a deadline for each step
 - Prompt and provide incentives for completion
- Use things the child wants as jumping-off point
- Prompt prioritizing by asking what needs to get done first.
 - What's the most important thing you have to do today?
 - First/Then
- Older children need a planner (planner book, Google calendar, homework app)

Get Ready, Do, Done

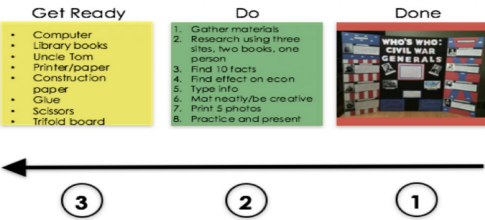


Simple Example of Get Ready, Do, Done

SITUATION: I AM GOING TO WORK



Complex Example of Get Ready, Do, Done



Time Management, Planning, & Prioritizing

Task Initiation

- Prompt and reinforce throughout the day
- Provide a visual cue
- Break overwhelming tasks into smaller, more manageable pieces
- Include your child in the plan for when or how the task will get done
- Give choice on how your child wants to be reminded (e.g., alarm, kitchen timer, or a naturally occurring event)
- Create a nightly schedule where certain tasks start at certain times
- Agree on a time limit for a task and set a timer as a cue for when to start
- Do the first step of the task together, then let your child try alone



Emotional Regulation

- With younger children, regulate the environment
 - Dim the lights to promote calmness
 - Speak in a soft voice so the child has to focus in on your words. You may need to first offer a motor demand to gain/discern their attention (i.e. "if you hear my words, touch your head")
- Prepare your child about what to expect and what he can do if overwhelmed
- Give your child coping strategies
 - Options for escape
 - Calming techniques
- Teach self-statements: give your child a script to follow for problem situations
- Connect to characters in a story or on television
- Some children may be comforted by learning [how their brain works](#).
- Use "No" responses to your child's requests judiciously; think about the request before answering. Can you say "yes" if certain conditions are present?

Organization

2 Key Factors:

1. Put a (simple) system into place with simple materials
2. Supervise your child on a daily basis in using the system

Tips:

- Start Small
- Prioritize (e.g., school materials over closet)
- Use a picture of actual organized space or materials
- Provide labeled spaces for where items go
- Check in daily or weekly and then fade these check-ins as your child is successful



Teaching EF Skills Through Routines

How to choose a routine to tackle first:

- If this one routine cleared up, everyone's lives would go so much more smoothly
- Small and can be tackled easily (quick success!)
- Give your child a choice
- Shared implementation
- Long-term goals

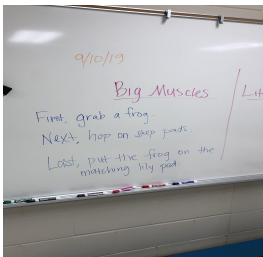
Teaching EF Skills Through Routines

Develop a plan:

- Involve your child in the process
- Think about what EF skills you are teaching
- Make a list together of steps to be done
- Decide together the order and turn into a checklist
- Talk through the process
- Rehearse or role-play the process
- Decide what time the whole routine should be finished
- Initially, cue each step and praise as it is checked off
- As child is successful, fade supervision



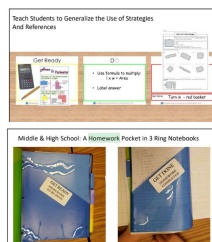
Example of Teaching Through Routines



Teaching EF Skills Through Routines

Homework:

- Create a designated homework area.
- Within that area, be sure that common supplies are organized and available.
- Be as consistent as possible with a designated homework time. Consider other family activities in creating this time. Be realistic.
- Supervise!



Seeing some success?

- Specifically praise!
- Explicitly congratulate!
- Recognize what you saw your child doing that helped him/her succeed!

Teaching EF Skills Through Routines

Adaptations for younger children:

- Keep it short
- Reduce steps
- Use pictures rather than words or lists
- Timers
- Reinforcers as needed

Adaptations for older children:

- Full partners
- Be willing to negotiate rather than dictate
- Visual cues (less "nagging")
- Use more powerful reinforcers
- Logical/natural consequences

**Where can
I find out
more?**

Smart But Scattered by Dawson, & Guare

www.understood.org

Taking Charge of ADHD by Russell A. Barkley, PhD

360 Thinking™ Cognitive Connections, LLP | www.efpractice.com

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