

Classroom Recommendations for Children with ADHD

Following are some general recommendations for children who struggle with focus or restlessness. Since each child's ADHD profile is unique, choose a few strategies from the list that help support your student's individual needs.

1. Seat the child near the teacher and teaching action to help them maintain focus and to help attend to auditory and visual cues.
2. Keep instructions brief (one or two parts), specific, and step-by-step.
3. Supplement verbal instructions with visual cues or written directions.
4. Discreetly check in with the child to make sure they understand instructions or assignments and have them repeat back directions if it appears they are lost or slow in starting.
5. As classroom assignments become more difficult, the child may need help organizing his/her approach to more complex, ambiguous, and open-ended projects.
6. Stay aware of classroom distractions such as windows, doors, or friends, that may keep the child from focusing on his/her work.
7. Give assignments one at a time to avoid overload.
8. Allow the child extra time to complete tasks that tend to take longer. For example, allow him/her to complete every other math problem so that they are able to reach the end of the assignment, thus giving them a sense of accomplishment while ensuring they complete all difficulty levels. Gradually increase length of assignments as the child becomes quicker, more efficient, and more confident in his/her abilities.
9. Keep assignments clearly defined and structured.
10. Help the child self-monitor for moments of low focus/energy/boredom or restlessness. Create a plan for how he/she can tell the teacher when they are struggling with these symptoms.
11. Provide the child with opportunities for energy breaks and movement (e.g., running an errand for teacher, handing out papers to the class, getting wiggles out).
12. Build movement into activities (i.e., allow the child to stand up while working on a task or use fidgets, theraband, or a wiggle seat.) Provide opportunities for him/her to take breaks from tasks requiring sustained effort and allow opportunities for movement, which help to increase alertness.

13. Use frequent and consistent immediate positive feedback for on-task behaviors and good organizational skills. Positive feedback can help the child feel successful and improve his/her self esteem as well as decrease anxiety.
14. Develop a communication system between the child, teachers, and parents to ensure both the child and parents are informed of classroom progress and challenges.
15. Institute a classroom reward system if needed. In such a system, the child is rated by the teacher(s) at a few periods during the day and this information is passed along to the parents for a home reward. Sometimes teachers use a coupon that has a simple rating scheme for excellent, good, or poor performance on the selected target behavior.
16. Provide the child with explicit instruction at the outset of assignments with what he/she is expected to do, how to get started, and what steps to take to finish the task.
17. Use a discrete cue to re-focus the child when teachers notice they are off task or distracted.
18. Use a privacy board, headphones or quiet space when doing work that requires focus and sustained attention.
19. Stay aware that the child may process information slower than is readily apparent and may appear to be “inattentive” when he/she is a step or two behind peers in grasping the directives. At these times it will be important to assess whether the child is lost due to inattention or just processing the information presented at a slower rate.
20. Extra time on timed or standardized tests, taken in a room with low distraction.
21. Since the child may become overwhelmed by multiple/complex stimuli, they will likely benefit from ‘anticipatory guidance’—that is ‘walking through’ what is to occur and providing him/her with strategies for handling new material.
22. Help the child develop an organization system for his/her schoolwork and other personal materials. Checklists, log books, day planner, time lines, shelves, etc. are all useful for this purpose.
23. Seat the child near a positive role model and use peer tutoring as appropriate.
24. Provide 1:1 direction as needed, especially at times of transition.
25. Use *environmental planning* i.e. learn to anticipate aspects of the child’s environment that trigger or challenge the child.

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Better Behavior: Helping Kids Create Change and Improve Relationships by Noah Kempler, MFT
available at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)