

The Teacher's Guide to ADHD and Classroom Behavior



From the ADHD Experts at

ADDITUDE

Strategies and Support *for* ADHD & LD

ADDITUDE

Strategies and Support for ADHD & LD

A trusted source of advice and information for families touched by attention-deficit disorder—
and a voice of inspiration to help people with ADHD find success at home, at school, and on the job.

ADDitudeMag.com

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The Teacher's Guide to ADHD and Classroom Behavior

Why kids with ADHD act the way they do — and how teachers can help them succeed.

BY THE EDITORS OF ADDITUDE

Students with ADHD don't mean to blurt out answers, pester their neighbors, or play too rough. But sometimes their bodies just act before they have a chance to stop and think. ADHD's inherent impulsivity means these kids get labeled as unruly or aggressive, even though many are caring, sensitive, and truly trying.

Why the disconnect? Studies show that ADHD compromises the area of the brain responsible for "self-regulation." Students with ADHD struggle to modify their behavior with future consequences in mind, and shouldn't be held to the same standards as their peers.

And then there's the other end of the spectrum — the students with ADHD or LDs who daydream, stare out the window, or lose focus when stimuli compete for attention. As a result, they miss lessons, instructions, and directions.

Why? ADHD also impacts the parts of the brain that control sustained focus. Children with ADHD have a lower level of brain arousal, and are therefore easily distracted whenever an activity is not sufficiently stimulating. They tune into hallway noise, birds outside, or their own inner thoughts.

Together, these challenges can make classroom management a perilous juggling act. Here, we offer ideas for anticipating impulsive inter-

UNITED WE LEARN
11 rules for an effective
parent-teacher partnership.
additu.de/united

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ruptions before they occur and for engaging all students in ways that promote learning and fun. Use the tactics below to address disruptive or distracted behavior in the classroom constructively.

DISTRACTIBILITY

Students with inattentive ADHD may get lost in their fast-moving thoughts or get lead mentally astray by a passing bird outside the window — missing lessons, instructions, or key points as a result. To keep these children focused and engaged in the classroom, try these ideas:

Seat children with ADHD away from distractions, particularly doors, windows, high-traffic areas, and noisy air conditioners or heaters. Surround them with well-behaved classmates, if possible. Arrange desks in a way that allows you to move freely around the room and easily access any student's desk. Moving around while you teach will help you hold students' interest, as well as gently redirect the attention of students who begin to drift away.

Make lessons interesting! Turn off the lights and illuminate the blackboard with a flashlight to highlight key points. Invite a special lecturer or performer to help you teach a lesson. Draw silly illustrations to provide context for lessons — and encourage students to do the same.

Incorporate real-life examples or current events. When possible, plan lessons around topics or events that relate directly to your students' interests. If your students love sports, for instance, have them calculate batting averages or engage in a fantasy football tournament — it will hold their attention better than plain fractions.

Work with parents to get medication right. If you notice that a student with ADHD becomes unfocused every afternoon at 2 PM, for instance, let the parents know; if he's taking medication, they may be able to tweak the dosage to keep him more attentive throughout the day.

HYPERACTIVITY

Children with hyperactive-type ADHD usually have energy to spare — making it difficult for them to sit still for long periods of time during the school day. They might fidget or squirm in their seats, kick the chair in front of them, or get up in the middle of your lesson. Some children with ADHD may talk excessively or hum to themselves while trying to sit still. Hyperactive behavior isn't a choice, but it can be a big distraction for other students — and a nuisance to a teacher who's managing

RECESS RULES!

Why taking away recess is a counterproductive punishment.

additu.de/recess

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26 kids at once. Teachers should provide physical outlets to help these kids release their pent-up energy in a non-intrusive way. Solutions include:

Have the student run errands for you. Sending a kid with ADHD to deliver a note to another teacher, or to get something from another classroom, serves two purposes: it gives the child an opportunity to stretch her legs and move around, and it also helps her feel responsible and trusted by her teacher. It's a win-win.

Allow students to walk around the classroom between lessons. Some teachers go as far as putting mini-trampolines or exercise bikes in their classrooms, and allowing students — with or without ADHD — to use them when they're feeling restless.

Encourage the use of “fidgets.” Worry beads, stress balls, and other small fidget toys can help students burn excess energy and improve focus, without distracting other students.

Provide lots of breaks. During long lessons or timed tests, allow brief periods of movement to help kids stay focused and interested.

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Children with ADHD are often labeled as “troublemakers” because of their tendency to act on their impulses. But these children aren't deliberately being bad, in most cases — rather, they're unable to self-regulate and modify their behaviors with future consequences in mind. This is perhaps the hardest symptom of ADHD to modify, and though it can be frustrating to manage, teachers should try to be patient. To help children with ADHD learn impulse control, teachers can:

Provide discreet reminders of expected behavior. If a child frequently blurts out answers, for instance, tape a small card to the top of her desk that says “Raise hand before speaking” — or even just “RH,” to protect the child's privacy. Looking at the card — or having it lightly tapped by the teacher after a slipup — will help the child learn appropriate behavior in the long term.

Make each day's schedule clear. Write the agenda on the board, and erase items as they are completed. Knowing what lesson or activity is coming next — and when they'll get a break — provides students with a sense of control that can improve behavior.

STOPLIGHT SYSTEM

Learn how one easy-to-use tool can help teachers manage classroom behavior

additu.de/stoplight

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Help kids prepare for transitions. Transitions between activities can stress children with ADHD. Give a five-minute warning, and then a two-minute warning, before students will be stopping one activity and starting another. Anticipating situations that may spark meltdowns and acting proactively is key.

Discipline when appropriate. ADHD is not an excuse for bad behavior. When necessary, discipline a child immediately after a rule is broken — delayed punishments, like after-school detention, don't work well for children who struggle to connect their current actions to future consequences.

Provide positive feedback. Children with ADHD often struggle with self-esteem — and always getting in trouble certainly doesn't help. When a child does something good, provide genuine, specific praise: “I'm proud of how you helped Johnny solve that problem during group work — you shared your ideas and listened to his without interrupting.”

Use a token system, when helpful. Some children with ADHD respond best to concrete rewards, like tokens or “points” earned for demonstrating a positive behavior. They can redeem their points at a later date for a prize, like a toy or an additional privilege.

FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS

Children with ADHD have difficulty sustaining attention and ordering tasks in their brain, which makes understanding and executing directions difficult. Often they'll hear the first step but miss the rest, or complete directions out of order. A child may leave the classroom thinking she got the homework assignment correct, for instance, but she actually only wrote down half of it. To help students manage this challenge, teachers should:

Establish eye contact with the student. Children with ADHD may be distracted without the teacher ever realizing it. When giving specific directions to a student, make sure she's looking you in the eye. You may need to pause in your sentence to make this happen.

Be specific; be brief. Make your instructions as simple and clear as you can. When possible, give directions to the student personally, instead of speaking to the entire room.

Allow the use of audio recorders or other tools. Small discreet

SIGNS OF LD

If a student is struggling in school, it may be a learning disability. Find out what teachers should look out for.

additu.de/red-flags

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recorders can help students with ADHD capture all instructions or assignments, without getting stressed about missing anything.

Write down instructions. Written instructions — either on the board or on a separate sheet of paper — can help ensure that students don't skip steps. If the student has to copy down the instructions himself, check that he didn't leave anything out.

Change your tone. Raising or lowering your tone in a dramatic fashion while giving directions can catch the attention of a distracted student.

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The Complete IEP/504 Guide

A step-by-step roadmap for securing services and accommodations for your child with ADHD or LD.

If you've watched your child struggle in school, you know how important it is to get him the help he needs. Unfortunately, when it comes to accommodations, most parents aren't sure where to even start. In this comprehensive step-by-step guide, we outline how to pursue an evaluation, which plan is best for your child's needs, and how to secure accommodations that work, suggested by educators and parents who've been there.

>> Learn more about this eBook: <http://additu.de/iep-504-ebook>

Your ADHD Homework Survival Guide

A plan for getting assignments written down, completed, and handed in on time.

After working hard to focus and remember all day long, children with ADHD fight nightly homework with a vengeance. And who can blame them? Children with ADHD struggle with executive functions, working memory, and focus — skills that are taxed all day. Parents who are tired of daily battles over vocab lists and multiplication tables agree: There has to be a better way. In this eBook, learn how to break the bad homework cycle and keep children learning.

>> Learn more about this eBook: <http://additu.de/hw-book>

The ADHD Parent-Teacher Handbook

Practical learning solutions to common ADHD symptoms in the classroom and at home.

Consistency and cooperation between school and home makes such a tremendous difference. Forge a coordinated partnership with parents by sharing these practical learning solutions to common ADHD problems in the classroom and at home. This eBook has specific strategies for both teachers and parents to use when helping children maintain focus, stay organized, make and keep friends, and control impulsive behavior.

>> Learn more about this eBook: <http://additu.de/pth>

FREE ADDitude Downloadable Reports

The Secret Power of Fidgets

Learn how fidget toys can improve student behavior and focus.

IEP vs. 504: What's the Difference?

Learn what accommodations your child might qualify for, and how to pursue them.

10 Teaching Strategies that Help Students with ADHD

Learn how to support, direct, and educate kids with ADHD.

Top 5 Homework Frustrations

Why kids struggle with homework, and what you can do to help.

Does Your Child Have a Learning Disability?

Use this self-test to find out if your child's problems at school may be due to LD.

Music for Healthy ADHD Brains

8 of the best songs to help you or your child focus.

10 Solutions to Disorganization at School

Keeping backpacks, lockers, and binders in order.

Find these and many more free ADHD resources online at:

<http://additu.de/freedownloads>

ADHD Webinar Replays from *ADDitude*:

The ADHD-Executive Function Connection

>> <http://additu.de/efunction>

We've all heard of executive functions — the brain-based skills that affect how we plan, organize, and carry out tasks. But how do executive functions relate to ADHD — and how can children and adults with the condition compensate for natural deficiencies in these critical skills? Thomas Brown, Ph.D., explains the ins and outs of executive functions and how they affect your focus in this expert webinar.

Teaching Students with ADHD

>> <http://additu.de/teaching>

Teaching kids is hard work; teaching kids with ADHD simply cannot be done without special tools that help teachers implement IEPs, deal with disruptive behaviors, and more. In this expert webinar, Jerome Schultz, Ph.D., addresses teachers' top concerns and explains how to create effective learning environments — for all students.

Comeback Kids: Building Resilience in Your Child

>> <http://additu.de/resilience>

Kids diagnosed with ADHD hear negative messages throughout the day. “Stay seated!” “Be quiet!” “Are you even listening?” These messages have a profound impact on their self-esteem, and may make them less willing to try new things. But growth — and learning — requires resilience, and it's up to you as parents to show them the way. This webinar teaches you how.

How Stress Impacts Learning and Behavior

>> <http://additu.de/stress>

In today's high-pressure school environment, kids with ADHD or LD can become overwhelmed by stress. In this audio and slide presentation, hosted by Jerome J. Schultz, Ph.D., find out how school stress impacts your child's brain — and what you can do about it. Get the tools you need to help your child manage academic stress so her brain has room to grow and learn!

How to Start (and End) the School Year Organized

>> <http://additu.de/scor>

Kids with ADHD often forget to write down homework assignments, lose important papers, and feel overwhelmed by big projects — and end up earning poor grades, in large part because they've never learned how to get organized. This webinar teaches systems for organization — as well as strategies to follow through with those systems and stay organized all year round.

FREE ADHD Newsletters from *ADDitude*

Sign up to receive critical news and information about ADHD diagnosis and treatment, success at school, adult ADHD, and parenting strategies: <http://additu.de/newsletter>

Adult ADHD and LD

Expert advice on managing your household, time, money, career, and relationships.

Children with ADHD and LD

Strategies and support for parents on behavior and discipline, time management, disorganization, and making friends.

ADHD and LD at School

How to get classroom accommodations, finish homework, work with teachers, find the right schools, and much more.

Treating ADHD

Treatment options for attention deficit, including medications, food, supplements, brain training, mindfulness and other alternative therapies

For Women with ADHD

Managing ADHD on the job, running a household, dealing with challenging emotions, and much more.