

Attention and Concentration

Several strategies can be put in place to aid children with their attention and concentration. Ideas for activities can be found below:

Environment

- Reduce distractions by allowing the child to work in a quieter area within the class or a position reducing distractions (e.g. at the front).
- Less pictures on the walls.
- Suitable height table and chair with feet flat on the floor.



Giving instructions

- Always make eye contact
- Use short, simple instructions
- Minimise sequence e.g. 1-2 tasks at a time
- Ask child to repeat instructions back or participate in demonstration
- Develop a routine for gaining the whole classes attention prior to giving instruction

Classroom ideas

- Positive reinforcement with praise and attention when the child perseveres
- Choose activities that ensure success and can be gradually made harder
- Write on the board simple instructions and refer the child back to these
- Encourage older children to keep a diary
- Keep classroom materials away and clearly labelled

Desk organisation

- Clear clutter on desk to reduce distractions
- Use 'fill in the gaps' answers rather than lengthy writing where possible
- Direct attention to important aspects of the task- e.g. underline/ highlight/ star beginning and end
- Provide written instructions

If the child fidgets

- Allow them to hold a tactile object while trying to concentrate e.g. koosh ball, red nose, paper clip, theraputty
- Redirect to a constructive task, hand an object or book, send on errand
- Consider the use of a move 'n' sit cushion
- Allow an object in the mouth e.g. gum, sucky sweets, chewy lace.
- Allow an area that the child can move about briefly without disturbing classmates

If the child day dreams

- Place the child near you
- Use an egg timer to focus attention on task
- Play games such as Kim's game to improve memory and concentration

If student calls out

- Reward child immediately when they wait before they respond
- Reward peers that do not call out
- Give all children three squares of paper and remove one each time a child calls out. If they lose all squares they lose a pre-determined privilege.

Hyperactivity

- Use deep and firm pressure to help a child calm down. You can make sure they are sitting correctly and then push down on shoulders for 10.
- Time out space in the classroom with soft furniture/ bean bag
- Place heavy bean bag on the child's knee whilst sat at desk
- Keep tasks short and allow short rest breaks if fatigued
- For older children, encourage self regulation strategies (see movement below)

Movement

- Give opportunities for movement as often as possible in class such as running errands, movement breaks.
- These activities can be done discreetly in the classroom setting
 - Press up on chair
 - Push hands together
 - Hook hands together and pull
 - Roll neck slowly in circular motion



Listening Skills

- Encourage story telling such as events of the day. Repeat main features of the story to the child or ask them to tell another family member later in the day.
- Ask the child to read out loud and then ask questions about what they have read.
- Ask the child to repeat instructions back, encourage eye contact.

Planning and task transition

- Provide a written or pictorial schedule of the daily or lesson's routine.
- Give 5 minute warnings before any transitions
- Alternate activities that require a high level of concentration with those that are more relaxed.
- Use an egg timer on the child's desk to encourage them to sit and complete an activity for that length of time.
- Use a traffic light system to stop and plan activities. Red is for "stop", amber is for "think and plan" and green is for "do". It may be useful to put this on a card in the child's planner as a visual reminder.