

## Checklist for Executive Function Skills – Elementary Level

The following is a list of Executive Function Skills. These are abilities that allow a student to be successful. Please mark any of the behaviors below that apply to your student. Only mark items that are comparatively worse than other students his or her age.

**SUSTAINED ATTENTION:** Ability to maintain attention despite distractibility, fatigue, or boredom.

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- Distractibility
- Inconsistent performance
- Forgetfulness
- Zoning out/daydreaming
- Making careless mistakes
- Difficulty following directions
- Difficulty completing assignments
- Poor *note* taking skills
- Off task behaviors (i.e., talking to neighbors, playing with items in desk)

**WORKING MEMORY:** Holding information in mind while performing complex tasks.

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- Gets confused when too much information is presented
- Has trouble remembering things (i.e., phone numbers)
- May lose track of what they are doing as they work
- May forget what they need to retrieve when sent on an errand
- May frequently switch tasks or fail to complete tasks
- Has difficulty keeping up with classroom lessons
- Has difficulty remaining attentive and focused for appropriate length of time
- Has difficulty sequencing math word problems
- Extreme difficulty solving problems mentally (i.e., mental math)
- Has poor reading comprehension
- Has difficulty summarizing
- Demonstrates inconsistent performance
- Has difficulty following directions
- Has difficulty keeping track of a lot of information

**FLEXIBILITY:** To move freely from one situation to another and to think flexibly in order to respond appropriately to the situation.

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- Has difficulty making transitions
- Has difficulty starting a new task before the first task is complete
- Has difficulty switching gears (addition and subtraction problems on same page)
- Demonstrates perseverative behaviors
- Gives the same answers to different questions
- Has difficulty switching to a new topic or new subject
- Is inflexible
- Has difficulty with problem solving and conflict resolution
- Fails to comply with task instructions

## Checklist for Executive Function Skills – Elementary Level

**INHIBITION:** The ability to stop one's own behavior at the appropriate time, including stopping actions and thoughts

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- Has difficulty waiting
- Interrupts and disrupts group activities
- May call out
- Touches things or people
- Makes careless mistakes
- Displays hyperactivity
- Acts on auto-pilot without reflection
- Perseverates
- Has many false starts
- Dives right into problems without pausing, reflecting, developing a strategy or game plan
- Talks excessively
- Is unlikely to reflect or self-monitor
- Misinterprets directions

**ORGANIZING/PLANNING/INITIATING:** The ability to impose order on work, play, and storage spaces. The ability to manage current and future oriented task demands. The ability to begin a task or activity and to independently generate ideas, responses, or problem-solving strategies.

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- May forget homework assignments/materials
- Can be unprepared and not be able to find materials or has a messy desk/workspace
- May get "stuck"
- Appears to be daydreaming
- Has difficulty completing assignments in a timely manner (may underestimate the time needed)
- Has difficulty organizing and expressing ideas in oral and/or written form
- Approaches tasks in a haphazard fashion
- Has difficulty responding to open-ended questions
- Performs better with multiple choice questions
- Has difficulty making decisions
- Has difficulty starting an assignment independently
- Has difficulty generating ideas, responses and problem solving
- Has difficulty with multi-step problem solving

## Checklist for Executive Function Skills – Elementary Level

**EMOTIONAL CONTROL:** The ability to modulate emotional responses by bringing rational thought to bear on feelings.

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- Emotional reactions are out of sync with the situation (Small events trigger big emotional responses)
- May laugh hysterically or cry easily with little provocation
- Has temper tantrums or explosive outbursts
- Is bossy
- Is easily upset/overly sensitive
- Demonstrates aggressive behavior
- Is rigid/inflexible in thinking
- Demonstrates rapid mood changes without apparent cause)
- Has a low tolerance for frustration
- Is socially immature
- Appears insensitive to others' perspective and/or feelings

**SELF-MONITORING:** The ability to monitor one's own performance and to measure it against some standard of what is needed or expected.

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- Makes careless mistakes
- Rushes through work
- Appears to lack pride in work
- Is disorganized
- Exhibits undesired classroom behavior
- Has difficulty checking over work/proofreading
- Produces sloppy work
- Acts without thinking things through
- Is unaware of behavior and impact on others
- Has difficulty with time management
- May have difficulty monitoring volume of voice
- Has difficulty with pragmatic skills
- Has difficulty empathizing
- Procrastinates
- Misses deadlines
- Has difficulty completing work

## Checklist for Executive Function Skills – Elementary Level

**ABSTRACT REASONING/CONCEPT FORMATION/SALIENCY DETERMINATION:** The ability to make connections, synthesize and categorize information.

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- Has difficulty with perspective taking
- Has difficulty with social problem solving
- May ask the same questions repetitively
- Is a concrete, literal learner
- Has difficulty understanding what cannot be seen, heard or touched
- Has difficulty sorting/organizing information
- Has difficulty with abstract concepts
- Has difficulty with reading comprehension
- Has difficulty understanding the most important thing to focus on during lessons
- Has difficulty summarizing information
- Focuses on details and misses the "big picture"
- Has difficulty determining what is irrelevant versus relevant
- Has difficulty making inferences
- Performs better during structured tasks (answering specific concrete questions)
- Struggles in unstructured tasks when not given much direction (write a story)
- Has difficulty reading between the lines or "catching on"

## Checklist for Executive Function Skills – Middle School Level

The following is a list of Executive Function Skills. These are abilities that allow a student to be successful. Please mark any of the behaviors below that apply to your student. Only mark items that are comparatively worse than other students his or her age.

**INHIBITION:** Ability to stop one's own behavior at the appropriate time, including inappropriate actions and thoughts.

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- Calls out during lessons
- Touches objects/peers
- Invades others' personal space
- Interrupts conversations
- Makes careless errors- written & verbal
- Struggles with directions: not reading directions or misreading directions
- Misinterprets text
- Attempts to solve problems without planning
- Starts & stops tasks repeatedly

**FLEXIBILITY:** Ability to move from one situation to another and to think flexibly. The ability to stop an old behavior and start a new one.

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- Perseverates on a topic, idea or activity
- Repeats the same behavior after the task has changed
- Is driven by routine and consistency
- Needs the same seat
- Wears the same color
- Eats the same foods
- Has difficulty transitioning - class to class, weekend to school, one activity to another,...
- Is unable to tolerate changes in schedule
- Has difficulty with transitioning within conversation

**EMOTIONAL CONTROL:** Ability to manage emotions in order to achieve goals and complete tasks.

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- Tantrums
- Cries
- Laughs inappropriately
- Calls out
- Makes irrational statements ("Teacher hates me," "Someone's laughing at me")
- Demonstrates aggressive behavior, physically or verbally

## Checklist for Executive Function Skills – Middle School Level

**PLANNING, ORGANIZING AND INITIATING:** Ability to plan, begin and manage a task or activity independently.

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- Doesn't begin tasks (i.e. sits and stares)
- Has messy desk/notebooks/locker/backpacks
- Has difficulty with unstructured tasks
- Is often off task (i.e. looks lost)
- Has difficulty understanding what to do
- Has difficulty with time management
- Is overwhelmed by large amounts of information
- Has difficulty retrieving information spontaneously or answering open ended questions
- Has difficulty handing in assignments in a timely fashion

**WORKING MEMORY:** Ability to hold information in one's mind for the purpose of completing a task.

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- Has difficulty keeping up with information to complete a task
- May look like poor attention
- Misses important pieces of information
- Gets confused when too much information is presented at once or too quickly (i.e. information overload)
- Has difficulty taking notes from lectures
- Has extreme difficulty solving problems mentally (i.e. mental math)
- Has difficulty keeping up with and maintaining conversation
- Frequently asks questions
- Has difficulty sequencing

**SELF-MONITORING:** Ability "to monitor one's own performance and "to measure against some standard of what is needed or expected.

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- Has difficulty with perspective taking
- Has difficulty understanding someone else's point of view
- Is often unaware of his own behavior or its impact on others
- Has difficulty with empathy
- Has difficulty knowing what to say and when to say it

## Checklist for Executive Function Skills – Middle School Level

**SUSTAINED ATTENTION:** Ability to notice information and maintain focus over a long period of time.

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- Demonstrates poor attention
- "Zones out"
- Deomonstrates inconsistent performance
- Has difficulty with note-taking
- Is distractible
- Pays attention to everything, not just target activity
- Struggles to stay on task
- Asks questions that were just answered

**ABSTRACT REASONING/CONCEPT FORMATION/SALIENCY:** Ability to see relationships, make connections and categorize information.

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- Has difficulty forming theories and problem solving
- Has difficulty understanding what he/she cannot hear, see or touch
- Has difficulty understanding figurative language
- Has difficulty understanding ambiguous language
- Has difficulty understanding multiple meaning words, similes and metaphors, humor and sarcasm
- Has difficulty synthesizing information
- Has difficulty determining relevant vs. irrelevant details
- Has difficulty determining main idea
- Has difficulty determining related concepts
- Has difficulty "reading between the lines"
- Misses the "Big Picture"

## Checklist for Executive Function Skills – High School Level

The following is a list of Executive Function Skills. These are abilities that allow a student to be successful. Please mark any of the behaviors below that apply to your student. Only mark items that are comparatively worse than other students his or her age.

**INHIBITION:** The ability to stop one's own behavior at the appropriate time, including stopping actions and thoughts.

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- Calls out during lessons
- Does not follow directions
- Has inconsistent test performance
- Touches things/ other people
- Is restless
- Demonstrates over-active behaviors

**FLEXIBILITY:** The ability to move freely from one situation to another and to think flexibly in order to respond appropriately to the situation.

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- Perseverates on previous and current tasks
- Is often not prepared for next activity
- May just sit and stare
- Does not participate

**EMOTIONAL CONTROL:** The ability to modulate emotional responses by bringing rational thought to bear on feelings.

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- Often calls out in class without consideration of others
- Lacks emotional regulation
- Has difficulty redirecting and refocusing once the child exhibits the lack of emotional control (e.g., temper tantrums, cursing, crying, extreme laughter, etc.)
- Exhibits unpredictable emotional responses that are out-of-sync with the situation

**INITIATION:** The ability to begin a task or activity ability to begin a task or activity and to independently generate ideas, responses, or problem-solving strategies.

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- Sits with a blank page
- Exhibits task avoidance behaviors such as leaving the classroom
- Gives excuses on a consistent basis

**WORKING MEMORY:** The capacity to hold information in mind for the purpose of completing a task.

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- May appear as poor attention
- Only obtains part of the information and gets confused when too much information is presented in quick manner
- Has significant difficulty solving problems mentally
- Has poor reading comprehension
- Has difficulty sequencing information



## Checklist for Executive Function Skills – High School Level

**PLANNING/ORGANIZATION:** The ability to manage current and future-oriented task demands.

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- Lacks follow through with assignments or projects
- Inconsistently meets of deadlines and completes homework
- Has messy backpack and/or folders

**ORGANIZATION OF MATERIALS:** The ability to impose order on work, play, and storage spaces.

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- Lacks checklist(s)
- Demonstrates inefficient use of space
- Has disorganized desk and/or locker
- Is often missing materials needed for class (e.g., writing utensils, paper)

**SUSTAINED ATTENTION:** The ability to hold attention in one spot and to maintain focus over a prolonged period of time.

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- Has poor attention; is easily distractible
- "Zones Out"
- Is inconsist-The student knows what was covered when s/he was paying attention and does not know what was covered when s/he was not paying attention
- Has difficulty beginning activities
- Has difficulty remaining on task until activity is finished
- Pays attention to everything; however, does not filter relevant from irrelevant information

**SELF-MONITORING:** The ability to monitor one's own performance and to measure it against some standard of what is needed or expected.

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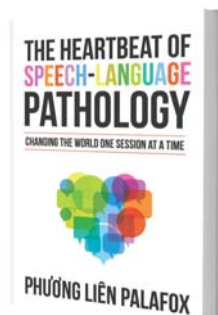
- Is unaware of how behaviors impact their learning environment and the learning environment of others
- Lacks time management skills
- Fails to check work and makes careless mistakes
- Rushes through work and often overlooks directions and task requirements

Great resources to help you do your job effectively!

Click below:



Collaborating with Educational Diagnosticians in the Referral and Evaluation Process



The Heartbeat of Speech-Language Pathology



Collaborating with Teachers to Make Great Referrals



Breaking Into the Classroom: Service Delivery in the Schools



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