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.

- [ ] 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.

- [ ] 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.

- [ ] 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

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

☐ 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.

☐ 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.

- □ 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.

- □ 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.

- [ ] 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"

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# 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.

- [ ] 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.

- [ ] 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.

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


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

- 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.

- 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.

- 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.

☐ Demonstrates poor attention
☐ "Zones out"
☐ Demonstrates 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.

☐ 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.

- ☐ 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.

- ☐ 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.

- ☐ 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.

- ☐ 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.

- ☐ 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.

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

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

☐ 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.

☐ Has poor attention; is easily distractible
☐ "Zones Out"
☐ Is inconsistent-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.

☐ 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