

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

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

- 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"

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

Checklist for Executive Function Skills – Middle School Level

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"
- 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.

- 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 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.

- 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 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.

- 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