



Space Matters

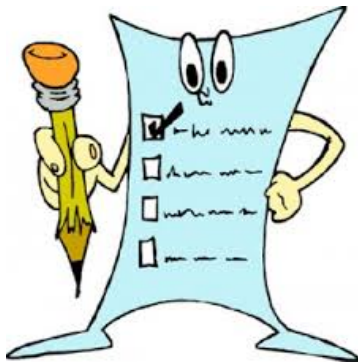
- * Work in a consistent location; reduce distractions
- * Maintain close proximity



Movement & Supportive Cues

- * Encourage helpful fidgets/movement during learning
- * Give movement brain breaks
- * Agree on & use supportive cues

Sustaining Attention



Predictability

- * Create a daily schedule with preferred activities
- * Set times; Use a visual timer
- * Use a checklist with criteria/how-to) for tasks
- * Chunk bigger tasks into smaller, manageable parts



Motivation

- * Incorporate student interest
- * Reward with preferred activities & praise
- * Praise on-task behaviour and completion of tasks often & with specific feedback

Sustained attention is an executive skill that helps us pay attention even when we're distracted, tired or bored. Some strategies for supporting individuals to increase their attention capacity, or sustain attention through tasks, are listed below.

Space Matters

- **Choosing a consistent location** for work provides routine and clear expectations. This also creates regular opportunities for cueing & check-ins.
- **Reduce distractions**, taking away anything that may be a distractor is proactively removed to support focus on the task.
- **Maintaining close proximity**, or staying comfortably close enough to support, allows for regular praise, encouragement, as well as redirection and supportive cues or agreed upon ways to remind students to stay on task or return to the task.

Predictability

- **Use visual timers**, such as stopwatches, online timers, microwave timers or ordinal clocks support a visual understanding of time to complete a task, recognition of time as it passes, and time left. Agree on a length of time for sustained work before getting started.
- **Make a schedule, together**, that includes the child's voice to determine what and when tasks, breaks & preferred activities, will happen. Also, include a plan to **check progress** (after each task, at specific time(s) or end of day, etc.).
- **Develop a checklist** together outlining how to make (criteria) each task, project, study session, test etc. most effective and/or successful.
- **Break down bigger tasks** into smaller parts (i.e. chunk tasks to make them more manageable) to be completed over different work times or several days.

Movement and Supportive Cues

- **Encourage use of helpful fidgets and movement** during learning or on breaks. Helpful fidgets are ones that support focus but are not distracting. Fidgets and movement options that work are based on individual preference. Some ideas are seating (i.e. exercise ball, cushion, wiggle seats, bean bag chair, etc.), hand-held fidgets (i.e. puddy, stress ball, tangle chains, etc.) and gum or chewable chains.
- **Make cueing helpful**. Cues can be visual, verbal or non-verbal. These are best determined together to decide what is most supportive and helpful for the student. Possible questions to help determine a fair and reasonable cue sequence can include: When can a parent cue? How often (frequency)? What cues should be used? Verbal vs non-verbal cues (one or other or both)? When NOT to cue?). How will the child peacefully cue that they have had enough?

Motivation

- **Incorporate and capitalize on student interests** whenever possible. Games, challenges or contests can also provide motivation for some individuals.
- **Preferred activities & praise**. Provide a preferred activity when the task is finished. Consistently and often offer praise for on task-behaviour. More attention for specific behaviours often results in an increase in those behaviours.
- **Identify & list common distractions**. Distractions can be redirected to make excellent preferred activities!