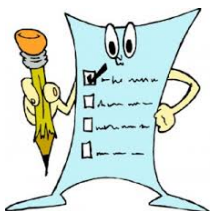


Strategies for Getting Started

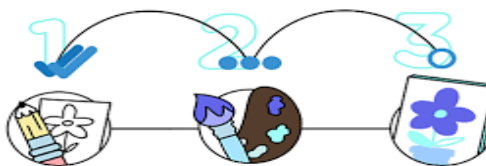
Try 1 or a few that work for you!



Use a visual schedule.



Give choices!



Plan it out:
Chunk the task with visual cues.



Use areas of interest.



Provide oral & visual
Instructions.



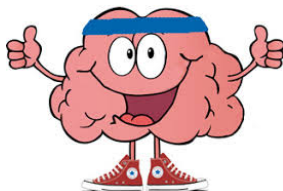
Use a visual timer.



Countdown
to get started.



Take turns getting started
reading or writing.



Encourage brain breaks
between tasks.



Prompt & praise.



Predetermine incentives,
positive reinforcement,
First, task...Then, preferred activity.

TASK INITIATION is an Executive Functioning Skill that helps us “**get started**” on work that we may be avoiding or don’t want to do. **The following strategies support getting started with regards to schoolwork or regular activities, like chores!**

1. **Visual schedules:** A concrete schedule of the day/morning/hour can help your child feel in control and less overwhelmed by the expectations placed on them. Create this together - build it around family routines/schedules and non-school activities.
2. **Choice! Choice! Choice!** Offer choice whenever possible: choice of time, order, questions, visual cues, reward, brain break, topic, etc.
3. **Plan it out:** Together make a plan to complete the task.
 - a. Break the task into manageable parts or steps
 - b. Present information 1 step at a time. Start with simple tasks first: “Open your book...now write your name and date.”
 - c. Choose pictures and/or write the steps of the plan out together; use pictures/a checklist to highlight what is needed, step-by-step and what’s been accomplished. This allows some control and ownership which can reduce resistance to getting started.
 - d. Keep visual cues to signal starting a task consistent. Decide on the cue together.
4. **Use areas of interest:** Connect tasks to real world examples, and highlight how they are meaningful in real life. When giving options, offer choices that are specific to the child’s area of interest.
5. **Prompt & praise:** Give a prompt to begin a task and provide positive reinforcement or praise once started, completed, &/or to recognize progress made (e.g. verbal praise or a point system).
6. **Provide oral & visual instruction:** Discuss the steps or instructions for a task and use pictures or visuals to support the information
7. **Use a visual timer:** Decide together on the time needed for a task or before the next break, and use a timer to track the time. With a digital clock or ordinal timer, set the timer. With an ordinal clock with a glass face, colour a triangular piece of time with a dry erase marker; draw lines to the center of the clock from the start and finish times to create a triangle, and then colour it in so the time can be observed as it passes.
8. **Countdown to get started:** Give a warning prompt with a specific time (e.g. “You have 5 more minutes to ...”) to indicate an upcoming shift in activities/tasks. Some children will respond well to a 5-10 second countdown to the next activity, much like a rocket ship countdown: “5-4-3-2-1”
9. **Take turns:** To support getting started, to keep going, and to get the most out of the learning, take turns with some of the work tasks. For example, alternate child/adult reading every second page/paragraph, adult creates a concept map and child writes in the headings, or adult records student thinking during brainstorming.
10. **Encourage brain breaks:** We all benefit from quick breaks when we work. Brain breaks can involve physical movement such as a quick run around the house or doing a Tiktok dance; a mindfulness activity such as deep breathing or listening to music; or anything that brings about a change in the demands on the brain - switching gears!
11. **Prompt & Praise:** Give quick prompts to redirect attention or indicate what to do next. Offer praise when the child gets started and for all they are doing correctly (i.e. getting their supplies, having their book out, finding the correct page, getting started reading/writing/math, working hard, staying on task, etc.)
12. **Pre-determine incentives:** Incentives can help with motivation. Using a “first-then” strategy (“**FIRST**, do this and **THEN**, you can do that,” identifying a preferred activity (e.g. drawing, basketball, LEGO), a point towards a reward (e.g. choosing the family desert for Friday), and/or a positive reinforcer (e.g. Fortnite with a friend online, card game with parent, etc.)

*Adapted from *Smart but Scattered* By Peg Dawson & Richard Guare