

Supporting Executive Functioning (EF)



Executive functions are skills that help people stay focused, manage emotions, remember things, and follow through with tasks. These skills develop over time, but some people find certain areas more challenging than others. One important skill is working memory - the ability to hold and use information in our minds for short periods.

Here are some simple, practical strategies to help you or your child support this skill.

- **Chunk it down:** Break big tasks and information into smaller, manageable pieces. Parents, you can help your child break down assignments or chores into smaller steps.
- **Short bursts:** Work/Have your child work on tasks for shorter periods, switching between different activities to refresh focus. Try 10 minutes on one task, then 10 minutes on another.
- **Frequent breaks:** Take/Encourage your child to take short breaks (1-2 minutes) throughout the day, especially during tougher tasks. Combine these with movement or relaxation, like a quick walk.
- **Minimise distractions:** A tidy workspace and headphones can help with concentration. Parents, you can help your child to create a distraction-free study space.
- **Best time of day:** Schedule/Help your child schedule demanding tasks for when you/they feel most alert.
- **Multiple senses:** Using visual aids (like diagrams) alongside verbal information can be helpful. Repetition also helps. Parents, you can present information to your child in multiple ways.

This handout offers general strategies to support working memory. These strategies are intended as a starting point to help you find ways to manage working memory challenges. This handout is not a substitute for individual advice or intervention. If you or your child require personalised strategies or professional guidance, we recommend consulting with an appropriately skilled allied health professional.

References:

Roth, R. M., Isquith, P. K., & Gioia, G. A. (2005). Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function: Adult Version (BRIEF-A). APA PsycTests.

Sharman, E. (2022, November). Workplace adjustments for executive dysfunction.
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