

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIOURAL STRATEGIES FOR ADHD

The following behavioural strategies are taken from a standard list of recommendations used in the SickKids Neuropsychiatry Program:

- Limit work periods to increase success and minimize frustration with homework. Activities should be short and varied to help maintain attention.
- At home use a timer to help schedule breaks. Use of a timer may provide structure and motivation, and assist with task completion. Breaks should be brief and include activities that are not too stimulating or too far away from the task at hand.
- It can be helpful to include breaks during a long work period at school to provide appropriate opportunities to move in the classroom. For example, activities such as taking attendance records to the school office or returning books to the school library could be built into a daily routine.
- On-task behaviour for a designated period of time should be rewarded, and the reward may be an activity of the child's choice. The period of time can be lengthened as on-task behaviour improves.
- It may be helpful to post a daily checklist with a list of tasks to be accomplished on the child's desk in the classroom or at home. Completion of each item can then be checked off.
- Ensure that instructions and directions are understood before beginning a task. Repeating the required steps or instructions either to the teacher or a partner can help set a framework for the task.
- Breaking down tasks into small and immediate steps can be helpful in meeting time expectations. Large tasks can be overwhelming, making it difficult for the child to begin. Presenting the child with small, do-able components of a task can avoid the resistance and frustration with schoolwork often seen in children with ADHD.
- Difficulty with organization and planning often results in a significant amount of work not being completed or passed in. The use of an agenda can be helpful for children and adolescents with these kinds of difficulties, but parents and teachers need to provide assistance in maximizing the effectiveness of this tool.
- A neat work area will likely be less distracting. For example, provide materials only for the current task.
- Children with ADHD often have difficulty with transitions. Their impulsivity and excitability can lead to difficulties settling down, organizing their belongings, and moving between structured and unstructured activities. It can be helpful to develop and review explicit rules for transitions (e.g., what materials will be needed, how much time is allowed).