



Attention and Concentration in the classroom

A child with **attention** difficulties may have the following characteristics:-

very easily distracted

responds to even the slightest noise or movement in the classroom

frequently disrupts other children

often restless and fidgety

goes from one activity to another very quickly

has difficulty screening out, or filtering out irrelevant background sounds or visual information

A child who cannot **concentrate** tends to be:

a "daydreamer"

slow to initiate or complete tasks

often quiet in the classroom and not noticed, because they are not disruptive and don't draw attention to themselves



Helpful strategies:

- Limit over-stimulation through careful organisation of the environment, where good attention and concentration skills are required.
- Calm down spaces, with opportunities to visit space, or ticket system to leave areas of high demand, e.g. to go for a drink. This way the child can use the tickets when they need to, and these

tickets can be limited per day, so the child learns to pace self.

- Think about location of objects – are they necessary or unnecessary for the task? Are they too close to be a distraction (visual, auditory, or tactile)? What is within the child's visual field from their point in the classroom?
- Minimise necessary objects by having set placement of pencils, ruler, glasses case, pencil case, books, worksheets, etc. Design a 'placemat' for each task, i.e. a different one for language tasks, vs. mathematics, etc.



- Positively reinforce good work with praise and use encouragement when the child is reaching their end limits of attention.
- Use enclosed places, e.g. cubicles for either short-term work, or on an area the child finds more difficult.
- Goal-oriented tasks – clearly identify the end point of the task prior to beginning. The goals need to be realistically challenging and achievable. They can be modified to start tasks for someone else to finish; or finish tasks that have been started by others.
- If the child loses track of information presented on the board, then present same information in multiple forms.

This increases memory cues and can be helpful for the whole class.

- Consider good general positioning to assist with compliance for tasks, e.g. appropriate height chairs and tables, bean bag chairs on the mat, soft wedge-cushions, etc.
- Find out when is the best time of the day for the child's alertness, and use this for learning. Other times can be filled with activities with a movement focus, such as (if appropriate) wiping tables, tidying up, etc.
- Teach self-talk techniques through modelling, narration.
- Visualising can help with movement control, correctly sequencing an activity, and production of an end product.
- Muffle noise if possible; e.g. choose carpeted rooms, ones away from office sounds, shared spaces, etc.
- Lunch bunch' - a small group of children eating together in quiet space, rather than with a whole school in the cafeteria.
- Recreation choices that support attention development, e.g. activities with a high level of movement but with a focus, such as football, netball, gymnastics, martial arts, ballet, etc.
- Consider appropriate toys/activities for free time, i.e. ones that calm children down such as slow rhythmic activities, music with similar rhythms, etc.
- Use a check point/ box system to monitor stages of tasks. (N.B. This can be a lot of work to set up.)
- Make lists – this helps with organising prior to starting tasks,

sequencing of task aspects and time management.

- Sequencing using graded stages (small steps to larger ones), picture boards, activities with a distinct beginning and end which can then be cleared away, routines.
- Finish tasks to an agreed, achievable point. Discuss expectations of finish point prior to starting the activity.
- Learn different ways to play with the same toy/object, rather than rapidly presenting or representing toys to keep them interested.
- Use organised carrying tasks or errands for the teacher, with varying time demands to help build attention skills and confidence.

