



LEARNING STRATEGIES THAT WORK NOW

**Tools and best practices
that work for students
with ADHD learning
at school and/or
learning at home.**



FROM THE ADHD EXPERTS AT
ADDITUDE

ADDITUDE

Strategies and Support for ADHD & LD

A trusted source of advice and information for families touched by attention-deficit disorder—
and a voice of inspiration to help people with ADHD find success at home, at school, and on the job.

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TOOLS AND STRATEGIES THAT WORK FOR PARENTS

> **Get creative with teachers.** If your child is struggling to engage with work and routine assignments, get in touch with the teacher and ask if an alternative project can work. If this week's math lesson is making change, ask if your child can practice the concept by creating a "store" at home rather than filling out worksheets. You can attach prices to items around your home for purchase, and even introduce concepts like percentages with "discounted" items and coupons.

> **Give your child control.** Parents say their children do best when they get to choose the order, structure, and priorities of their daily learning. Making learning personal—shifting subjects to suit the ebbs and flows of a child's focus and productivity—brings encouraging results.

> **Create homework spaces for your child.** Have your child build a fort under the dining room table

and do assignments inside. Go to the park to do work or take a walk and have a picnic. A child can sit under your desk and do homework while you work remotely. Changing the scene for homework motivates a child to do it.

> **One parent's secrets to distance learning.**

1. Keep a routine—school is from 8:30 to 3:30, which means a child does homework if there is no online class. 2. Avoid using earbuds during online class. 3. Schedule email/social media time—in five- to 10-minute periods—throughout the day. One more thing: Request that teachers inform you about their expectations and assignments.

> **Reorder the school day to match your child's energy level and focus.** If math is hard for your child, do it in the morning, even if the school schedules math in the afternoon.

> **Ask the teacher to send a daily checklist of all the tasks to be done that day.** It's easy to follow and a parent doesn't have to dig around to find out what's due. The checklist also empowers kids to be more self-sufficient.

> **Talk with the teacher about varying the schedule.** Rather than having every subject every day, split up subjects, so a child takes two subjects daily, alternating days with two others. Homework is more manageable, and the schedule isn't as overwhelming.

> **Create a "sticky note" chart and hang it in the kitchen.** The student removes a note after she's completed the assignment. That makes it easy for her and her parents to monitor her progress, and she feels a sense of accomplishment as she removes each note from the chart.

> **MAKE LEARNING A GAME.** Children are motivated to learn when they're having fun, so if your child loves board and card games, run with it. Learning can be incorporated into almost any game or favorite activity hiding in your closet. Connect 4, puzzles, and LEGOs all work well to motivate learners. Tell your child he can add five pieces to a puzzle after he answers five questions. "When the lesson is complete, the puzzle will be finished."





> **BUILD FOCUS AT HOME WITH BUSY HANDS AND FEET.**

Allow your child to use Play-Doh or a hula hoop while answering flashcard questions. Kicking a goal outside or throwing bean bags across the room have also worked for homeschoolers.

> **Work one-on-one together on the hardest subjects.** Give a child instant feedback about challenges and ask, “What made you think of that answer?” This allows you to try to understand your child’s thought process and correct any mistakes in real time.

> **Work with the school.** The school is responsible for providing a student with curriculum changes and behavior support. Let the school or IEP team help with the gaps and behaviors you’re seeing. Tell the team how they are affecting your child’s ability to get work done. Ask for help to hold him accountable. Also ask for help regarding the work that is required. Finally, ask if he may do other assignments to learn the topic. For example, may he take an online class instead of writing a paper?

> **Structure your child’s day.** Set up work periods using incentives that matter to your child or teen: timed breaks with appropriate activities, and earned rewards when the period is over or the task is completed. Plan to work alongside your child. You can do some of your work while she does hers. You’ll also be there to answer questions or help her stay on task.

> **Use the Pomodoro technique.** This is a time-management system built on the premise that the best way to accomplish goals is to work with time instead of struggle against it. Specifically, it contends that humans are most productive when working in 25-minute increments, broken up by five-minute activity breaks that help to maintain energy and focus. Every hour and a half, a 30-minute break helps the brain and body reset for more work. The challenge is to find and introduce short activities that kids will love and do independently—away from their screens. Here are some great activities you can try: **5 minutes**—GoNoodle videos, jump rope, create

“He learns best working one-on-one with the teacher and gets *kind and patient* instructions.”

A Parent’s 7-Step Guide to “School” at Home

1 TAKE LOTS OF MOVEMENT BREAKS. Don’t expect to plow through more than one or two subjects at one sitting.

2 DO ONE-ON-ONE WORK. Team up with your child as much as he will tolerate.

3 DON’T SIT AT A TABLE. Let your child sprawl. Tables may feel confining. Lying on his belly may ruin his handwriting, but pick your battles.

4 BE OPEN TO LEARNING FROM PODCASTS, video games,

and so on. My oldest gets his social studies from podcasts; my youngest learns science from games.

5 BE SURE YOUR CHILD IS FED and hydrated, and has had enough sleep. A deficiency of any of these will derail his focus.

6 IF YOUR CHILD CAN’T START or stay focused for some reason, don’t force it.

7 DON’T CONFINE LEARNING TO WORKSHEETS. Kids with ADHD get bored with them very quickly. —ELIZABETH BROADBENT



Play-Doh sculptures, dance to your favorite song; **15 minutes**—draw with chalk on the sidewalk, paint with watercolors, ride a bike; **30 minutes**—make a fort using sheets and pillows, play a card game, create a scavenger hunt outside.

> Store school stuff in one place.
One parent of four school-aged



children bought four bins in different colors that were large enough to store their notebooks, pencils, markers, papers, and laptops. The bins contain everything the kids need for any “live” class, but they are light enough to carry from room to room. **All school-related items stay in the bins, so the children don’t need to jump up during a Zoom/Google class to get something.**

ADDitude Survey Snapshot

We asked parents: “What have you learned about your child’s learning challenges?”

- 1** My child needs constant redirection to stay on task **55%**
- 2** My child does better with frequent breaks and a more relaxed pace **52%**
- 3** My child does best when he/she can structure the day and prioritize work **38%**
- 4** The social aspect of school is a big motivator for my child; without that, he/she has less interest in “doing school” **36%**
- 5** My child does better when there is a clear boundary between home and school **36%**
- 6** My child finds it easier to learn new concepts when taught in person **34%**
- 7** My child does better without peer judgment and the social aspect of school **26%**
- 8** My child needs academic support and instruction that I’m not equipped to provide at home **25%**
- 9** My child does fine academically. Without the need to manage behavior, the day is not as hard **19%**
- 10** My child finds it easy to learn new concepts on his/her own **16%**

> Schedule class time. Have your child stay on a school schedule, no matter what his age. Think of it this way: If he had to be physically present for class, when would he have to set his alarm and get himself out the door to show up on time? An online class should be treated with the same importance. Following his school schedule as closely as possible will also make it easier for your child to work independently.

> Designate different areas for “school” and “homework.” Set up two separate work areas in your home. The school area will be where your child takes his online Zoom classes and listens to downloaded lectures. The homework area is for reading and independent learning.

> Get outside. Fresh air refreshes the brain and improves focus. Have your child do math homework with sidewalk chalk or learn vocabulary words while jumping on a trampoline. Does the dog need walking? You grab the flashcards, your child grabs the dog—and by the time you’re back, he has studied for the exam.

> Create a study soundtrack. Music helps the brain focus. Have each of your children create a study playlist of music they love, and play through the playlist every time they sit down to work. Eventually, the music will act as a motivator—when they hear the music, it means it’s time to get work done. Are your children all working in the same space? Come up with a household playlist for quiet work time.



TOOLS AND STRATEGIES THAT WORK FOR TEACHERS

> START A LESSON WITH A LITTLE HUMOR TO ENGAGE STUDENTS. You can make Wednesday “Wig Wednesday.” Kids are encouraged to show up on Zoom for the lesson wearing a wig of their choice.

> Tweak the writing process to build confidence.

Staring at a blank 8 x 11 page can be intimidating. Ask writing-challenged students to make a slideshow instead. Whether it's PowerPoint, Google Slides, or another app, slideshow programs allow students to use writing and images to convey an idea, provide supporting details, and offer examples in a visual way.

> Tap into the visual power of timers. Students with attention challenges are overwhelmed when starting lengthy, multi-part projects that require a lot of mental energy. Timers can provide a counterbalance. During any phase of an assignment, a teacher might use her phone to set a timer for 20 minutes and leave it where students can see it on the screen. This prompts students to start working, as there is now a visual reminder of a time limit. It also eases their anxiety because they know there is only a small section to tackle at this moment.

> Increase engagement with hands-on projects. Project-based learning (PBL) can make a topic or subject more interesting and fun, boosting a student's engagement. Foldables is a hit among many students. A foldable is a type of graphic organizer that displays and arranges information on many subjects. According to Dinah Zike, M.Ed., who is credited with the idea, “Making a foldable gives students a fast, kinesthetic activity that helps them organize and retain information. Foldables can also be used for an in-depth investigation of a concept, idea, opinion, event, person, or place.”

> Make learning meaningful to each student.

While curriculum guides and district expectations that align with specific units of study may be the focus, what's crucial is that students read what they choose for the most part, and write, analyze, research, and argue about what's important to them. Individualized learning plans and schedules for each student need to be encouraged, realized, and supported.



> Consistent communication is key.

When teaching remotely, scheduling “live” video sessions at the same time every day helps students structure their time—

and sets the day’s schedule. Moreover, teachers can use texts and phone calls to provide the type of in-the-moment prompts that they might otherwise do in person in the classroom. Group text apps, like Remind, are helpful, but personal phone calls are most effective in getting a student’s attention.

> **Stay connected with students.** It is important to talk with students about topics unrelated to school—their interests and passions. It keeps the relationship growing, and makes the student more willing to learn.

> **Record classroom lessons.** Many teachers have found that recording their lessons and lectures is helpful for students with learning challenges. Children can review them, and stop and pause and rewind when they are having trouble understanding parts of the lesson.

> **Classroom rules to live by.** Incorporate breaks, flexible seating, and movement into the classroom. Also provide more visuals and schedules. Finally, if possible, allow children to chew gum in the classroom. It has helped many students maintain focus.

> **Understand that relationships are everything.** The children who have a good relationship with their teacher are more successful because they trust their teacher.

> **Sharing resources with parents.** Launching a weekly email with links to valuable information about their students’ learning patterns and challenges maintains a close connection with parents, and enlists them in helping their children overcome problems.

> **Encourage interest-based learning.** Ask students what they want to learn about, and tailor unit studies to those topics. Interest-based learning is the way to go.

> **Games and rewards spark learning.** Anything game-based and reward-driven engages students with ADHD—apps like Raz-Kids, Epic!, Mathletics, and ABCya are very effective.

Tech That Teachers *and* Students Love

> **I USE BLOOMZ REMINDERS FOR PARENTS**, and Google apps and Happy Numbers for the children. I will continue with Bloomz (for updates, reminders, and progress) and Google Classroom apps in the fall.

> **FLIPGRID WORKS WELL.** Students can record themselves reading their writing assignments.

> **GOOGLE CLASSROOM** has been helpful. The most engaging part of the lesson is using Kahoot! to review what we just learned.

> **I’VE BEEN USING MICROSOFT TEAMS.** I’ll continue to use Teams

when school reopens. It’s a great way for kids to interact with each other and with me.

> **DURING DISTANCE LEARNING I STARTED INTEGRATING EDPUZZLE**, a video enhancement platform that tracks students’ progress. In the building this fall, I will likely use Edpuzzle for additional support resources. I’ve discovered that many of my students engage more when using online platforms.

> **USE VIDEO GAMES FOR LEARNING WHENEVER YOU CAN.** Any lesson that incorporates video games or videos is a plus.

Many students love **prodigygame.com** for math practice. I had used this site/platform in school before remote learning. I also find that any technology that helps them minimize their fear of the concepts that challenge them, whether it be reading or math, keeps them engaged.

> **GOOGLE CLASSROOM HAS BEEN WONDERFUL.** I incorporate Google Spreadsheet, where all of the assignments expected to be completed daily and weekly live on one spreadsheet, along with links that bring you to the assignment.

> **YOUTUBE IS A WINNER.**



> **USE AUDIOBOOKS TO IMPROVE COMPREHENSION.** For a student with ADHD and language processing challenges, reading can be a slog. Audiobooks are effective in engaging struggling readers and getting them over their reluctance to start. The actors reading the text do a fantastic job to bring the writing, characters, and story alive. Most important, audiobooks remove the burden of visual processing, which reduces stress and conserves mental energy. Studies show that audiobooks build the same language comprehension skills as do visual reading. Nevertheless, it is best if students follow along with the text as they listen, to bridge the gap between visual and auditory processing.

> **Grab attention and spark motivation.** Start Zoom or Google Hangout videos with a focus item—a picture or an object that introduces the lesson. Presenting something visual before going into the lesson or lecture builds motivation. Ask questions like, “Why do you think I’m holding a (beach ball, empty cup, stack of LEGOs)?” and ease into academic discussions. This builds rapport and connection that encourage distance learning.

> **Let the children talk before starting the online lesson.** Set a timer and permit the children to express themselves—some teachers call it “unloading”—for a short period. If you have a large group, let them adjust to being with each other online by doing a few simple exercises together, or talk in small groups. After they have finished talking, they can focus better on the lesson.

> **Shorter is better.** Teachers find that short lessons of 15 minutes on Zoom, with social breaks in between, retain the students’ focus. Doing several

shorter lessons is more effective than doing a longer one.

> **Limit distractions, where possible, in the classroom.** Teachers have observed that many students achieve at much higher levels without all the distractions of a regular classroom, and without having to navigate social situations and multiple teachers. Many students characterized by teachers as “not trying,” “doesn’t care,” or “won’t listen” are now “rock stars” learning at home.

> **One-on-one attention goes a long way.** With permission from their principal and parents, some teachers are teaching one on one via video call. A child gets individualized instruction, and also feels important because he has the full attention of the teacher.

> **Keep students connected to their classmates.** Online students feel cheated when it comes to social connections, so create social events for kids on Zoom or some other platform. Teachers have held “Spirit Week,” Pajama Day, and Twin Day (all done on video) to engage their students. Ultimately, schools and educators want to remind students who are struggling, stressed out, and more anxious than neurotypical students that they are there for them.

“I ask my students how they are first, rather than tell them to do schoolwork. I have learned that my students do their work to please me.”

> **GIVE CHILDREN A CHOICE ABOUT THE WAY THEY LEARN.** Some children love learning online and some don’t. If there is a way for students to pick which learning platform they use—paper/pencil or online—instead of being forced to do one or the other, they will be better at completing their work.





TEACHER HACKS FOR ONLINE LEARNING

Four ways to maximize your child's performance at home or in the classroom.

BY EZRA WERB, M.Ed.

1 Teach Your Child to Set Incremental Goals

> **Digital calendars** It's easy for tweens and teens to do this by using calendars on their phones, tablets, or computers. They can set incremental due dates for the steps to complete a project—e.g., brainstorming, research, outlining, writing a draft, editing—and can set alerts so they're notified as to when a step should be completed. Calendars now come with any device, and Google has its own version.

2 Organize Digital Files

> **Create folders** Folders help students organize their files. Make a master folder for each school year's work. Also, make a folder for random pictures, and one for videos or any other interest a child may have.

> **Create sub-folders** Inside of each school year's folder, make a sub-folder for each subject: English, math, history, science, and so on. And in those subject folders, add bins for specific types of assignments. Perhaps most important, make a folder for "Assignments I need to finish."

> **Label the folders** Put the year on the master folders. When creating folders for specific assignments, name them clearly for easy retrieval later on. For example, in the English or language arts folders, title one of them "Essays," another one "Work for novels," and another called "Grammar assignments." Repeat for each subject.

3 Help Your Student Get Started on Writing Projects

> **Use graphic organizers online for**

brainstorming Students with attention challenges need a chance to brainstorm as a step in the process of writing. Graphic organizers offer students not just a space to add their thoughts, but a form that helps to keep their ideas clear and meaningful. There are many online sites (some free) that provide visual charts into which students can add their ideas. **Read** WriteThink.org, inspiration-at.com, bubbl.us, and mindomo.com are just a few.

> **Use speech-to-text** For some students, writing is a nightmare. They have to generate original ideas, then hold them in their working memory, phrase them coherently so they make sense, and finally, write it all down. Speech-to-text simplifies this process by allowing them to speak their ideas and have them instantly typed on the computer. With their rough ideas on the screen, they can edit and reword without the stress of drawing on several executive functions at once.

4 Start Your Student on Typing Programs

As students move beyond the primary grades, it is expected that they will turn in written assignments as typed docs. There are many free typing programs available online. Websites like TypingClub.com and typing.com are free and ready to use. Others, like ratatype.com, require logins, and some have downloadable software. Typing is a fun way to keep students engaged in something that will benefit them for years to come. **A**

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ADDitude eBooks Available Now

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A Parent's Guide to ADHD at School

How to manage ADHD symptoms at school, secure accommodations, get organized, tackle homework, and more.

You're always trying new ways to help your child focus on lessons, adhere to classroom rules, and turn in his homework on time. You want support strategies that will nurture his strengths — and push him to meet the challenges each new school year brings. This eBook has them

>> Learn more about this special report: <http://additu.de/schoolbook>

The Complete IEP/504 Guide

A step-by-step road map to securing school accommodations for your child.

How to request an assessment, prepare for school meetings, choose the most effective accommodations, draft a comprehensive IEP or 504 plan, and much more. Includes sample letters and worksheets.

>> Learn more about this eBook: <http://additu.de/iep-504-ebook>

The ADHD Parent-Teacher Handbook

Forge a partnership with your child's teacher by sharing these practical learning solutions for home and the classroom.

Kids with ADHD may forget to write down assignments or drift off during lectures, but that doesn't mean they don't want to learn. Parents and teachers alike may struggle to manage these challenges on occasion, but one thing is clear: When everyone works together to provide support, children with ADHD benefit.

>> Learn more about this eBook: <http://additu.de/pth>

FREE ADDitude Downloads

What Every Teacher Should Know About ADHD

Our most popular resource for parents to share with educators.

IEP vs. 504: What's the Difference?

Learn what accommodations your child might qualify for, and how to pursue them.

10 Teaching Strategies that Help Students with ADHD

Learn how to support, direct, and educate kids with ADHD.

Top 5 Homework Frustrations

Why kids struggle with homework, and what you can do to help.

10 Solutions to Disorganization at School

Keeping backpacks, lockers, and binders in order.

Does Your Child Have a Learning Disability?

Use this self-test to find out if your child's problems at school may be due to LD.

Executive Function Worksheet

Common executive function challenges and easy-to-apply solutions.

Find these and many more free ADHD resources online at:

[http://additu.de/
freedownloads](http://additu.de/freedownloads)

ADHD Webinar Replays from ADDitude:

Keeping Students with ADHD Engaged in Remote Learning

>> <http://additu.de/elearn-webinar>

Your child's school has canceled in-person classes due to the coronavirus outbreak, and you are worried about an academic freefall and/or a remote learning free-for-all where you end up playing the homework police all day, every day — while also working from home? Here, learn how to apply structure to this unstructured time with solutions from educator and author Ann Dolin, M.Ed.

Rev Up Your Child's Executive Functions for the New School Year

>> <http://additu.de/ef-webinar>

Learn practical ways to get your child's brain back in "school mode," no matter how that looks. This webinar offers evidence-based approaches to reboot your child's brain to listen, pay attention, and follow through at school. Specifically, parents will learn how to "turn on" a child's brain for listening, focus, and paying attention; how to "Zone the Home" for a smooth transition back to school; and simple mindfulness strategies to boost executive functions.

What Teachers Should Know About Their Students with ADHD

>> <http://additu.de/for-teachers>

Many teachers know that students with ADHD have trouble completing academic assignments and controlling their emotions, but they may not know that roughly half of all students with ADHD fail to read social cues. As a result, they inadvertently alienate their classmates and sometimes their teachers. This webinar will provide teachers the tools they need to understand and guide these students.

How to Fight for Your Child's Rights — and Happiness

>> <http://additu.de/rights>

Do you know your child's legal rights? Do you know how to get your pediatrician to address your concerns? Do you know what to do when you're not taken seriously? If you answered no to any of these questions, you're not alone. In this webinar, hosted by veteran parent Penny Williams, learn how to take your advocacy to the next level and get your child the support she deserves.

FREE ADHD Newsletters from ADDitude

Sign up to receive critical news and information about ADHD diagnosis and treatment, plus strategies for school, parenting, and living better with ADHD: <http://additu.de/newsletter>

Adult ADHD and LD

Expert advice on managing your household, time, money, career, and relationships

Parenting Children with ADHD and LD

Behavior and discipline, time management, disorganization, making friends, and more critical strategies for parents

ADHD and LD at School

How to get classroom accommodations, finish homework, work with teachers, find the right schools, and much more

Treating ADHD

Treatment options including medications, food, supplements, brain training, mindfulness and other alternative therapies

For Women with ADHD

Managing ADHD on the job, running a household, dealing with challenging emotions, and much more