

TIPS FOR EDUCATORS:

General Assignment Accommodations

Fact Sheet One of Four in the Assignment Accommodations for Students with ADHD Series

ADHD affects the brain, which means children with ADHD can have different ways of learning and retaining information, and showing what they know. Many students with ADHD perform better on assignments if they are given accommodations. Assignment accommodations can include making changes to assignments that allow the students to learn the material in a format that works for them, or changes in how the student shows that they have mastered content and skills. The overall concept of the assignment remains the same, allowing the student to learn the same curriculum as others in the classroom.

Accommodations for students with ADHD most often include decreasing the length of an assignment. For instance, writing shorter papers, answering fewer test questions, or completing fewer homework problems. The overall format of an assignment might be modified as well. Examples of this are dictating written assignments into a tape recorder or presenting a project orally instead of submitting a written report. These general assignment accommodations work for students with ADHD on classwork, homework, and assessments.



- ✓ **Decreasing assignment length:** Students with ADHD have difficulty getting started and finishing tasks. An assignment with ten questions estimated to take the average students ten minutes may take the student with ADHD half an hour. You could have the student just complete a portion of the ten questions. This accommodation is most useful for shorter assignments such as independent classwork and homework.
- ✓ **Tailoring assignments to the child's level:** Assignments that are meant to practice skills and show new mastery can be tailored to the child's level. Students with ADHD have the most difficulty focusing on tasks that are too easy or too



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complex. Assigning only those segments of the assignment that the child hasn't yet shown to have mastered is most efficient. Computerized assessments can be used to generate the appropriate level of work.

- ✓ **Extended time to complete assignments:** In order to keep a concept or the curriculum the same, decreasing the total length of an assignment may not work. For longer assignments, such as writing an essay or completing a test, it may be more appropriate to extend the amount of time the student has to complete the project. You might estimate that the average student will take 30 minutes to complete a test, but for the student with ADHD who has time impairments it might take them twice the time.
- ✓ **Visual representation of time:** Neither of the above general accommodations may consistently work well alone. Students with ADHD also have an impaired sense of time, making it difficult for them to manage time well. Giving students some form of a timer to show them how much time has passed and the amount of time remaining can help students realize time is passing.



- ✓ **Dividing assignment into parts:** Another way to help with time impairments as well as forgetfulness and self-talk deficits is to divide large assignments into multiple



pieces with separate deadlines. If you are having students write a research paper due in six weeks, you can break the assignment into parts. Part one could be an outline due at week two, part two a rough draft due at week four, and part three the final research paper due at week six. It is important to make each piece a separate assignment with individual due dates. When one piece is completed, the instructions for the next piece are then given to the student. When working on longer assignments, breaks—particularly those that allow students to move and be physically active—can help them stay on task while working.

- ✓ **Provide flexibility on format:** Some students with ADHD perform written and reading assignments very slowly. In some cases, allowing them to complete a written assignment by dictating their ideas to someone else or into a tape recorder are appropriate accommodations. For reading assignments, letting them listen to a passage read aloud to them might work. passage instance, with math word problems where the student is not being assessed on their reading or writing abilities, but rather math concepts, you could make an assignment accommodation

that lets the student listen to a recording of someone reading the word problem and then they could record their answer back.

- ✓ **Consistent positive reinforcement:** Many of the above accommodations work for most students, but after time, will fail without the addition of motivation. Furthermore, students with ADHD are often noticed only for problem behavior or failure. For students to be successful appropriate behavior should be reinforced frequently and efforts must be praised. Make a plan to notice the students when they behave as expected and to give extra encouragement and reassurance during more challenging times so that students know they are on the right track. Positive reinforcement helps students develop the motivation to succeed, making assignment accommodations even more effective.

In many instances, a learning disability may also affect students with ADHD. As many as 45% of children with ADHD have a co-occurring learning disorder, as compared

to only 5% of children without ADHD. It is often important to assess and test for co-occurring learning disabilities to create a plan and choose accommodations that work best for each student.

Resources

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Other Fact Sheets in this Series:

- [Accommodations for Reading Assignments](#)
- [Accommodations for Written Assignments](#)
- [Accommodations for Math Assignments](#)

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