



# Executive Functioning Difficulties Fact Sheet

## Executive Functioning is...

- ✓ Executive function refers to self-regulating skills. We use them every day to plan ahead, stay organised, solve problems and focus on what's important.
- ✓ Children who struggle with executive skills (organisation) find it hard to **handle information** in an **effective** and **logical** way.
- ✓ Executive function is a **set of mental processes** that help connect past experience with present action. They include: **planning; organising; setting priorities; shifting between situations, or thoughts; controlling our emotions and impulsivity; using working memory; monitoring ourselves and keeping track of how we are doing.**

## Executive Functioning is not ...

- ✗ Always picked up at primary school. They become more apparent at secondary school when the demands of completing schoolwork independently increase.
- ✗ indicative of intellectual capacity, or the lack of it.



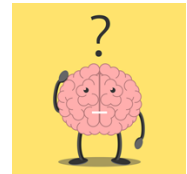
Children who experience difficulties with executive function may also show a weakness with **working memory**.



Dysfunction in executive often accompanies **learning difficulties** and even more so ADHD and **significant difficulties with learning and behaviour**.

First, you see them in a child's **external behaviour**. Second, they affect children **internally**, in how they think and learn.

## Executive Functioning...



### External Issues

being disorganised;  
losing things all the time;  
poor time management;  
inability to complete a task;  
inability to make a plan (and follow it through).



### Internal Issues

deciding what's important/unimportant when reading or listening;  
absorbing/retaining what is taught in school;  
understanding and following verbal directions;  
organising thoughts;  
unclear, disorganised writing.

## Ways to help pupils with Executive Functioning Difficulties...

**Create routines** and use **special techniques to do tasks** that others may do without thinking. This may help to **identify strengths** that can **compensate** for weaknesses.

It helps to give **direct instruction**, **frequent reassurance** and **explicit feedback**.

**Classroom accommodations** : positive behaviour intervention plans and informal supports like task boards.

**Self-advocacy training** helps pupils understand, ask for and explain to others what they need to succeed.

## Other Information

<https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/child-learning-disabilities/executive-functioning-issues/what-is-executive-function>

<https://www.tes.com/news/executive-function-what-you-need-know>

