

Classroom Management Strategies for ADHD in Secondary School

ADHD in High School: Setting Up the Classroom

Since ADHD students are usually easily distracted and easily bored, it is a good idea to set up your classroom in such a way as to optimize their focus, and increase their chances of success.

- The best ideas are the ones that benefit all of the students in the classroom, not just the ADHD students.
- With your ADHD students it is usually better to use rows in your seating arrangement and to avoid groups of students. Often the groups are too distracting for the ADHD student.
- In the ideal setting, provide tables for limited and specific group projects, and traditional rows for independent work.
- Some teachers have suggested arranging desks in a horseshoe shape to promote appropriate discussion while permitting independent work.
- Teachers must be able to move about the entire room and to have access to all students. Practice "Management By Walking Around" in your classroom.
- Make eye contact with your students, especially those with inattentive ADHD.
- Have your ADHD students seated nearest to the place in the class where you will give directions or lectures. Seat them as close as possible without being punitive to them.
- Do not seat ADHD students in the back of the classroom. To minimize distractions, seat attention deficit students away from both the hallway and windows.
- Stand near attention deficit students when giving directions or presenting the lesson. Use the ADHD student's worksheet as an example when you are giving the directions.
- Make sure that the attention deficit students know what's going on around them.
- As best as you can, provide comfortable lighting and room temperatures.
- Raise your expectations for their performance, and let them know what your expectations are. Let them know that you believe that they can succeed in your classroom, but there will be a price to pay in terms of effort and organization. Let them know that you will help as much as possible.

Presenting Your Lesson to ADHD Students

- Provide an outline with the key concepts or vocabulary prior to lesson presentation. The students can follow along and see the main concepts and terms as you present the lesson.
- ADHD teens are easily bored. Try to increase the pace of lesson presentation. Resist the temptation to get sidetracked.
- Include a variety of learning activities during each lesson. Use multi-sensory presentations, but screen audio-visual aids to be sure that distractions are kept to a minimum. For example, be sure interesting pictures and or sounds relate directly to the material to be learned.

- Many teachers are now using PowerPoint presentations or Astound presentations for their students with great effect.
- Provide self-correcting materials for immediate feedback to the ADHD student.
- Use computer assisted instruction, both in terms of the student at a computer, and also in terms of presenting information via PowerPoint presentations.
- Use cooperative learning activities, particularly those that assign each teen in a group a specific role or piece of information that must be shared with the group.
- Pair students to check work.
- Provide peer tutoring to help ADHD student's review concepts. Let students with Attention Deficit Disorder share recently learned concepts with struggling peers. Use peer tutoring whenever possible. Use older students to help your attention deficit students, and perhaps allowing him to tutor a younger student.
- The more exciting a subject is to a student with Attention Deficit Disorder, the better he will perform in your class. Let your students know "why" learning your material is important! Motivation is key.

Tips for Using Worksheets and Giving Tests to Students with ADHD

Students with ADHD can really benefit from well thought out worksheets, and from tests with modified structures. For example, many students with Attention Deficit Disorder do very poorly on timed tests, but will do just fine on the same test without a time limit imposed.

- "Usability" is essential. Just as web designers strive to make web sites fast, easy to navigate, and more user-friendly, teachers should strive to make their worksheets easy to understand, easy to navigate, and user friendly.
- Use large type.
- Make the important points easy for the student to find.
- Keep page format simple.
- Include no extraneous pictures or visual destructors that are unrelated to the problems to be solved.
- Use buff-coloured paper rather than white if the room's lighting creates a glare on white paper.
- Write clear, simple directions. Underline key direction words or vocabulary or have the students underline these words as you read directions with them.
- Draw borders around parts of the page you want to emphasize. Draw their attention

Giving Tests to ADHD Students

- Frequently give short quizzes and avoid long tests.
- ADHD students are well known for doing poorly on long tests or on timed tests, even when they know the material.
- Provide practice tests.
- Provide alternative environments with fewer distractions for test taking if necessary. Students with attention deficit will often perform much better is taking a test in a quiet environment with few distractions.

- Using a tape recorder, have the student record test answers and assignments or give the student oral examinations.
- Consider modifying the test environment for students with Attention Deficit Disorder to accurately assess their ability/achievement on subject area and standardized tests. Individual administration in a quiet area with frequent breaks will give a more accurate assessment than group administration.

Impulsivity with ADHD Students ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is generally defined by: Inattention, Impulsivity, and sometimes Hyperactivity. Impulsive behaviours are common. One of the main characteristics of people with Attention Deficit Disorder is the tendency to act impulsively (acting before thinking about the consequences of their behaviour). Impulsivity often shows itself in a lack of understanding of cause and effect. Research suggests that ADHD students can often verbalize the rules but have difficulty internalizing them and translating them into thoughtful behaviour. Difficulties in waiting for what they want also add to the impulsivity. Some clinicians believe that this lack of "self-control" (poor regulation and inhibition of behaviour), rather than their problems with paying attention, is the primary problem with attention deficit disorder.

- Give your ADHD students a break once in a while.
- Know the difference between big things and little things, and don't confront attention deficit students on each little thing. It is hard for ADHD students to control themselves all of the time.
- Distinguish between premeditated and impulsive behaviours. Consequences still need to be applied in both situations but telling a student who has been impulsive that you realise it was impulsive can help him/her feel more understood.
- By having attention deficit students think "out loud" when they are problem-solving, the teacher will gain insights into their reasoning style, and the process will slow them down before they respond impulsively.
- Quite often, ADHD students will make the same mistakes over and over again, both socially and with school work. Students with attention deficit disorder often have problems with taking turns, over-interpreting others' remarks as hostile, personalizing others' actions excessively, and misreading social cues.
- With the help of your ADHD student and his trusted peers, common problematic themes can be identified. Role-play scenes involving these behaviours, preferably with his friends, identifying and practicing better ways to solve problems.
- To teach your ADHD students to slow down before they say things that they'll regret later, encourage them to practice "stopping and thinking" before talking. Let them practice by encouraging them to wait about five seconds before responding to your questions. This one technique can help ADHD students a great deal.
- It is important for attention deficit students to identify a "support network" of peers and adults that can help give him hints when he needs to "slow down". This group can also practice the "slow down" techniques with their ADHD friend.
- Students with attention deficit disorder can benefit greatly from behavioural interventions that are sensitive to their processing style. Rewards, or punishments, should be as immediate as possible. Changing the reward periodically is usually necessary.
- A major consideration in forming an effective behavioural plan is assessing what is workable for the classroom teacher on a regular basis. Some plans that require extensive charting do not succeed because the teacher can not follow through effectively within the context of the daily classroom demands. Keeping the plan simple and flexible is the key to success.

- Have someone actively monitoring your ADHD student during tests, especially multiple-choice, fill in the "bubble" tests. He can get off track and fill in the wrong places or become so frustrated that he might answer at random to simply complete the test.
- Emphasize that part of the work routine is to "check your work". Students with ADHD tend to complete work and turn it in without checking it over. Give the attention deficit student some instruction in how to check his work and practice it with him.
- In assignments that require research reports and creative writing, have the ADHD student dictate the words to someone rather than writing it down. The attention deficit student can then copy the words using the word processor. This technique will yield greater output on tasks requiring expressive written language skills by removing the written component.

ADHD: Improving Social Skills

Students with Attention Deficit Disorder often lack social skills. Their impulsive comments or lack of empathy often makes it hard to keep friends. This is not true for all students with ADHD, as there are different types of ADHD but it is true for many students with attention deficit disorder. Students with attention deficit disorder experience many difficulties in the social area, especially with peer relationships.

- ADHD students tend to experience great difficulty picking up other's social cues, and often act impulsively.
- Attention deficit students are often unaware of their effect on others.
- They are likely to over-personalize other's actions as being criticism.
- They tend not to recognize or respond well to positive feedback. In fact, ADHD may be directly related to a deficit in recognizing rewards.
- Students with Attention Deficit Disorder tend to get along better with younger or older students when their roles are clearly defined.
- ADHD students tend to repeat self-defeating social behaviour patterns and rarely learn from experience.
- In conversations ADHD students often ramble and say embarrassing things to peers.
- Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder tend to get into the most trouble during times with little structure or little supervision.
- Enlisting the support of peers in the classroom can greatly enhance the ADHD student's self-esteem. Students with good social awareness and who like to be helpful can be paired with the attention deficit student. This pairing can take the form of being a "study buddy" while doing activities or projects.
- Cross-age tutoring with older or younger students can also have social benefits. Most successful pairing is done with adequate preparation of the paired student, planning meetings with the pair to set expectations, and with parental permission. Pairing expectations and time-commitments should be fairly limited in scope to increase the opportunity for success and lessen the constraints on the paired students.
- Students with ADHD tend to do well in the cooperative group instructional format. Small student groupings of three to five members, in which the students "sink or swim" together to complete assignments/projects, encourage students to share organizational ideas and responsibilities, and gives an ideal setting for processing interpersonal skills on a regular basis.

Attention Deficit: Improving Time on Task

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- Work hard to only reward ON-task behaviours.
- Any attention that you give to your students is potentially rewarding. Even when you are nagging them, that "negative" attention is potentially rewarding.
- The rule is: Behaviour that is rewarded tends to re-occur
- Work to catch your ADHD students being ON-task, and reward them. The reward can be as simple as a smile or a nod. A positive comment can go a long way. Over a period of time, rewarding ADHD students for ON-task work will result in an actual increase in their attention span and time ON-task.
- The other rule is: Behaviour that is ignored tends to decrease, or go away.
- Of course there are exceptions to this, such as the fact that many behaviours are self-rewarding. Antisocial or criminal behaviours are both self-rewarding. That means the "doing" of the behaviour, and the "getting away with" of the behaviours are themselves rewarding. If they are ignored, antisocial or criminal behaviours will go unchecked and out of control. Don't ignore antisocial behaviours.
- However, in the classroom situation, apply the rule this way...
- When your ADHD student is OFF-task, either ignore him or redirect him back to his work depending on the situation. As soon as he is back ON-task reward his ON-task behaviour with the smile, comment, pat on the back, or whatever.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: Keeping ADHD Students Focused in Class

The skills of "staying focused longer to the right task" are important to teach ADHD students so that they can be successful in school, and later in their careers. Here are some tips to help ADHD students

- One of main characteristics of students with ADHD is the difficulty with sustaining attention on tasks over time. In other words, they get bored very easily, even by you.
- Promote time on task, never time off task. Take time to catch the student being on task and working hard. Reward him with a simple smile or pat on the back. If you do this consistently, you will see his attention span, or time on task, increase throughout the school year, making your life easier in the long run.
- Your ADHD student will respond better to situations that he finds stimulating and engaging. Varying the instructional medium and pace will help sustain the attention deficit student's interest.
- Your ADHD student would probably find lessons that emphasize "hands-on" activities highly engaging.
- Keeping the time required for sustained attention to a task balanced with more active learning will improve your attention deficit student's performance. Changes in instructor's voice level and variation in word-pacing will also increase his attention during instruction.
- Break long tasks into a series of shorter "sprints." Same amount of work, just organized differently so that they can work with focus, rest for a few seconds and see how they did, then work again.
- Ask the attention deficit student how long he thinks it would take to perform a certain task. Let him set his own time and race against a timer.
- Stress accuracy instead of quantity of work. Mastery of a subject is really what you want as a teacher anyway.

- Computers are great for 1 on 1 work and immediate feedback. Students with attention deficit disorder can stay focused on computers for longer than written work due to the direct feedback given by a computer.
- Students using medication to treat attention deficit disorder will have their optimal attention effects for methylphenidate (Ritalin) 45 minutes to 2 1/2 hours after medication. Other medications differ, and it is best to check with the physician about the time of maximum medication effects. If possible, it is best to schedule the most attention-demanding tasks for the ADHD student during this medication window.
- Combine your verbal directions along with illustrations or demonstrations of what you want your students to do. The more ways you use to describe what you want your ADHD students to do, the greater likelihood that they will actually do it.
- Your attention deficit student will be more successful when given directions one step at a time. When a series of instructions are given, retention beyond the first direction is difficult. Minor adjustments on the part of the teacher in giving directions will help the ADHD student a great deal.
- Proximity is an issue when giving directions. The nearer you are to the ADHD student, the greater the chance that he will be listening closely.