

Executive Functioning Supports That Stick

Practical Strategies for Home & School

Purpose

Executive Functioning (EF) skills (ex: organization, planning, working memory, emotional control, etc.) are the foundation of independence. Many students with ADHD, ASD, or learning disabilities struggle with EF because these are *taught skills*, not innate traits. This worksheet provides concrete routines, tools, and language that educators and families can use together to strengthen EF development across settings.

Understanding Executive Functioning

Core Skills:

1. **Working Memory** – holding information in mind while using it
 2. **Inhibitory Control** – resisting impulses and staying focused
 3. **Cognitive Flexibility** – adapting to change or multiple demands
 4. **Organization & Planning** – setting goals, prioritizing, sequencing steps
 5. **Self-Monitoring** – recognizing progress and adjusting
-

Tiered EF Support Framework

Tier	Focus	Examples
Tier 1: Universal <i>(All Students)</i>	Build EF habits into classroom/home routines	Visual schedules, color-coded folders, modeled organization
Tier 2: Targeted <i>(Some Students)</i>	Scaffold and reinforce EF strategies	Task checklists, cue cards, verbal rehearsal, timers
Tier 3: Intensive <i>(Few Students)</i>	Explicit EF skill instruction + coaching	Individual planner reviews, 1-to-1 executive coaching, digital supports

Classroom Strategies That Stick

EF Skill	Teacher Practice	Example Tool
Working Memory	Use “Say-Write-Show” (verbal + visual + model)	Sticky notes, anchor charts
Planning/Organization	Break assignments into chunks; use mini-deadlines	Project planners, Google Tasks
Self-Monitoring	Add reflection box to daily work (“What went well?”)	Exit slips, self-rating scales
Flexibility	Provide two task options when possible	“Pick 1: Read or Listen” menus
Inhibitory Control	Pre-teach “Pause-Plan-Proceed” routine	Visual cue card on desk

Home Strategies That Stick

EF Skill	Family Practice	Example
Routines	Post morning/evening visual checklists	“Ready for School” chart
Organization	Create one “Launch Pad” space for backpack & supplies	Basket by the door

Working Memory	Use whiteboard for reminders/steps	“After School 3-Step List”
Planning	Sunday night “look-ahead” meeting	10 min family calendar review
Emotional Control	Model calm-down routine before problem-solving	Breathe → Name the Feeling → Plan

Collaborative Language for Adults

Consistency in wording builds predictability.

Situation	Shared Adult Script
Student forgets homework	“Let’s look at your system—where can we add a reminder?”
Student becomes overwhelmed	“Pause. What’s step 1? Let’s start there.”
Student misses deadline	“Let’s map how you planned this and where the plan fell apart.”

Common Pitfalls & Fixes

Pitfall	Fix
Expecting EF skills without teaching them	Teach EF explicitly, like reading or math.
Over-supporting (“I’ll just do it for you”)	Fade scaffolds gradually: prompt → partner → independent.
Inconsistent routines between home & school	Align language and visuals; share copies of checklists.
Ignoring emotions	Regulate first, then problem-solve. EF cannot engage in dysregulation.

EF Growth Tracker (for Home or Class)

Date	Target Skill	Strategy Used	Student Reflection	Adult Notes
10/28	Planning Ahead	Used checklist	“Felt less rushed.”	Needed prompt on #3.

Action Starter

- Choose one EF skill (organization, planning, memory).
- Co-design a shared support with the student and family—e.g., same visual checklist used at home and in class.
- Revisit after one week to see if it’s working and refine together.