

## What is Executive Functioning (EF)?

Executive Functioning refers to the brain's ability to regulate attention, impulses and planning or organizing. In everyday activities, EF manifests as an individual's skill and ability to pay attention to details, remember important information, organize space, or planning daily activities.

Why do some Children have Difficulty with EF?

Most of EF is controlled by the frontal lobe of the brain. The frontal lobe is still developing through adolescence into early adulthood (mid 20s)  
It is normal for children to require additional guidance with organizational skills

Some children, however, may struggle with EF more than others. Decreased EF can be related to learning disabilities, under/over stimulation, or other environmental factors  
Difficulties with EF can be genetically-related.

What does EF Control?  
*Impulses and Emotions:*

The ability to stop and think before acting out  
*Planning/Strategizing:*  
The ability to decide what to focus on and create efficient steps to reach a goal  
*Mental Flexibility:*  
The ability to switch strategies as demands change  
*Working Memory:*  
The ability to hold information in mind while completing a task  
*Self-Monitoring:*  
The ability to monitor and evaluate your own performance

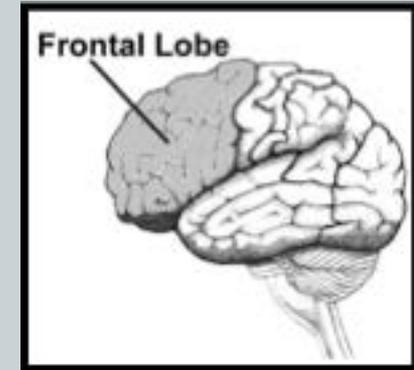
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A CHILD STRUGGLES WITH EF?

Impaired EF (or Executive Dysfunction) may mean that a child has difficulty completing everyday tasks that other children finish easily.

A child may have difficulty:  
Waiting until they are called on to talk  
Prioritizing assignments/homework  
Estimating time required to complete a task  
Telling stories or explaining details in an organized manner  
Memorizing or remembering important information  
Completing complex, multi-step assignments  
Developing strategies to enhance learning or memory

## GENERAL STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS

- Avoid giving multi-step directions
- Break large assignments into smaller manageable tasks
- Use organization tools like planners and timers
- Use verbal praise to identify and encourage successful behaviors; “catch” them behaving well



### TIME MANAGEMENT:

- Use a calendars app on phone or iPod to record dates and schedule reminders
- Keep a running list of due dates in one location (e.g., calendar)
- Create “to-do” lists estimating approximate time to completion
- Avoid becoming “stuck” on a task too long- move on and come back later.

### ORGANIZING WORK:

- Create checklist for each class
- Review checklist with teacher/parent
- Re-check checklist after completing assignments

### SPACE AND MATERIALS:

- Designate and organize a workspace
- Be sure to keep areas for work, sleep and play separate
- Keep work areas free from distractions like TV, noise, or excessive clutter

## RESOURCES

WEBSITES: National Center for Learning Disabilities <http://www.ncid.org>

VIDEOS: “What is Executive Function?” <http://youtu.be/z9c8-KMIK0s> “In Brief: Executive Function: Skills for Life and Learning” [http://youtu.be/efcq\\_vHUMqs](http://youtu.be/efcq_vHUMqs)

E-BOOKS: Executive Function 101 <http://www.ncid.org/images/content/files/executive-function-101-ebook.pdf>

SMART TOOLS: Google Chrome Stay Focused Tool <http://sites.google.com/site/gchromeat/stay-focused>