



# How to support children with Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder

## Education

### **H**ow do children with Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) behave in class?

- These children are easily distracted, difficult to keep their attention on an activity, difficult to focus in class, frequent daydreaming and fail to finish class exercises.
- They do not seem to listen when spoken to directly, cannot follow teacher's instruction.
- They are careless and tend to make mistakes in their homework or examinations. They are weak in organization, forgetful, often lose or forget to bring their personal belongings, such as stationery, books, etc.
- Some children are very energetic. They are fidget, tend to leave seat and fail to follow class rules.
- They talk excessively, difficult to stay quiet. They make fun in class deliberately, blurt out answer before raising their hands, disturb other classmates or disrupt class order.
- They are impatient and impulsive, have difficulty queuing or waiting for their turns. They tend to interrupt others or blurt out answer before a question is completed.



## How should teacher help these children?

- **Understand and accept their characteristics:** Teachers should understand the children's inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity are not the result of their mischief or opposition, but partly due to their physiological limitation causing difficulties in controlling attention, behaviour and emotion.
- **Avoid harsh punishment:** Harsh scolding and excessive punishment would not improve children's behaviour in the long term. On the contrary, it may have negative impact on their motivation to learn, self-confidence and relationship with teacher. Some children may lose confidence in their learning and social skill, become demotivated and lose interest in activities. Some children may even develop oppositional and defiant behaviour that may worsen the problem.
- **Teamwork:** Teacher can work with student support team, such as guidance teacher, social worker or educational psychologist, to identify effective ways to help the children. In addition, communication with parents is very important because it can help them to understand their children's behaviour in school, facilitate arrangement and coordination of treatment or other services.

## What can be done in class to improve children's attention?

- **Seating arrangement:** Can consider arranging a front seat for the children in class so that they can focus better on the teacher and blackboard, and teacher can easily supervise them. Avoid sitting them near window and door in order to minimize their distraction.
- **Class format:** Different types of classroom activities, novel and interesting teaching materials can help to improve children's attention and engagement in class.
- **Class assignment:** In view of the children's difficulty in sustaining their attention, teacher may consider breaking assignment into smaller parts and allow them to work on one by one. Teacher can also regularly remind them of the time they need to finish the assignment. Children tend to be more attentive when they need to beat the clock.



- **Visual Tips:** Write down class rules or instructions in point form on some cue cards and post them on a prominent area of children’s desk or classroom to remind them to pay attention.
- **Call and ask:** When the children are distracted, teacher can call their name and ask them question to keep them on track.
- **Peer support:** Arrange capable classmates with good attention to sit next to the children, help them in checking handbooks or doing class exercises.
- **Make sure children are listening:** When talking to or giving instruction to the children, teacher may pat them lightly or call their name to get their attention, keep eye contact with them throughout the communication. After giving instruction, teacher may ask the children to paraphrase them to make sure they understand.
- **Develop the habit of self-checking:** As these children are usually careless, teacher may encourage them to develop a habit to check their personal belongings or review the answers of their assignments. Teacher can make checklists or cue cards to remind them of things that are easily forgot.
- **Assign simple tasks:** Teacher can assign simple tasks to the children, such as distribution of worksheets and taking of materials so that they can have appropriate chances to move around and reduce their “daydreaming or zoning out”.

## How can teacher encourage good behaviour of children?

- **Set goals and rules:** Set clear, concrete and feasible goals and rules with children, such as “raise your hand before asking question” and “stay in seat during lesson”. However, avoid setting too many goals at a time (less than three goals are suggested). It is difficult for children to remember too many rules and change many habits at one time. When the target behaviour of children improves steadily, teacher can consider setting new goals with them.



- **Prepare a behavioural chart:** After setting behavioural goals, teacher can design a behavioural chart to record the children’s good behaviour with sticker or mark to designate their successfulness. When children got certain marks, they can redeem a prior agreed reward or privilege, e.g. a chance to join an interesting activity or have some small gifts.
- **Early reminders:** Teacher can remind children of the rules at the beginning of certain activities or periods, which they are easily off track.
- **Praise children for their good behaviours:** Teacher can praise the children when they are doing well, such as paying attention in class or following instruction to finish task.
- **Appropriate use of quiet time:** In case the children disrupt class order and disturb other classmates, teachers can put them in “quiet time” by sitting them at a corner for few minutes to allow them to calm down and stop their disturbing behaviour. When the quiet time is over, ask them to continue their task. If they start to cooperate and follow instruction, teachers may praise them for their good behaviour.

## If the children need to take medicine, how can teacher help?

- **Remind children to take medicine:** Some children need to take prescribed medicine to improve their inattention and hyperactivity during school hours. Teacher can help to remind them and check if they have taken medicine on time. These should be done in private in order to avoid embarrassment of the children.
- **Beware of the children’s condition:** Teacher can help to monitor children’s condition, observe their response to treatment and report any side effect. Teacher can inform parents of their children’s condition, which can help doctors in prescribing and adjusting the dosage of medicine.



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