

# Characteristics of Executive Function Strengths and Weaknesses

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The following are strengths and weaknesses that a student may exhibit for each of the major executive function areas. The profile of strengths and weaknesses will vary between students. These descriptions are intended to provide a general picture of what behaviors a student may exhibit if he is struggling in any of these areas.

**WORKING MEMORY**—Temporarily storing information needed to complete a task

**+ Strengths**

- Brings school materials (books, notebooks, assignment notebooks) to and from school
- Keeps track of school assignments
- Remembers and follows multi-step directions
- Remembers extracurricular activities or events that are not part of his daily schedule

**– Weaknesses**

- Doesn't follow directions or complete multi-step tasks well
  - Struggles to comprehend written material
  - Has difficulty with written assignments
  - Experiences difficulty taking notes in class
  - Has trouble memorizing facts and information (e.g., spelling words, math facts)
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**TIME MANAGEMENT**—Estimating the amount of time a task will take to complete in order to meet deadlines

**+ Strengths**

- Turns in assignments on time
- Begins long-term projects in advance
- Studies for tests well in advance
- Works or reads ahead
- Completes homework within a reasonable amount of time

**– Weaknesses**

- Struggles with multiple projects at a time
  - Has difficulty managing multiple classes
  - Misjudges the amount of effort homework or a project will take (scrambles at the last minute)
  - Rarely works or reads ahead
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**PLANNING & ORGANIZATION**—Establishing and meeting current and future task demands to achieve a goal

**+ Strengths**

- Brings home books and materials needed to complete homework
- Has organized backpack—not full of extraneous papers
- Knows where completed homework is and turns it in on time
- Knows when tests are scheduled and projects are due
- Studies for tests and completes projects on time

**– Weaknesses**

- Arrives at school unprepared
- Fails to turn in assignments, loses assignments
- Forgets books and other necessary items to complete homework
- Has messy backpack, desk, and room

**Goal**

The student will create a plan to complete homework.

- Review the assignments below and use the Getting Ready to Go Home Checklist to check or list needed materials. Then transfer the assignments to the Daily Homework Schedule.
  1. Date: Tuesday, March 1
  2. Spelling – workbook pp. 40-42
  3. Math – p. 87, 1-10; okay to use calculator
  4. Science – questions 1-5 from lab notebooks
  5. Social Studies – Section 6, Chapter 5 quiz
  6. Reading – in-class essay Wed. on describing Bilbo Baggins from *The Hobbit*, review descriptive language, can use notes

**Goal**

The student will reorder words to form grammatically correct sentences.

- Change the order of the words in the sentence to create a new statement or question.

1. There is the ball. The ball is there. OR Is the ball there?

2. The girls are playing. \_\_\_\_\_

3. You did go there. \_\_\_\_\_

4. Carl and Benny played tag during PE. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Today the assignment is due. \_\_\_\_\_

6. Before dinner, wash your hands. \_\_\_\_\_

7. Squirrels eat nuts and bark. \_\_\_\_\_

8. I can cut with scissors. \_\_\_\_\_

9. Jinny and Kim ate fish sticks and fries. \_\_\_\_\_

10. Open the door, please. \_\_\_\_\_

11. The sun is shining now. \_\_\_\_\_

12. We played on the swings at the park. \_\_\_\_\_

## Initiation Strategies

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- Answer the following questions to determine if the student has difficulty with initiation.

Does the student:

- have trouble starting homework or doing chores without multiple prompts?
- put off starting school projects or studying for tests?
- procrastinate, in general?

If the student shows one or more of these behaviors, his initiation skills may be weak. Initiation can be defined as a person's ability to begin an activity, project, or task in a timely manner without delay. Students with weak initiation skills have difficulty recognizing when it's time to get started and figuring out how to do so independently. The following strategies primarily focus on creating routines to help the student develop positive planning and organization habits that lead to reduced prompting from parents and teachers. These strategies may be given to parents since most of them need to be implemented at home.

- Create daily, weekly, and monthly routines, especially around meals and bedtime.
- Make your child's after-school schedule consistent. Include free time and time for snacks and homework.
- Have your child begin homework at a certain time each day. Schedule short breaks into your child's homework time.
- Sit down with your child and look at his homework planner.
- Check for upcoming tests. Help your child create study materials (e.g., organize notes; write note cards for vocabulary words; create study guides; make charts, graphs, lists, or summaries). Have your child study a little bit each day.
- Check for upcoming long-term assignments. Help the student with long-term assignments by breaking them down into smaller tasks and assigning due dates to each task.
- Check to see what homework your child has due the next day. Make a homework plan for the night.
- On Monday, check to see what homework is due for the entire week. Make a homework plan.
- Check the school web site for assignment updates and grades, if applicable. If your child has missing assignments, address these assignments as soon as possible and check the teacher's policy on late or missing assignments. Have your child complete missing work and turn it in as soon as possible. If your child's teacher does not give a grade for a late assignment, discuss the consequences of this with your child and talk about what he can do in the future to avoid this occurring again. Encourage your child to complete overdue assignments, even if the teacher doesn't give credit, in order to ensure your child learns the concepts.
- Low quiz or test scores may indicate your child is having difficulty understanding the material. Review concepts your child has not mastered to help him perform better on future tests.