

# ADAPT: Accommodations for Students with ADHD



Harvey C. Parker, Ph.D.  
Clinical Psychologist

Author of *The ADHD Workbook for Parents*, *The ADHD Handbook for Schools*, and  
*Problem Solver Guide for Students with ADHD*

Children and youth with attention deficit disorder (ADD) often have serious problems in school. Inattention, impulsiveness, hyperactivity, disorganization, and other difficulties can lead to unfinished assignments, careless errors, and behavior which is disruptive to one's self and others. Through the implementation of relatively simple and straightforward accommodations to the classroom environment or teaching style, teachers can adapt to the strengths and weaknesses of students with ADD. Small changes in how a teacher approaches the student with ADD or in what the teacher expects can turn a losing year into a winning one for the child. Examples of accommodations which teachers can make to adapt to the needs of students with ADD are grouped below according to areas of difficulty.

## **SOCIOLIZATION**

- praise appropriate behavior
- monitor social interactions
- set up social behavior goals with student and implement a reward program.
- prompt appropriate social behavior either verbally or with private signal
- encourage cooperative learning tasks with other students
- provide small group social skills training
- praise student frequently
- assign special responsibilities to student in presence of peer group so others observe student in a positive light.

## **MOOD**

- provide reassurance and encouragement
- frequently compliment positive behavior and work product
- speak softly in non-threatening manner if student shows nervousness
- review instructions when giving new assignments to make sure student comprehends directions
- look for opportunities for student to display leadership role in class
- conference frequently with parents to learn about student's interests and achievements outside of school
- send positive notes home
- make time to talk alone with student

- encourage social interactions with classmates if student is withdrawn or excessively shy
- reinforce frequently when signs of frustration are noticed
- look for signs of stress build up and provide encouragement or reduced work load to alleviate pressure and avoid temper outburst
- spend more time talking to students who seem pent up or display anger easily .
- provide brief training in anger control: encourage student to walk away; use calming strategies; tell nearby adult if getting angry.

## **INATTENTION**

- seat student in quiet area
- seat student near good role model
- seat student near "study buddy"
- increase distance between desks
- allow extra time to complete assigned work
- shorten assignments or work periods to coincide with span of attention; use timer
- break long assignments into smaller parts so student can see end to work
- assist student in setting short term goals
- give assignments one at a time to avoid work overload
- require fewer correct responses for grade
- reduce amount of homework
- instruct student in self-monitoring using cueing
- pair written instructions with oral instructions
- provide peer assistance in note taking
- give clear, concise instructions
- seek to involve student in lesson presentation
- cue student to stay on task, i.e. private signal.

## **ACADEMIC SKILLS**

- if reading is weak: provide additional reading time; use "previewing" strategies; select text with less on a page; shorten amount of required reading; avoid oral reading
- if oral expression is weak: accept all oral responses; substitute display for oral report; encourage student to tell about new ideas or experiences; pick topics easy for student to talk about
- if written language is weak: accept non-written forms for reports (i.e. displays, oral, projects); accept use of typewriter, word processor, tape recorder; do not assign large quantity of written work; test with multiple choice or fill-in questions
- if math is weak: allow use of calculator; use graph paper to space numbers; provide additional math time; provide immediate correctness feedback and instruction via modeling of the correct computational procedure.

## **IMPULSIVENESS**

- ignore minor, inappropriate behavior
- increase immediacy of rewards and consequences
- use time-out procedure for misbehavior
- supervise closely during transition times
- use "prudent" reprimands for misbehavior (i.e. avoid lecturing or criticism)
- attend to positive behavior with compliments etc..
- acknowledge positive behavior of nearby students
- seat student near role model or near teacher
- set up behavior contract
- instruct student in self monitoring of behavior, i.e. hand raising, calling out
- call on only when hand is raised in appropriate manner
- praise when hand raised to answer question.

## **ORGANIZATION PLANNING**

- ask for parental help in encouraging organization
- provide organization rules
- encourage student to have notebook with dividers and folders for work
- provide student with homework assignment book
- supervise writing down of homework assignments
- send daily/weekly progress reports home
- regularly check desk and notebook for neatness, encourage neatness rather than penalize sloppiness
- allow student to have extra set of books at home
- give assignments one at a time
- assist student in setting short term goals
- do not penalize for poor handwriting if visual-motor defects are present
- encourage learning of keyboarding skills
- allow student to tape record assignments or homework.

## **MOTOR ACTIVITY**

- allow student to stand at times while working
- provide opportunity for "seat breaks" i.e. run errands, etc.
- provide short break between assignments
- supervise closely during transition times
- remind student to check over work product if performance is rushed and careless
- give extra time to complete tasks (especially for students with slow motor tempo).

## **COMLIANCE**

- praise compliant behavior
- provide immediate feedback
- ignore minor misbehavior
- use teacher attention to reinforce positive behavior
- use "prudent" reprimands for misbehavior (i.e. avoid lecturing or criticism)
- acknowledge positive behavior of nearby student
- supervise student closely during transition times
- seat student near teacher
- set up behavior contract
- implement classroom behavior management system
- instruct student in self-monitoring of behavi