From Summertime Skills to Schooltime Success: Boosting Executive Function All Year Long

June 16, 2025

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Objectives

Participants will:

A. Understand what executive functioning is and specific executive function skills

B. Identify common “pain points” at home that can be supported by building executive function skills

C. Learn practical, everyday ways to build key executive function skills at home during the summer

D. Transfer these summer skills to skills needed for school in the fall

What are executive function skills?

Executive function skills are the mental processes that help us plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and shift from task to task successfully. Think of them as your brain's "air traffic control system." They help you organize your thoughts, regulate emotions, and respond to situations in flexible ways.

Strong executive function skills help kids succeed in school and life, build healthy relationships, and feel more confident and capable.

Response Inhibition

Response inhibition is the ability to think before you take an action.



Working Memory

Working Memory is the ability to keep information in your mind while manipulating it (e.g. remembering a phone number, remembering directions, doing mental math, taking notes, etc.)

Emotional Control

Emotional control is the ability to manage your emotions to be able to accomplish your tasks



Flexibility



Flexibility is the ability to adapt to changes, including obstacles and new information.

Sustained Attention

The ability to keep your attention on a task for an extended period of time, despite distractions.



Task Initiation



Task initiation is the ability to start tasks without a long delay, efficiently and timely

Planning and Prioritizing



Planning is the ability to prepare for the future in order to achieve a goal.

Prioritizing is the ability to decide what is and what is not important to focus on

Organization



Organization is the ability to create a system that allows you to keep track of things

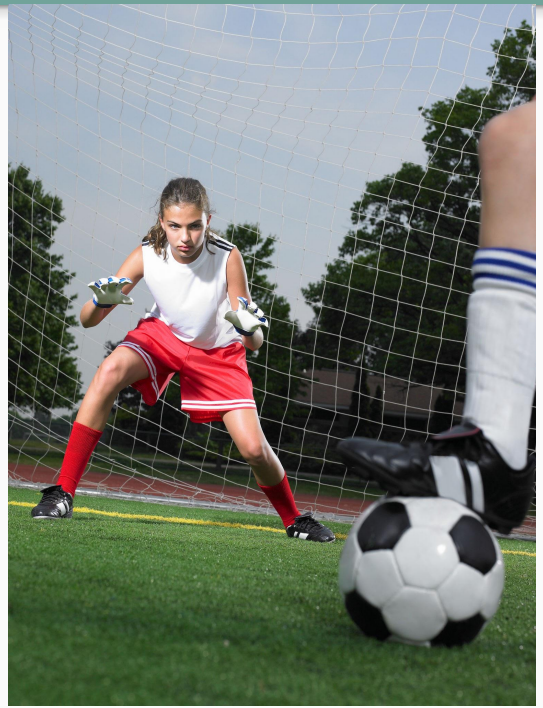
Time Management

Time management is the ability to estimate how much time you have for doing something and to stick to the allotted time.



Goal-directed persistence

Goal-directed persistence is the ability to develop a goal and follow through with it, despite setbacks and distractions.



Common Pain Points

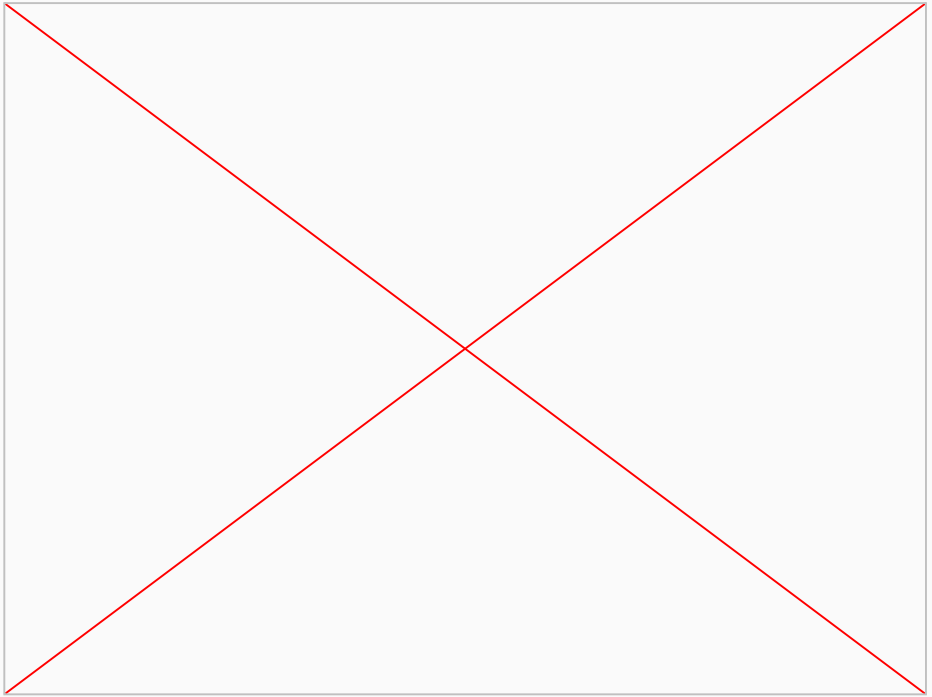
Weak executive functioning skills can make every day occurrences challenging and frustrating

Poll



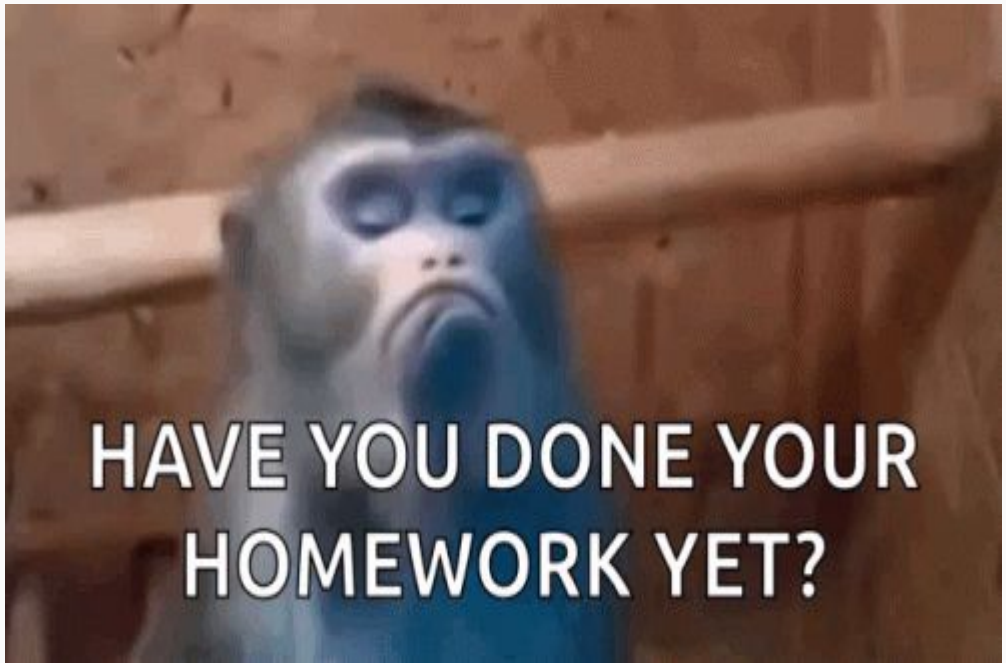
Preparing Materials for the Day

- Checklists
- Visual Checklists
- Prepack
- Reminder Notes
- Voice Memos
- Leaving Things in car/backpack



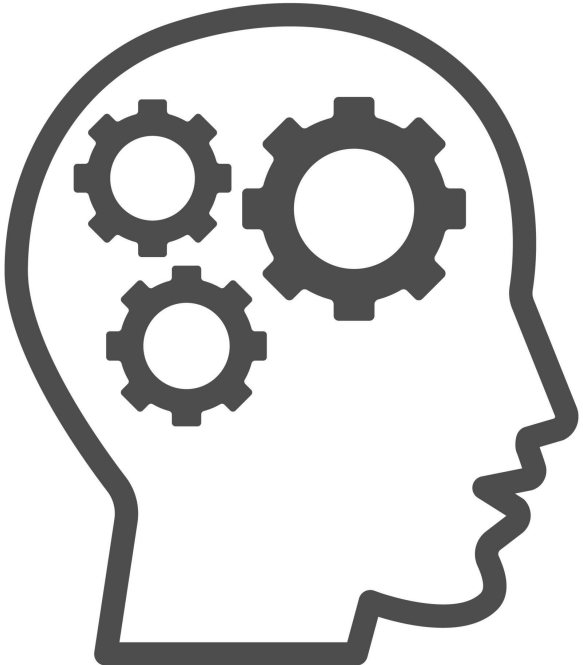
Getting Started and Sustaining Focus on Less Preferred Tasks

- Checklists
- Pomodoro Timers
- Purposeful Location



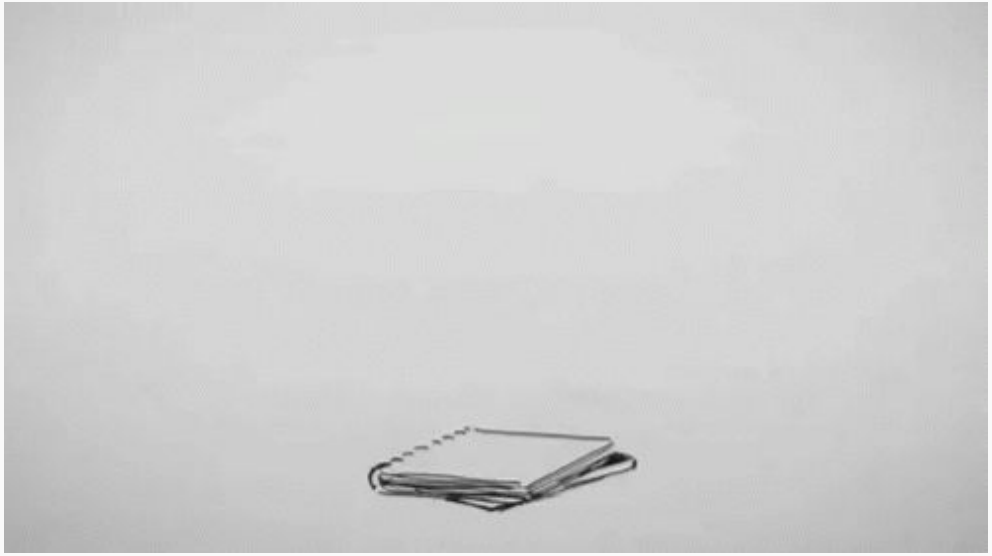
Transitions

- Advanced Warning
- Visual Timers
- Calming Strategies
- Palate Cleanser in between 2 activities



Cleaning Up/Organizing Space and Materials

- Chunking Tasks
- Visual Picture Reminders
- Do it before you sit down!
- Predictable schedule



Planning Activities and Assignments

- Make it fun
- Review daily
- Chunk longer assignments into shorter pieces
- Write it down



Building Executive Function Skills At Home

Strategy #1

Create predictable routines–even a flexible schedule in the summer can help. For teens, a summer job, internship, or volunteer work can build routine.

Executive Function Skills Used:

Planning, Organization, Time Management, and Task Initiation

Building Executive Function Skills At Home



Building Executive Function Skills At Home

Strategy #2

Involve your kids in planning a summer activity (e.g. picnic, lemonade stand, family trip, garage sale)

Executive Function Skills Used:

Planning, Task Initiation, Time Management



Building Executive Function Skills At Home

Strategy #3

Teach your kids to cook or bake by having them follow an age-appropriate recipe. Have them make their own lunches for camp.

Executive Function Skills Used:

Planning, Working Memory, and Flexibility

Building Executive Function Skills At Home

Strategy #4:

Encourage your kids to work on independent summer projects (e.g. grow a garden, finish a book series, train for a race, etc.).

Executive Function Skills Used:

Goal-directed Persistence, Sustained Attention, and Time Management

Goal setting worksheet

My name:	Date:

My goal

Why I want to achieve this

Problems that may appear	Possible solutions

What will I do to achieve my goals?	How will I monitor my process?

Tasks that will lead to my goal

Date	Tasks	✓

Building Executive Function Skills At Home

Strategy #5

Encourage downtime and even boredom to spark creativity. Suggest non-digital ways to relax (e.g. art, building things, music, reading, biking).

Executive Function Skills Used:

Emotional Control and Flexibility



Building Executive Function Skills At Home

Strategy #6

Practice decision-making: Talk through real-life choices together, such as managing screen time or making a big purchase.

Executive Function Skills Used:

Emotional Control, Response Inhibition, Flexibility

Building Executive Function Skills At Home

Strategy #7

Model and share your own executive function tools (planner, Any.do app). Say things like, “I use a checklist to stay on track when I feel overwhelmed.”



Bridging Summer into Fall

Summer Schedule	→	School Day Schedule
		After School Schedule
Plan Summer Fun	→	Planning Group Projects
		Planning Assignments
Cooking/Baking	→	Materials Management Throughout the Day
Summer Projects	→	Long Term Assignments
		Group Projects
		Essay Writing



Bridging Summer into Fall

Downtime	→	Focus on “Boring” Classes
		Lunch/Recess Positive
Decision Making	→	Picking Electives(MS/HS)
		Order of Assignments
Tools	→	Planners/Agenda Books
		Work Processes
		Study Tools



Reference

Dawson, P. and Guarre, R. (2009). Smart but Scattered: The Revolutionary “Executive Skills” Approach to Helping Kids Reach Their Potential. Guilford Press.

"The Pool" *Bluey*, Joe Brumm, Season 1, Episode 22, Charlie Aspinwall, 2011. TikTok, https://www.tiktok.com/@bluey/video/7119480112298396933?lang=en

Thank You!

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