



## Some Possible Warning Signs of an Executive Function Issue

- Struggles with time management
- Difficulty starting tasks on their own
- Disorganized
- Difficulty using and applying information from memory
- Forgets rules easily
- Difficulty planning and completing projects
- Needs to follow rigid routines
- Dislikes change
- Appears impulsive
- Poor emotional control
- Struggles with open ended tasks

**What are Executive Function Skills?**  
Executive Function skills help us organize information, manage time, act appropriately, and complete steps to reach a goal.

### Key Areas of Executive Function

#### Working Memory

Takes in new information and uses it to complete a task e.g. follows simple instructions from adults without reminders. Remembers and organizes key pieces of information for activities e.g. plays a board game using the rules

#### Self-control

Thinks before acting and keeps feelings in check e.g. raises hand in class instead of yelling  
Manages time by starting and completing activities when needed e.g. begins a morning routine like getting dressed without getting distracted

#### Mental Flexibility

Adjusts to changing situations especially when things don't go as planned e.g. easily switches from play time to dinner time  
Considers different points of view e.g. uses problem solving to fix a homework mistake

Note: these are three commonly recognized areas of executive function.



# EXECUTIVE FUNCTION





## Activities to Develop Executive Function Skills

Your child develops executive function skills through social interactions, play time, and everyday activities. Here are some tips and activities you can do to help your child learn and improve upon their executive function skills.



### 6-12 Months

Play Peek-A-Boo to practice remembering where an object is, even if it can't be seen  
Talk to baby often to help build attention and focusing skills  
Provide age appropriate toys and household objects, like spoons or pots, for baby to explore  
Use imitation games, e.g. clapping hands, to build memory skills and teach baby how to copy you



### 13-24 Months

Play pointing games, e.g. point and say the name of objects, to practice paying attention and learning how words and objects relate  
Provide simple directions to improve listening skills, remembering instructions, and starting new tasks Try finger painting with different colors to encourage creative thinking  
Scoop and pour beans from one bucket to another using a plastic cup, which can help kids learn to concentrate on a specific task



### 2-3 Years

Sing songs and play games that include instructions, e.g. Mother May I?, to practice taking turns and remembering words to complete an action  
Play in different environments to practice adjusting to new experiences  
Put away toys and games after play to help build organizational skills  
Play Follow the Leader to develop listening skills, the ability to follow directions, and learning how to wait for a turn



### 4-5 Years

Encourage imaginary play to practice decision making. Have craft time to build creative thinking skills  
Use storytelling to reflect on the order and details of events  
Ask questions while completing puzzles or games to help with ability to think through steps  
Build shapes or figures together with building blocks or clay to develop planning skills and complete tasks with multiple steps

### 5+ Years



Play games that use matching, sorting and memory skills, e.g. Go Fish. Engage in activities that require following instructions, e.g. board games  
Play games like Simon Says to practice remembering rules and thinking flexibly to adjust to different scenarios  
Use structured physical activities, like group soccer, to build focused attention skills  
Provide opportunities to practice decision making, e.g. deciding on an activity to do and figuring out how to complete it