

Attention

Getting and holding student attention is a daily challenge. One reason is that the work is difficult and they may lack the skills needed to be successful. Some students with attention deficits can be attentive when interested in the activity, but if not, they find the task nearly impossible. However, there are also cases of students who simply cannot stay on task since this is the nature of their condition.

- **Behaviors** may include the following:
 - ❖ boredom
 - ❖ disinterest, daydreaming, forgetfulness
 - ❖ fidgeting or hyperactivity
 - ❖ sustaining attention and completing tasks
 - ❖ lack of follow-through on directions and schoolwork
 - ❖ impulsive behavior
 - ❖ poor organizational skills
 - ❖ careless errors
 - ❖ distractibility
 - ❖ messy handwriting

- **Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder** behaviors may also include the following:
 - ❖ fidgeting with hands or feet and squirming in seat
 - ❖ losing things
 - ❖ often leaving seat in classroom, running or climbing
 - ❖ difficulty playing quietly and taking turns
 - ❖ talking excessively and interrupting others

- **Strategies**

Strategies for dealing with attention deficits should be highly structured and have clear expectations in order to keep students focused and on the task.

 - ❖ **Use music** as a tool for transitioning, so that a song played in the classroom is an introduction and smooth transition to a new task. Choose music that students enjoy, play it for a few minutes and allow students to relax and enjoy the moment. Once the music ends, begin a new task like reviewing with flashcards. Students will begin to understand that the musical interlude is a positive connection to a task.

- ❖ **Provide attention and recognition** as often as possible. Look for and encourage strengths, interests, and abilities. Tell them what you want rather than what you don’t want. Examples of encouragement may include statements like these:
 - “I can see how hard you are working today and it will pay off!”
 - “You have handed in your homework on time all week-good for you.”
 - “You are very artistic!”

- ❖ **Establish cues**, or signals, that will remind students they need to stay on task: a hand signal, tap on the shoulder, a word cue, a bell, move closer to the student, or create your own cue.
- ❖ **Silence** can also be used to get attention. Pause and create suspense by looking around before beginning a review session. Hold the pause and wait for students to be attentive. Tell them that someone is going to have to answer a question about what is being said, so everyone must listen carefully. Make it personal by using a student’s name in the question or in the material being covered.
- ❖ **Social skills** include the things we should say and do when we interact and try to get along with people. They allow a person to perform competently in social situations. Helping students understand and learn appropriate behaviors may take practice. They must be made aware of social cues like facial expression, tone of voice, and body language.