

Executive Skills Questionnaire —

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Step I: Read each item below and then rate that item based on the extent to which you agree or disagree with how well it describes you. Use the rating scale below to choose the appropriate score. Then add the three scores in each section. Use the Key on page 2 to determine your executive skill strengths (2-3 highest scores) and weaknesses (2-3 lowest scores).

Strongly disagree	1	Tend to agree	5
Disagree	2	Agree	6
Tend to disagree	3	Strongly agree	7
Neutral	4		

Item	Your score
1. I don't jump to conclusions	_____
2. I think before I speak.	_____
3. I don't take action without having all the facts.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
4. I have a good memory for facts, dates, and details.	_____
5. I am very good at remembering the things I have committed to do.	_____
6. I seldom need reminders to complete tasks	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
7. My emotions seldom get in the way when performing on the job.	_____
8. Little things do not affect me emotionally or distract me from the task at hand.	_____
9. I can defer my personal feelings until after a task has been completed	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
10. No matter what the task, I believe in getting started as soon as possible.	_____
11. Procrastination is usually not a problem for me.	_____
12. I seldom leave tasks to the last minute	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
13. I find it easy to stay focused on my work.	_____
14. Once I start an assignment, I work diligently until it's completed.	_____
15. Even when interrupted, I find it easy to get back and complete the job at hand.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
16. When I plan out my day, I identify priorities and stick to them	_____
17. When I have a lot to do, I can easily focus on the most important things.	_____
18. I typically break big tasks down into subtasks and timelines.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
19. I am an organized person.	_____
20. It is natural for me to keep my work area neat and organized.	_____
21. I am good at maintaining systems for organizing my work.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____

Strongly disagree	1	Tend to agree	5
Disagree	2	Agree	6
Tend to disagree	3	Strongly agree	7
Neutral	4		

Item	Your score
22. At the end of the day, I've usually finished what I set out to do.	_____
23. I am good at estimating how long it takes to do something.	_____
24. I am usually on time for appointments and activities.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
25. I take unexpected events in stride.	_____
26. I easily adjust to changes in plans and priorities.	_____
27. I consider myself to be flexible and adaptive to change.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
28. I routinely evaluate my performance and devise methods for personal improvement.	_____
29. I am able to step back from a situation in order to make objective decisions.	_____
30. I "read" situations well and can adjust my behavior based on the reactions of others.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
31. I think of myself as being driven to meet my goals.	_____
32. I easily give up immediate pleasures to work on long-term goals.	_____
33. I believe in setting and achieving high levels of performance.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____
34. I enjoy working in a highly demanding, fast-paced environment.	_____
35. A certain amount of pressure helps me to perform at my best.	_____
36. Jobs that include a fair degree of unpredictability appeal to me.	_____
YOUR TOTAL SCORE:	_____

KEY			
Items	Executive Skill	Items	Executive Skill
1 - 3	Response Inhibition	4 - 6	Working Memory
7 - 9	Emotional Control	10 - 12	Task Initiation
13 - 15	Sustained Attention	16 - 18	Planning/Prioritization
19 - 21	Organization	22 - 24	Time Management
25 - 27	Flexibility	28 - 30	Metacognition
31 - 33	Goal-Directed Persistence	34-36	Stress tolerance

Strongest Skills

Weakest Skills

Executive Skill Definitions

- **Response Inhibition:** The capacity to think before you act – this ability to resist the urge to say or do something allows us the time to evaluate a situation and how our behavior might impact it. In the young child, waiting for a short period without being disruptive is an example of response inhibition while in the adolescent it would be demonstrated by accepting a referee’s call without an argument.
- **Working Memory:** The ability to hold information in memory while performing complex tasks. It incorporates the ability to draw on past learning or experience to apply to the situation at hand or to project into the future. A young child, for example can hold in mind and follow 1-2 step directions while the middle school child can remember the expectations of multiple teachers.
- **Emotional Control:** The ability to manage emotions in order to achieve goals, complete tasks, or control and direct behavior. A young child with this skill is able to recover from a disappointment in a short time. A teenager is able to manage the anxiety of a game or test and still perform.
- **Sustained Attention:** The capacity to maintain attention to a situation or task in spite of distractibility, fatigue, or boredom. Completing a 5-minute chore with occasional supervision is an example of sustained attention in the younger child. The teenager is able to attend to homework, with short breaks, for one to two hours.
- **Task Initiation:** The ability to begin projects without undue procrastination, in an efficient or timely fashion. A young child is able to start a chore or assignment right after instructions are given. A high school student does not wait until the last minute to begin a project.
- **Planning/Prioritization:** The ability to create a roadmap to reach a goal or to complete a task. It also involves being able to make decisions about what’s important to focus on and what’s not important. A young child, with coaching, can think of options to settle a peer conflict. A teenager can formulate a plan to get a job.
- **Organization:** The ability to create and maintain systems to keep track of information or materials. A young child can, with a reminder, put toys in a designated place. An adolescent can organize and locate sports equipment.
- **Time Management:** The capacity to estimate how much time one has, how to allocate it, and how to stay within time limits and deadlines. It also involves a sense that time is important. A young child can complete a short job within a time limit set by an adult. A high school student can establish a schedule to meet task deadlines.
- **Goal-directed persistence:** The capacity to have a goal, follow through to the completion of the goal, and not be put off by or distracted by competing interests. A first grader can complete a job in order to get to recess. A teenager can earn and save money over time to buy something of importance.
- **Flexibility:** The ability to revise plans in the face of obstacles, setbacks, new information or mistakes. It relates to an adaptability to changing conditions. A young child can adjust to a change in plans without major distress. A high school student can accept an alternative such as a different job when the first choice is not available.
- **Metacognition:** The ability to stand back and take a birds-eye view of oneself in a situation. It is an ability to observe how you problem solve. It also includes self-monitoring and self-evaluative skills (e.g., asking yourself, “How am I doing? or How did I do?”). A young child can change behavior in response to feedback from an adult. A teenager can monitor and critique her performance and improve it by observing others who are more skilled.
- **Stress Tolerance:** the ability to thrive in stressful situations and to cope with uncertainty, change, and performance demands. We generally reserve our discussion of this skill to adults, since it seems more relevant with this population. We find it helps people understand the kind of work environment they do best in.

Strategies for Specific Executive Skills

Executive Skill	Possible Strategies	
Response Inhibition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post home or classroom rules and review regularly • Arrange for in vivo practice or behavioral rehearsal • Wristband reminder (e.g., to raise hand to talk) • Talking stick (cue to talk) • Sticky notes to write something down rather than interrupting • Sit near teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prompts in advance about expected behavior • Prompts in advance about expected behavior • Visual cue on desk to remind them to work quietly • Prompts in advance about expected behavior • Help student build in technology breaks rather than combining homework with technology use
Working Memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To-do lists (paper, white board to post prominently) • Colored wristbands to remind student of homework assignments • Post-it reminders • Laminated lists (e.g., by door at home or on inside of locker door) to remind kids what they need to take with them • Songs and rhymes as memory aids • Ask student what cues they think work for them (e.g., how they might use smart phone to provide cues) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach Principle of “off-loading” <p>Off-loading: This refers to the idea that the brain doesn’t have to work as hard when you can find a way to “off-load” some of the tasks we’re asking it to do. Examples: the brain doesn’t have to allot space to remembering homework assignments when we write them down. It doesn’t have to work at remembering something we have to do after school if we build an alarm into our smart phone to remind us...</p>
Emotional Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help student write a script to follow • Have a “cooling off” space • Prepare student by asking them to predict what will happen/how they will handle it • Review expectations in advance • Teach students to label emotions • Teach kids: “respond don’t react” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach kids to recognize situations or early signs • Teach coping strategy • Rehearse the strategy repeatedly until it is internalized • Teach mindfulness meditation • Self-talk to plan in advance (If/Then: If this happens, then I will....)

Executive Skill	Possible Strategies	
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Normalize” errors • Preview changes in schedule • Praise kids for being flexible • Role play handling situations that require flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use language to showcase flexibility (stuck/unstuck; big deal/little deal; Plan B) • Do It Later folder (for kids who have trouble leaving a task undone)
Sustained Attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce distractions (seating arrangements, white noise) • Modify/limit task length or demand (end in sight) • Build in variety/choice • Help student choose best time of day to work on effortful tasks • Use fidget toys such as stress balls • Movement breaks • Wiggle cushions/study carrels; dead headphones; listen to iPod; quiet desk/noisy desk/standing desk; “theraband” on front two legs of chair to allow movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time Timer (make time visible) • Sand timer (real or app) • Identify distractors and figure out how to remove or work around them Have the child identify something to look forward to doing after work is done • Teach to track time on task using index card or sticky note • Have students set goals (how long can you go before you need a break?)
Task Initiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish set time to do non-preferred tasks • Teach 1-2-3-Start strategy (student lists the first 3 things they need to do in a work session and then they do them in order) • Make a list and break into bite-sized chunks • Use alarm on smart phone to remind student to start (If they’re not ready to start, have them hit “Snooze” rather than turning the alarm off) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help student make a plan for doing the task and include the start time • Practice getting started in isolation—start with a short, easy task and just practice starting it at the planned start time • Help student figure out what’s preventing them from getting started and design an appropriate strategy (see Form in Task Initiation folder in Dropbox)
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach to use a planning template • Help student design a plan/template • Start with big picture; plan backwards • Help student find planning tools that work for them (calendar, agenda book, apps) • Break task down with a visual (e.g., dividing reading assignment into pages per day) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a road map • Help student select a graphic organizer that meets the need • Walk through the planning process (use a template) • Have them plan a simple task and gradually prompt to do more of the planning themselves

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put each step of a project on a separate index card or post-it and rearrange to create the right sequence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask questions to get student to prioritize (What do you need? What should you do first?)
Executive Skill	Possible Strategies	
Time Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a color-coded chart showing student their weekly schedule and where the discretionary time is (school; sports or extracurricular activities; travel to and from school; chores or family obligations; study time) Practice estimating how long it takes to do something. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write each task on a post-it and place it on a large dry erase calendar so that it can be moved as needed. Use a dry erase board for planning with columns for Task, This Month, This Week, Today, Done. Have student move post-its from left to right.
Goal-Directed Persistence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure the goal or benchmark is in sight—post it visually (e.g., a picture of the reward they’re working for) Help them set “Personal Best” goals (i.e., incremental improvement) and teach them about Outcome Goals (“Last week I got a 75 on my math quiz. This week I’ll shoot for a 78.”) and Process Goals (“Last week I studied 20 minutes for my math quiz. This week I’ll study for 30 minutes.”) Talk about the advantage of focusing on Process Goals. 	<p>For students who are resistant to goal-setting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define a goal as something that people want to get better at or to change. Start with helping them set a goal for something they want to do outside of school. Skip the word “goal” and talk with them about making a plan (starting with one thing they want to do before the next coaching session)
Metacognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help student create sample to match or error monitoring checklist Embed metacognitive questions into instruction/conversations Help student decide on how performance will be evaluated Have the student evaluate their own performance Model thinking aloud to solve problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use different strategies—ask kids to evaluate which worked best Use Problem Solving Template Teach students to ask questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What’s my problem? What’s my plan? Am I following I my plan? How did I do