

Helping Kids with ADHD Stay on Task

By Brittany Fichter

Content originally found at www.BrittanyFichterWrites.com

Helping Kids with ADHD Stay on Task

August 23, 2013

When I was student teaching, we had a second grader with textbook **ADHD** (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder). At first, it seemed as if he didn't want to do anything he was supposed to do. When the students were supposed to be turning in their homework, he was finding random objects in his desk. When they were supposed to be putting their lunch boxes in the bin, he was trying to get his friends to laugh about a spinning trick he'd learned to do with his eraser.

At first, it was exasperating, and could be quite annoying because he'd not only lag behind, but distract others in the process. As I spent more time with him though, I realized he was extremely intelligent, and really wanted to do well in class. He simply couldn't focus. He hadn't been diagnosed with ADHD officially, so there was no official paperwork to tell us how we needed to work with him. The more we watched him, however, the more we realized he needed help. That's when my Master Teacher did something that changed the way he got ready in the morning and in the afternoon. She gave him a personal checklist for each part of the day.

Morning Routine	
Greet the Teacher	
Unpack Backpack	
Put Away Lunch Box	
Turn In Homework	
Sharpen Pencils	
Hang Backpack on Chair	
Get Out Idea Notebook	
Begin Board Work	

This list is much like the one she gave to our student. There are three important tips I want to mention when successfully creating this kind of checklist:

1) The directions are simple - The fewer words there are, (especially for a child who doesn't read much yet) the more affective it'll be. Just think about it from the child's perspective. If there are lots of words, it's likely that the child will get distracted before he finishes.

2) The pictures should be as straightforward as possible - This particular list was created as a simple Word document. (Word has a ton of great Clip Art available for this.) You don't want pictures that the child has to decipher.

3) It's great if the list is laminated - That way, the child can use a dry erase marker to check off or cross out each action as he does it. It'll keep him from having to read the whole thing over again each time he looks at the list. At the end of the day, the list can be wiped clean and used again.

Take a look at some more examples.

Wake Up Routine	
Eat Breakfast	
Brush Teeth	
Comb Hair	
Make sure homework is in backpack	
Get Lunchbox	

After School Routine	
Put backpack in bedroom	
Eat snack	
Do Homework	
Play until dinner	

Bedtime Routine	
Clean up toys	
Brush Teeth	
Put on PJs	
Get a drink	
Bedtime Prayers	

I'm not saying your child's life should be run completely by checklists. My point in sharing all of these is that you can utilize this tool in a vast variety of ways that fit your child's needs. Although my student wasn't officially diagnosed with ADHD, his mother used lists like this to benefit him at home as well. She said she kept a list on his bathroom mirror so he could see it when he got ready in the morning.

It's important to remember that these lists aren't a "cure all" for inattentive children. Rather, they make it easier for the child to stay on track. For example, if I walked up to my student and found him distracted, all I had to do was call his attention and point to the next step on his list. Usually, it would only take him a few seconds to realize what he was supposed to be doing, much less time than if I had lectured him over and over again about following directions.

Morning Routine	
Go running	
Eat breakfast	
Make coffee	
Shower and get ready	
Get Dressed	

These lists can benefit adults as well. I don't have ADHD, but since I love to multitask, I find that I often get off-task simply because I'm doing so much. Lists help me remember what I really need to do and help me prioritize. I have a favorite app on my iPad that allows me to set due dates for my errands and chores, and allows me to check them off so I can see what I've done.

Whether you have ADHD or not as an adult, lists can really help with making sure you stay focused on what's most important at the time. You could even use pictures. Living with ADHD or simply having the tendency to do way too much at a time (That would be moi.) doesn't mean you have to sacrifice lots of time and energy trying to stay on track. It simply means you need to find the tools that help you the most.