

Executive Skills Problem Checklist—Middle/High School Version

Directions:

1. Check (✓) problem areas that significantly interfere with effective studying.
2. Look over all the items you checked and choose THREE that you think cause the greatest problems. Place a star (★) next to those.

Response Inhibition

- _____ Rushing through work just to get it done
- _____ Not having the patience to produce quality work
- _____ Giving up on a homework assignment when I encounter an obstacle
- _____ Having trouble doing homework when there are more fun things to do

Working Memory

- _____ Writing assignment instructions without enough detail to understand later
- _____ Forgetting to take home necessary materials or take materials to class
- _____ Forgetting to hand in homework
- _____ Forgetting long-term projects or upcoming tests
- _____ Not paying attention to classroom instructions/task directions
- _____ Trouble remembering multiple directions or multiple problem steps
- _____ Losing materials
- _____ Forgetting to complete assignments
- _____ Forgetting to check agenda/assignment book
- _____ Not recording when an assignment is due

Emotional Control

- _____ Getting really irritated when a homework assignment is hard or confusing
- _____ Finding it hard to get started on assignments because of perfectionism or fear of failure
- _____ Freezing when taking tests and doing poorly despite studying long and hard
- _____ Not seeing the point of an assignment and finding it hard to motivate myself to do it

(continued)

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Task Initiation

Procrastinating/avoiding tasks due to:

- not knowing how to get started
- believing the task will “take forever”
- believing my performance won’t meet expectations
- seeing the task as tedious, boring, or irrelevant
- Finding other things to do rather than starting homework
- Having difficulty getting back to work after breaks

Sustained Attention

- Taking frequent breaks when working
- Taking breaks that are too long
- Internally distracted—thoughts, states, moods, daydreams (please specify): _____
- Externally distracted—sights, sounds, technology such as phone, computer, TV, video games (please specify): _____
- Rushing through work—sloppy/mistakes
- Not knowing limits (e.g., how long I can sustain attention) or when the best study time is
- Not recognizing when I’m off task

Planning/Prioritization

- Not making a study plan (may not know how)
- Can’t break down long-term projects into smaller tasks and timelines
- Having difficulty taking notes or studying for test because I can’t distinguish important from nonimportant
- Not using or not knowing how to use agenda/assignment book
- Spending too much time on less important elements—can’t put the most important parts or most important assignments first
- Planning unrealistically (e.g., fail to take into account obstacles to the plan)

Flexibility

- Struggling with assignments that require creativity or are open-ended
- Getting stuck on one solution or one way of looking at a problem
- Having trouble coming up with topics or ideas of things to write about
- Having difficulty coming up with “Plan B” if the first attempt didn’t work

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Organization

- Not using or knowing how to design an organizational system
- Not being able to find things in notebooks or backpacks
- Losing assignments or important papers
- Not having neat study area
- Losing electronic data—forget where work is stored or what name it's filed under

Time Management

Can't estimate how long a task will take—due to:

- overestimating how long it will take to do a task (therefore never getting started)
- underestimating how long it will take to do a task (therefore running out of time)
- Chronically late (for school, tutoring, other appointments, and obligations)
- Having difficulty juggling multiple assignments and responsibilities because I can't judge time involved
- Overcommitted—juggling too many obligations (and I think I can pull it off!)
- Lacking a sense of time urgency (I don't appreciate that deadlines are important)
- Relying on deadline as activator or motivator

Goal-Directed Persistence

- Not having a long-term goal
- Having a long-term goal but lacking a realistic plan to achieve the goal
- Not seeing how daily actions impact goal attainment
- Not seeing studying as important and making minimal effort as a result
- Giving up in the face of an obstacle
- Having a “good-enough” mentality that gets in the way of producing quality work
- “Not on the radar”— seeing work as not relevant or not important enough to do

Metacognition

- Can't accurately evaluate skills (e.g., expect to do well on tests in spite of poor past performance, expect to go to a college or get a job without requisite skills or academic record)
- Can't identify appropriate study strategies
- Can't plan or organize a writing assignment
- Can memorize facts but missing the larger context (I do better on multiple-choice tests than essay questions)
- Having a hard time understanding more abstract concepts (math as well as content-area subjects)

(continued)

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_____ Having difficulty making inferences, drawing conclusions, grasping the main idea, and reading between the lines

_____ Failing to check work/proofread

Other

WHAT ARE MY TARGETS?

Executive Skill	Specific Problem

What are some ways that I could use my executive skills strengths to help me be successful?
