

Executive Functioning Support

Parent Advice Sheet – Age 5–6

What Is Executive Functioning?

Executive functioning refers to the mental skills that help children:

- Plan and organize tasks
- Follow directions and routines
- Control impulses and emotions
- Shift attention and adapt to change
- Remember and use information

Classroom Benefits

- **Better Attention and Focus:** Children can concentrate on lessons and ignore distractions, which is crucial in a busy classroom.
- **Improved Social Skills:** Executive function helps children cooperate, share, and manage emotions like frustration or anxiety.
- **Stronger Learning Outcomes:** Research shows that children with well-developed executive function skills make faster progress in subjects like maths and are better equipped to catch up academically.

Long-Term Impact

- These skills not only support academic success but also contribute to lifelong wellbeing — including better decision-making, emotional regulation, and resilience

Children with executive functioning difficulties may:

- Struggle to start or finish tasks
- Forget instructions or lose items
- Have trouble managing emotions or transitions

- Act impulsively or become easily distracted

How You Can Help at Home

1. Use Visual Schedules & Routines

- Create a picture chart for daily tasks (e.g., morning routine)
- Keep routines consistent and predictable

2. Break Tasks into Steps

- Give one instruction at a time: “First put on socks, then shoes”
- Use checklists for multi-step activities

3. Offer Choices & Structure

- Let your child choose between two options: “Do you want to tidy toys or books first?”
- Use timers to set limits: “5 minutes left to play”

4. Practice Emotional Regulation

- Teach calming strategies like deep breathing or counting to 10
- Label emotions and talk about ways to handle them

5. Encourage Problem-Solving

- Ask guiding questions: “What could we do differently next time?”
- Praise effort and flexible thinking: “You found a new way to do it!”

Fun Activities to Build Executive Skills

Activity	What to Do	Skills Practiced
Puzzle Time	Complete age-appropriate puzzles	Planning, persistence
Board Games	Play games with rules and turn-taking	Impulse control, flexibility
Sorting Challenge	Sort toys or laundry by category	Organization, attention
Step-by-Step Crafts	Follow simple instructions to make a craft	Sequencing, memory
“What Comes Next?”	Predict what happens next in stories or routines	Planning, working memory

Scavenger Hunt

Find items based on clues or categories

Focus, task
completion

Conversation Starters

- “What’s your plan for getting ready tomorrow?”
- “How did you feel when the game changed?”
- “What can we do if we forget something?”

Quick Tips

- Keep instructions short and clear
- Use praise and encouragement often
- Be patient—skills grow with practice and support