

Classroom Accommodations for ADHD Students

It is hardly any secret that every classroom has students who have a hard time paying attention and probably a couple of kids with a diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Some parents of ADHD students may wish to have formal *accommodations* written into a document that is often referred to as a *504 Plan* (because it refers to section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act). This plan identifies the steps to be taken to help insure that students with diagnosed difficulties are provided opportunities to learn with support to maximize their abilities and *accommodate* their challenges.

While the ideas below are especially useful for teachers working with children and teens with attentional difficulties, many of these techniques are just good teaching and useful for enhancing the learning of all students.

Areas of accommodation:

Classroom environment and seating

- Classroom has predictable daily routines
- Schedule changes are discussed ahead of time
- Consistent and clear limits are set for classroom behavior
- Work alternates short concentrated periods with breaks
- Visual distractions in classroom are minimal
- Auditory distractions in classroom are minimal
- Small group instruction
- Team teaching
- Identify teaching-style/student match (e.g. structured, nurturing, etc.)
- Seat in front of classroom
- Seat in quiet area
- Seat near teacher
- Seat near good role model
- Seat near 'study buddy'
- Increase distance between desks
- Reduce distractions on or near desk
- Minimize use to tables that would have another sitting facing the student with an accommodation
- Seat away from distracting stimuli
- Seat in study carrel or use partitions (beware that this could also create stigma)
- Build a solid rapport with ADHD students; recognize them out of class, use their names when you address them, and praise their accomplishments.
- Assigned work is posted on the board and on the internet

Assignments/Homework

- Extra time to complete assigned work
- Shorten assignments/work periods
- Simplify complex directions
- Break long assignments into smaller parts
- Assist student in setting short term goals
- Pair written instructions with oral instructions

- Develop private signal from pupil to teacher to request repetition of oral directions
- Repeat oral instructions
- Check homework daily
- Reduce amount of homework
- Limit homework to _____ minutes per night
- Limit home SSR, simultaneous reading, or family reading to _____ minutes per night
- Permit assignments to be printed or typewritten without penalty
- Permit writing assignments to be turned in on audio-file
- Permit writing assignments to be given orally
- Permit extra credit assignments
- Permit re-submitted assignments
- Adapt assignment to minimize writing (e.g. circle, cross out, write above line, etc.)
- Do not grade or minimize emphasis on handwriting
- Do not grade or minimize emphasis on spelling

Test Taking and Grading

- Provide written outline of main points prior to test
- Allow open book exams
- Allow outline or notes during exams
- Give exam orally
- Give take-home tests
- Allow student to dictate answers on tape recorder
- Give frequent short quizzes rather than long exam
- Allow extra time for exams
- Allow test to be taken untimed with specified short breaks
- Read test item to student
- Provide student with following information:
 - Grade performance relative to normal grade level expectations (traditional grade)
 - Grade for apparent effort
 - Grade performance relative to own growth and improvement (progress compared to own previous achievement)
- Avoid using child as negative example to others
- Avoid questioning child's motivation or effort
- Encourage child to accept own mistakes
- Identify whether test will assess abilities or disabilities

Home/School/Community Communication

- Parent/teacher conference frequency _____
- Teacher/student conference frequency _____
- Parent/student/teacher conference frequency _____
- Provide daily/weekly progress checklist
- Call parent if _____
- Provide case manager/school social worker to give lead in communicating within school, and between school, home and community. This includes assistance in selection of teachers; and teacher, aides, bus driver and administration orientation and awareness regarding nature of disability and adaptation needs and monitoring effectiveness of this adaptation plan.
- Monitor medication taking
- Assist physician in medication monitoring
- Consult with other professionals: _____ once per _____

Transportation

- Select seating and seat buddy on bus, not in rear of bus
- Provide adult supervision on bus

Medication

- Provide discrete reminder to student to obtain medication
- Take care not to humiliate student with respect to medication (this is only addressed to situations where student has had previous bad experience).

Aides and Technology

- Use highlighters to assist to student in identifying what is important
- Provide peer assistance/adult assistance in note-taking
- Provide tape recorder and permit tape recording of class
- Provide keyboarding skills training
- Provide computer with appropriate software for written assignments (word processing software includes spelling-prompt software, etc.)
- Provide computer for in-class note-taking
- Provide instructional software in subject matter area: _____ (semi-independent, self-paced, repetition, variety, multi-sensory, non-judgmental feedback)
- Provide textbooks on audio tape (i.e. through aural media catalogue)
- Provide opportunity to complete written assignments on computer
- Provide extra set of textbooks which may be marked
- Provide enlarged copy of reading assignments/written assignments
- Provide tutor for specified period of time and frequency

Learning style

Using or enhancing visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning and memory

- Provide auditory directions
- Provide auditory cues and clues
- Develop auditory mnemonics skills (e.g. set memorization tasks to music)
- Do or do not use background music to enhance learning (headphones or ambient)
- Provide visual directions, demonstrations and representations
- Provide visual cues and clues
- Develop visual conceptualization skills
- Develop visual mnemonics skills
- Encourage (multi-colored) outlining/underlining when reading
- Maintain visual contact while talking
- Use tactile and manipulative aides in teaching
- Provide simultaneous visual, auditory, and kinesthetic experiences
- Provide lessons in sequential order
- Provide lessons with contextual clues
- Provide written outline of lesson or written notes of lecture material
- Write main points of lesson on board
- Refer for academic testing in particular area
- Accept alternatives to oral reports (written, display, etc.)
- Utilize areas of strength to encourage expression
- Involve child in movement several times a day

Attention

- Provide cognitive behavioral feedback: positive feedback for attention to task (frequency based on what student can currently do) short-term reinforcers (e.g. happy face, check mark, star, in-class rewards) and long-term (e.g. accumulate points for rewards at home)
- Plan academic instruction for student's peak attention time (e.g., a.m.)
- Allow student to stand at times during seatwork (especially during end of task)
- Require active responses in instruction (talking, moving, organizing, working at board, interacting with computer)
- Provide opportunity for 'seat breaks' (structure with errands, physical activity, etc.)
- Provide short break between assignments
- Give child substitute verbal or motor responses to make while waiting
- Provide fidget object for manual activity (e.g. koosh ball, clay, worry beads, etc.)
- Teacher to stand near student when giving directions or presenting lessons
- Reward short periods of waiting
- Increase novelty
- If possible, use the student's interests in discussing lesson material (i.e., 'If anybody has any items from the Iraq War . . .').
- Teaching outcomes are likely to be improved by having several short lessons on a specific topic rather than one longer lesson
- Alternate high and low interest tasks
- Do not reinforce passive/withdrawn behavior
- Increase choice of tasks
- Place student first in line, or avoid lines altogether
- Teach or encouraged the teaching of self-monitoring strategies
- Alternating between tasks requiring mental and physical activity is a useful strategy.
- Occasionally use the student's name in the material being discussed (i.e., 'If Matt had 45 glow sticks and had to divide them . . .')
- Change your tone and verbal delivery when you are about to share new information that is especially important for the students to understand
- It is often useful to use your ADHD students to run errands because they need the chance for movement and may help young children to feel important to the teacher

Reading

- Encourage sustained silent reading
- Teach previewing strategies
- Select key passages
- Provide visual breaks after each line of the page
- Fold paper or cover paper so that only part is visible
- Read with window
- Enlarge print of written material
- Use highlighting system to limit amount of reading
- Use highlighting system to focus reading and studying
- Avoid oral reading
- Encourage oral reading
- Develop mnemonic strategies to address reversals
- Teach reading for meaning
- Teach phonetic decoding skills
- Use echo reading or simultaneous reading approach to reading acquisition
- Teach visual discrimination skills to reading acquisition
- Teach auditory discrimination skills to reading acquisition

- Teach underlining strategies

Writing/Handwriting (see also Aides & Technology)

- Accept alternatives to written reports (oral, tape recorded, display, projects)
- Provide instruction in brainstorming and outlining
- Provide specialized software for word processing (e.g., enhanced spell checking, etc.)
- Do not require copying from board or book (provide photocopied instructions or problems or refer to number)
- Reduced amount of required copying from board
- Adapt assignments to require less writing (e.g., provide photocopy, which may be enlarged, to circle, cross out write above/below line, etc.)
- Minimize or eliminate cursive writing

Spelling

- Use electronic spell checker (hand-held and/or computer)
- Limit or eliminate need for exact spelling
- Limit spelling list words
- Use simultaneous multisensory methods to encourage spelling memorization
- Fill in missing letters in preprinted portion of spelling word with omissions
- Circle correct version of word given several choices
- Unscramble pre-printed words and cross out unnecessary letters in spelled word

Math

- Permit use of calculator
- Provide graph paper to space numbers
- Model correct computational procedure
- Encourage self-talk
- Provide enlarged print problems and work area
- Encourage turning lined paper sideways to maintain column alignment

Organizational/Planning Skills

- Remind student to check over work product
- Give assignments one at a time
- Provide student with assignment book
- Check that homework assignments are written in full detail
- Supervise student in writing full assignment in book or provide written instructions
- Provide written checklist for getting organized
- Provide notebook with dividers and folders for work
- Check desk/notebook for neatness: reward it
- Provide extra set of books to keep at home
- Establish object placement routines
- Use color and physical/spatial organizers
- Teach organizational/study skills and allow for application and generalization

organizational skills: organizing notebooks and materials, assignments, time, study space

recognizing and formulating main ideas: categorizing main ideas, main ideas in paragraphs, main ideas in multi-paragraph selections

note-taking: from written sources two-column method, from lectures selective, skeleton notes

summarizing: two-column notes, variety of materials, paraphrasing

textbook skills: identifying and using parts of a textbook, previewing before reading, organizing and learning information while reading, reviewing and expressing information after reading

master notebook system: organizing, studying, mastering

test-preparation and test-taking: class review, identifying topics to be studied, determining what kind of questions will be on the test, planning study time, forming study groups, how to approach a test, essay questions, test anxiety

research and report writing: applying study skills to research and report writing

Self-Esteem

- Structure of immediate and ongoing success
- Provide reassurances and encouragement vs. correction and criticism at a rate of 4:1
- Provide reassurances and encouragement vs. correction and criticism at a rate of 10:1
- Focus on student strengths, talents and accomplishments
- Mark student's correct answers rather than mistakes
- Catch 'em being good: compliment positive behavior and work
- Speak softly in non-threatening manner if agitated
- Tolerate inconsistent performance
- Provide opportunities for student to display responsibility and/or leadership role
- Provide opportunities for student to provide assistance to others
- Make time to talk alone with student
- Encourage social interactions with classmates if withdrawn
- Reinforce frequently or reduce workload when signs of frustration are noticed
- Send positive notes home
- Provide positive role models with similar disability as classroom or assembly speaker

Positive Behavioral Intervention

- Begin day or period with relaxation and guided imagery exercise
- Provide behavioral feedback using written/symbol/quantitative feedback every _____ minutes
- Provide instruction in self-monitoring (e.g. hand-raising, using cueing)
- Cue students to stay on task (private signal)
- Ignore minor, inappropriate behavior
- Increase immediacy of rewards or consequences
- Give activity as a reward
- Use time-out procedure for misbehavior
- Permit time-in procedure for agitation and motor release
- Supervise closely during transition times
- Provide praise for positive behavior
- Acknowledge good behavior of other students

- Establish behavior contract with three goals
- Call on only when hand is raised appropriately
- Ignore calling out without raising hand
- Praise student when hand is raised
- Implement behavior management system
- Implement home-school token system
- Prudent use of negative consequences
- Praise compliant behavior
- Post class rules in conspicuous place
- Provide immediate feedback with teacher attention
- Avoid lecturing or criticism
- Student's disability would/would not cause him to violate school rules (if yes, work out an alternative disciplinary plan)

Socialization and Social Skills

- Provide recess/lunch opportunity indoors with friend (w/structured games, etc.)
- Provide lunch buddies
- Establish social behavior goals and reward program
- Prompt appropriate social behavior verbally or with private signal
- Avoid placing student in competitive activities
- Encourage cooperative learning tasks
- Praise student to increase esteem of others
- Assign special responsibilities to student in presence of peers
- Provide small group social skill training in the following areas:
 - *School-related skills/classroom survival skills* (Pre-school: asking a question, following directions, trying when it's hard, interrupting. Elementary: listening, asking for help, saying thank you, bringing materials to class, following instructions, completing assignments, contributing to discussions, offering help to an adult, asking a question, ignoring distractions, making corrections, deciding on something to do, setting a goal.)
 - *Beginning social & friendship-making skills* (Pre-school: listening, using nice talk, using brave talk, saying thank you, rewarding yourself, asking for help, asking a favor, ignoring, greeting others, reading others, joining in, waiting your turn, sharing, offering help, asking someone to play, playing a game. Elementary: introducing yourself, beginning a conversation, ending a conversation, joining in, playing a game, asking a favor, offering help to a classmate, giving a compliment, accepting a compliment, suggesting an activity, sharing, apologizing. Adolescent: listening, starting a conversation, having a conversation, asking a question, saying thank you, introducing yourself, introducing other people, giving a compliment, asking for help, joining in, giving instructions, following instructions, apologizing, convincing others.)
 - *Dealing with feelings* (Pre-school: knowing your feelings, feeling left out, asking to talk, dealing with fear, deciding how someone feels, showing affection. Elementary/Adolescent: knowing your feelings, expressing your feelings, recognizing another's feelings, showing understanding of another's feelings, expressing concern for another, dealing with your anger, dealing with another's anger, expressing affection, dealing with fear, rewarding yourself.)
 - *Alternatives to aggression* (Pre-school: dealing with teasing, dealing with feeling mad, deciding if it's fair, solving a problem, accepting consequences. Elementary: using self-

control, asking permission, responding to teasing, avoiding trouble, staying out of fights, problem solving, accepting consequences, dealing with an accusation, negotiating. Adolescent: asking permission, sharing something, helping others, negotiating, using self-control, standing up for your rights, responding to teasing, avoiding trouble with others, keeping out of fights.)

- *Dealing with stress* (Pre-school: relaxing, dealing with mistakes, being honest, knowing when to tell, dealing with losing, wanting to be first, saying no, accepting no, deciding what to do. Elementary: dealing with boredom, deciding what caused a problem, making a complaint, dealing with losing, showing sportsmanship, dealing with being left out, dealing with embarrassment, reacting to failure, accepting no, saying no, relaxing, dealing with group pressure, dealing with wanting something that isn't mine, making a decision, being honest. Adolescent: making a complaint, answering a complaint, sportsmanship after the game, dealing with embarrassment, dealing with being left out, standing up for a friend, responding to persuasion, responding to failure, dealing with contradictory messages, dealing with an accusation, getting ready for a difficult conversation, dealing with group pressure.)
- *Planning skills:* (Adolescents: deciding on something to do, deciding what caused a problem, setting a goal, deciding on your abilities, gathering information, arranging problems by importance, making a decision, concentrating on a task.