



Executive Functions

A Quick & Helpful Guide

Executive Functions are the skills we need to be successful in school and other areas of life. Below are some quick, helpful tips to improve any areas you may be struggling with.

But First! We have a **short assessment** that allows you to see your strengths and weaknesses when talking about 8 different Executive Functions. **Follow the link below, click on “Student Quiz”** and take a look at your results before we get to our helpful tips to know which areas you want to focus on:

<https://www.kandmcenter.com/executive-functioning-quiz> (Click here first to see which tips are best for you!)

Working Memory

- **Use checklists and write it all down!** It's hard to remember *everything* when we have a bunch of tasks on our plate. Writing down your tasks for the day and week, then checking them off as you accomplish them, is an easy way to forget less... It's also a satisfying feeling to see all those checkmarks! You can try these fun **online sticky notes** as well: <https://note.ly/> ! They are super easy to use and you can pick different colors for different types of tasks.

Organizing Materials

- **Get a planner!** This can be a physical paper planner or an online planner. Like checklists, planners help us remember ALL our tasks, events and classes. They also provide a visual so you can figure out what needs your attention at a glance. You can try this excellent **online planner**: <https://www.mystudylife.com/>

Planning Tasks

- Another use for a planner! You can also use a notebook to write down your tasks for the day or sticky notes. We recommend writing down **the top 5 things you want to accomplish** at the start of each day, and go from there. This can help lessen feelings of being overwhelmed. You

can try his excellent [online planner](https://www.mystudylife.com/) if you don't have a physical one:
<https://www.mystudylife.com/>

Emotional Control

- When stress starts to pile up it's easy to become emotionally overwhelmed, exhausted or frustrated. There's quite a lot of different strategies you can use when you're feeling out of control emotionally, here are a few examples:
 - [Take a couple deep breaths](#). In through your nose, hold for 5 seconds, then breath out through your mouth slowly. Try this guide:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaQed_Xdyvw
 - Take a second to [write down what you are feeling](#). Sometimes journaling about everything we have going on inside our minds and bodies can help lessen their burden.
 - [Put down what's overwhelming you](#), set a 10 minute timer and do something relaxing to give yourself an emotional break. You could watch a funny youtube video, listen to a calming or upbeat song, or read/ listen to an inspiring or funny book. This song never fails to make me feel less stressed: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxsOXOPni0o>

Initiating Work

- Sometimes when we look at everything we have to get done it can seem overwhelming. When we feel overwhelmed it's easy to hide from our work or ignore it. One strategy: [Do what you are dreading first and you will feel WAY better](#). If you get that *one* difficult task out of the way it can lessen a huge amount of stress and help you feel successful. Another strategy: [Only focus on one task at a time](#). We're only human and we can only do so much at one time! Write down ONE task and only let yourself focus on that task until you're done.

Time Management

- [Set a timer!](#) This can be a timer on your phone, a kitchen timer or a timer online. Set the timer for 30 minutes a time and assess how your work is going each time the timer rings. Allow yourself to take breaks in between your working times. You can also try a website, like the one below, that gives you different timing methods, such as a "Pomodoro Method" with work and break times already built in: <https://www.marinaratimer.com/> . [Rest is equally important to](#)

avoid feeling burnt out! If timers are too distracting and you find yourself watching the timer rather than working, listen to your body. If you start to naturally drift away from work, take a break and come back to working after a short period of relaxing.

Monitoring

- Monitoring is the ability to judge your work accurately and the ability to gauge how much time and effort any given assignment is going to take. This can be a tricky thing to do! One way to help improve monitoring ability is take a moment to **mentally estimate the time** a task should take you. **Write it down and set a timer.** Then, once you've reached that time, pause, and look at how far along you are. Are you going too fast, or, perhaps you're thinking too hard and taking too long? You can also check in with your teacher or a friend to see how long they think a task should take. Set up timers to check your progress as you go along so you know if you're putting in too little or too much effort!

Shifting to New Tasks

- When we accomplish one task it's sometimes difficult to switch gears to start another task. **Give yourself a little break in between tasks.** **Set a timer** and let yourself do something fun and relaxing for your brain. Once the timer rings, take a minute to set up your space so it feels **clean and organized**. Make sure you've got the materials you need, a glass of water and a comfortable place to sit. At this point you'll feel refreshed and ready to dive in!

