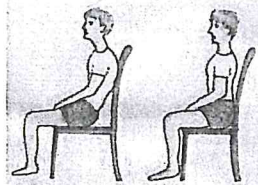




IDEAS TO HELP IMPROVE ATTENTION AND CONCENTRATION

- Reduce environmental distractions to a minimum as much as possible. This includes both auditory and visual distractions.
- Ensure the work area is kept tidy. Prompt the child to pack up tools from one activity before they go on to the next. Encourage them to think what they need for the next activity and put away everything else.
- Present only one task at a time, and give only one set of instructions at a time.
- Arrange appropriate furniture to promote good sitting posture. It is most helpful to sit on a chair with a firm seat, with feet flat on floor and the hips and knees at about 90°. A desk or table should not be excessively high or low.



- Provide multi-sensory information when giving directions e.g. visual cues such as writing instructions on a board as well as saying them verbally.
- Provide external cues to allow the child to monitor themselves and help them focus on an activity for a specific time e.g. alarm clock, egg timer, kitchen timer. Time spent on activities can be built up and timed, and a reward given for increasing concentration time.
- Allow a variety of positions to be assumed during tasks if the child finds it hard to sit still. Try alternative sitting positions, such as floor sitting, lying on the tummy, standing, kneeling to do tasks.
- Vary the sequence of tasks from physical to sedentary.
- Listening games
- Memory games are fun but require concentrations
- Games where they must look carefully e.g. mazes, Where's Wally?
- Get down on the child's level to maintain eye contact.
- Cut out distracting noises for individual sessions, decide how long they can pay attention to a specific task and try to increase a little at a time.
- Have the child sit next to good role models who may offer assistance if required.



- Have the child sit at the front of the class. This definitely will reduce distractions and give a clearer view of any written instructions.
- Using a bookstand for copying from books, placed in front, can sometimes help focus attention.
- Ensure that the child understands the work he has been asked to do and is able to carry out independently.
- Give instructions in small units of information so that they have a greater chance of retaining and acting on it. Make sure that the child is looking at you when speaking to them, if they break visual contact, stop talking and when they look back at you begin speaking where you left off. This may be more effective than continually using verbal prompts.
- 'Talk back' technique is helpful, i.e. child to repeat back the instruction - what they are going to do and what they need to do it etc.
- Extra time may be needed to complete tasks, tests or exams.
- Use a ruler, card or window to highlight specific text.
- Use 'time out' if a child's concentration is starting to wane, allow them to have a break if practical, e.g. send them on an errand.
- Give lots of positive reinforcement and verbal praise for perseverance and success. This is effective for children of all ages and even for older young people who need to know that they are doing well.
- Wherever possible, children should be encouraged to compete against themselves (i.e. concentrating longer or doing a task faster than last time) rather than against other children.
- Look for the activities the child enjoys most and is able to concentrate on for the longest. Encourage development of skills in these areas.



Devised by: UBHT O.T. Dept. 2002 and Children's Occupational Therapy Service, Devon Primary Care Trust, January 2003/revised 2009