

Executive Function Skills Workshop

Thursday, November 14, 2019

Aspen High School Library

5:30 - 7pm



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Executive function and self-regulation skills are the mental processes that enable us to plan, focus attention, remember instructions, and juggle multiple tasks successfully. Just as an air traffic control system at a busy airport safely manages the arrivals and departures of many aircraft on multiple runways, the brain needs this skill set to filter distractions, prioritize tasks, set and achieve goals, and control impulses.

-Center of Developing Child, Harvard University

EXECUTIVE SKILLS: 11 Skill Areas

Skill	Definition
Response Inhibition	The ability to stop one's own behavior at the appropriate time, including stopping actions and thoughts. The flip side of inhibition is impulsivity; if you have weak ability to stop yourself from acting on your impulses, then you are "impulsive."
Working memory	The capacity to hold information in mind for the purpose of completing a task.
Emotional Control	The ability to modulate emotional responses by bringing rational thought to bear on feelings.
Sustained Attention	The capacity to keep paying attention to a situation or task in spite of distractibility, fatigue or boredom.
Task Initiation	The ability to begin a task or activity and to independently generate ideas, responses, or problem-solving strategies.
Planning/prioritization	The ability to manage current and future- oriented task demands.
Organization	The ability to impose order on work, play, and storage spaces.
Time Management	The capacity to estimate how much time one has, how to allocate it, and how to stay within time limits or deadlines.
Goal-Directed Persistence	The capacity to have a goal, to follow through to completion of the goal, and not be put off or distracted by competing interests.
Flexibility	The ability to move freely from one situation to another and to think flexibly in order to respond appropriately to the situation.
Metacognition	The ability to stand back and take a bird's-eye-view of yourself in a situation, to observe how you problem-solve. It also includes self-monitoring and self-evaluative skills.

Source: Dawson and Guare (2004)

Long-Term-Project Planning Form *(cont.)*

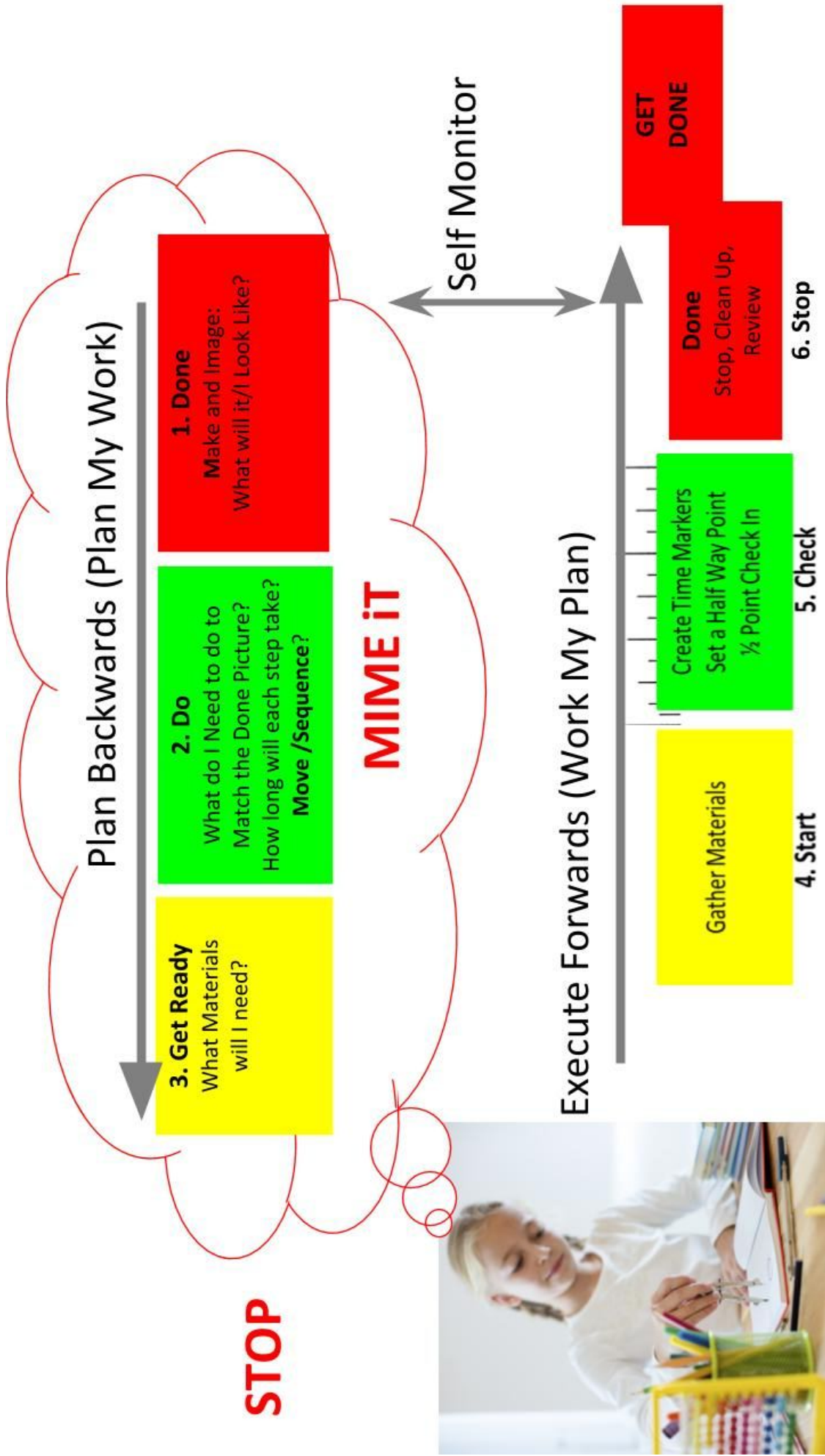
Step 3: Identify Project Tasks and Due Dates

What do I need to do? (List each step in order)	When will I do it?	Check off when done
Step 1:		
Step 2:		
Step 3:		
Step 4:		
Step 5:		
Step 6:		
Step 7:		
Step 8:		
Step 9:		
Step 10:		

Reminder List: Include here any additional tasks or details you need to keep in mind as you work on the project. Cross out or check each one off as you take care of it.

___ 1.
___ 2.
___ 3.
___ 4.
___ 5.
___ 6.
___ 7.
___ 8.
___ 9.
___ 10.

STOP



Daily/Weekly Planner

This Week (Dates: _____)

Marking period goal(s):

Tasks to Be Accomplished This Week

Daily Tasks

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

DAILY REMINDERS (THINGS I CAN'T FORGET!!!)

Weekend Plans

Saturday	Sunday

APPENDIX 7

Daily Coaching Form

Name: _____ Date: _____

LONG-TERM GOAL(S): _____

THE BIG PICTURE: _____

Upcoming tests/quizzes: _____

Subject:	Date:	Long-term assignments: Assignment:	Date due:	Task:	Other responsibilities:
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

TODAY'S PLANS: (include homework assignments as well as any work to be done on long-term projects or studying for tests)

What are you going to do?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

*Use this scale to evaluate: 1—Not well at all; 2—So-so; 3—Average; 4—Very well; 5—Excellent

LOOKING BACK:

Did you do it?	How did you do?*
Yes	1 2 3 4 5
No	1 2 3 4 5
Yes	1 2 3 4 5
No	1 2 3 4 5
Yes	1 2 3 4 5
No	1 2 3 4 5
Yes	1 2 3 4 5
No	1 2 3 4 5

THINGS I NEED TO REMEMBER (check off item when taken care of)

OTHER NOTES:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

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APPENDIX 4

Executive Skills Questionnaire for Students

Name: _____ Date: _____

Big problem	1
Moderate problem	2
Mild problem	3
Slight problem	4
No problem	5

Item	Score
1. I act on impulse.	_____
2. I get in trouble for talking too much in class.	_____
3. I say things without thinking.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
4. I say, "I'll do it later" and then forget about it.	_____
5. I forget homework assignments or forget to bring home needed materials.	_____
6. I lose or misplace belongings such as coats, notebooks, sports equipment, etc.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
7. I get annoyed when homework is too hard or confusing or takes too long to finish.	_____
8. I have a short fuse; am easily frustrated.	_____
9. I get upset easily when things don't go as planned.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
10. I have difficulty paying attention and am easily distracted.	_____
11. I run out of steam before finishing my homework.	_____
12. I have problems sticking with chores until they are done.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
13. I put off homework or chores until the last minute.	_____
14. It's hard for me to put aside fun activities in order to start homework.	_____
15. I need many reminders to start chores.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
16. I have trouble planning for big assignments (knowing what to do first, second, etc.).	_____
17. It's hard for me to set priorities when I have a lot of things to do.	_____
18. I become overwhelmed by long-term projects or big assignments.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____

(cont.)

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Executive Skills Questionnaire for Students (page 2 of 2)

Item	Score
19. My backpack and notebooks are disorganized.	_____
20. My desk or work space at home is a mess.	_____
21. I have trouble keeping my bedroom tidy.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
22. I have a hard time estimating how long it will take to do something (such as homework).	_____
23. I often don't finish homework at night and rush to get it done in school before class.	_____
24. I'm slow getting ready for things (e.g., school or appointments).	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
25. If the first solution to a problem doesn't work, I have trouble thinking of a different one.	_____
26. It's hard for me to deal with changes in plans or routines.	_____
27. I have problems with open-ended homework assignments (e.g., don't know what to write about when given a creative writing assignment).	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____

High School Students Only

28. I don't have effective study strategies.	_____
29. I don't check my work for mistakes even when the stakes are high.	_____
30. I don't evaluate my performance and change tactics in order to increase success.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
31. I can't seem to save up money for a desired object.	_____
32. I don't see the value in earning good grades to achieve a long-term goal.	_____
33. If I should be studying and something fun comes up, it's hard for me to make myself study.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____

KEY			
Items	Executive Skill	Items	Executive Skill
1–3	Response inhibition	4–6	Working memory
7–9	Emotional control	10–12	Sustained attention
13–15	Task initiation	16–18	Planning/prioritization
19–21	Organization	22–24	Time management
25–27	Flexibility	28–30	Metacognition
31–33	Goal-directed persistence		

Your Executive Skills Strengths

Your Executive Skills Weaknesses

APPENDIX 3

Executive Skills Questionnaire—Adult Version

Name: _____ Date: _____

Read each item below and then rate that item based on the extent to which you agree or disagree with how well it describes you. Use the rating scale below to choose the appropriate score. Then add the three scores in each section. Use the key on the last page to determine your executive skills strengths (2–3 highest scores) and weaknesses (2–3 lowest scores).

Strongly disagree	1	Tend to agree	5
Disagree	2	Agree	6
Tend to disagree	3	Strongly agree	7
Neutral	4		

Item	Score
1. I don't jump to conclusions.	_____
2. I think before I speak.	_____
3. I don't take action without having all the facts.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
4. I have a good memory for facts, dates, and details.	_____
5. I am very good at remembering the things I have committed to do.	_____
6. I seldom need reminders to complete tasks.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
7. My emotions seldom get in the way when performing on the job.	_____
8. Little things do not affect me emotionally or distract me from the task at hand.	_____
9. I can defer my personal feelings until after a task has been completed.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
10. No matter what the task, I believe in getting started as soon as possible.	_____
11. Procrastination is usually not a problem for me.	_____
12. I seldom leave tasks to the last minute.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
13. I find it easy to stay focused on my work.	_____
14. Once I start an assignment, I work diligently until it's completed.	_____
15. Even when interrupted, I find it easy to get back and complete the job at hand.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____

(cont.)

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Executive Skills Questionnaire—Adult Version (page 2 of 3)

Item	Score
16. When I plan out my day, I identify priorities and stick to them.	_____
17. When I have a lot to do, I can easily focus on the most important things.	_____
18. I typically break big tasks down into subtasks and timelines.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
19. I am an organized person.	_____
20. It is natural for me to keep my work area neat and organized.	_____
21. I am good at maintaining systems for organizing my work.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
22. At the end of the day, I've usually finished what I set out to do.	_____
23. I am good at estimating how long it takes to do something.	_____
24. I am usually on time for appointments and activities.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
25. I take unexpected events in stride.	_____
26. I easily adjust to changes in plans and priorities.	_____
27. I consider myself to be flexible and adaptive to change.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
28. I routinely evaluate my performance and devise methods for personal improvement.	_____
29. I am able to step back from a situation in order to make objective decisions.	_____
30. I "read" situations well and can adjust my behavior based on the reactions of others.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
31. I think of myself as being driven to meet my goals.	_____
32. I easily give up immediate pleasures to work on long-term goals.	_____
33. I believe in setting and achieving high levels of performance.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____
34. I enjoy working in a highly demanding, fast-paced environment.	_____
35. A certain amount of pressure helps me to perform at my best.	_____
36. Jobs that include a fair degree of unpredictability appeal to me.	_____
TOTAL SCORE:	_____

(cont.)

Executive Skills Questionnaire—Adult Version (page 2 of 3)

KEY			
Items	Executive Skill	Items	Executive Skill
1–3	Response inhibition	4–6	Working memory
7–9	Emotional control	10–12	Task initiation
13–15	Sustained attention	16–18	Planning/prioritization
19–21	Organization	22–24	Time management
25–27	Flexibility	28–30	Metacognition
31–33	Goal-directed persistence	34–36	Stress tolerance

Strongest Skills

Weakest Skills

APPENDIX 9

Daily Homework Planning Form

Name: _____ Date: _____

Subject/assignment	Do I have all the materials?	Do I need help?	Who will help me?	How long will it take?	When will I start?	How long did it take?
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			Start time: Stop time:	
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			Start time: Stop time:	
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			Start time: Stop time:	
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			Start time: Stop time:	
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			Start time: Stop time:	
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			Start time: Stop time:	

Did I follow my plan? Yes ☐ No ☐ If no, what got in the way? _____

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APPENDIX 13

How to Study for Tests

1. Keep a monthly calendar with the student to record any upcoming tests.
2. From 5 days to 1 week before the test, devise a study plan with the student.
3. Using the Menu of Study Strategies, have the student decide which strategies he or she wants to use to study for the test. Make sure the student understands what is involved in each strategy, providing further explanation if necessary (e.g., if the student chooses "Study flash cards," ask him or her to show what the flash cards will look like, giving additional suggestions for flash card design).
4. Have the student make a plan for studying that starts 4 days before the test. Vast psychological research shows that in learning new material, *distributed practice is more effective than massed practice*. In other words, if a student plans to spend 2 hours studying for a test, it is better to break down the study time into smaller segments over a longer period (e.g., 30 minutes a night for four nights) than study for a 2-hour block the night before the test. Research also shows that learning is consolidated through sleep, so getting a good night's sleep before an exam is more beneficial than "cramming" the night before.
5. If the student has problems with sustained attention, it may be easier to use several strategies, each for a short amount of time, than using one strategy for the full study period. You can suggest that the student set a kitchen timer for the length of time for each strategy, and when the bell rings, the student can move on to the next strategy (unless he or she prefers the strategy being used and wants to continue it).
6. After the student takes the test, have him or her complete the posttest evaluation. This builds self-evaluation so that improvements can be made and implemented for the next test.

(cont.)

How to Study for Tests (page 2 of 2)

MENU OF STUDY STRATEGIES

Check off the ones you will use.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Reread text | <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Reread/organize notes | <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Read/recite main points |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Outline text | <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Highlight text | <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Highlight notes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Use study guide | <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Make concept maps | <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Make lists/organize |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Take practice test | <input type="checkbox"/> 11. Quiz myself | <input type="checkbox"/> 12. Have someone else quiz me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 13. Study flash cards | <input type="checkbox"/> 14. Memorize/rehearse | <input type="checkbox"/> 15. Create a "cheat sheet" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 16. Study with friend | <input type="checkbox"/> 17. Study with study group | <input type="checkbox"/> 18. Study session with teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 19. Study with a parent | <input type="checkbox"/> 20. Ask for help | <input type="checkbox"/> 21. Other: _____ |

STUDY PLAN

Date	Day	Which strategies will I use? (write #)	How much time for each strategy?
	4 days before test	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
	3 days before test	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
	2 days before test	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.
	1 day before test	1. 2. 3.	1. 2. 3.

POSTTEST EVALUATION: How did your plan for studying work out? Answer the following questions:

1. What strategies worked best?
2. What strategies were not so helpful?
3. Did you spend enough time studying? Yes No
4. If no, what more should you have done?
5. What will you do differently the next time?

How to Organize Notebooks/Homework

1. With input from the student, decide on what needs to be included in the organizational system: A place to keep unfinished homework? A separate place to keep completed homework? A place to keep papers that need to be filed? Notebooks or binders to keep notes, completed assignments, handouts, and worksheets? A sample list is included in the checklist that follows.
2. Once you've listed all these elements, decide how best to handle them, one at a time. For example, you and the student might decide on a colored folder system, with a different color for completed assignments, unfinished work, and other papers. Or you might decide to have a separate small three-ring binder for each subject or one large binder to handle all subjects.
3. Make a list of the materials the student needs—these might include a three-hole punch, lined and unlined paper, subject dividers, and small Post-it packages the student can use to flag important papers.
4. Ask the student to procure the necessary materials if they are not available at school. It may be necessary to e-mail the student's parents to ensure that the materials are obtained.
5. Set up the notebooks and folders, labeling everything clearly.
6. Help the student maintain the system over time. This generally means a daily check-in, which might include having the student take out the folders for completed assignments, unfinished work, and material to be filed. Have the student make a decision about each piece of material and where it should go.

(cont.)

SETTING UP A NOTEBOOK/HOMEWORK MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

System element	What will you use?	Got it (✓)
Place for unfinished homework		
Place for completed assignments		
Place to keep materials for later filing		
Notebooks or binder(s) for each subject		
Other things you might need: 1. 2. 3. 4.		

MAINTAINING A NOTEBOOK/HOMEWORK MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Task	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Weekend
Clean out "to be filed" folder.					
Go through notebooks and books for other loose papers and file them.					
Place all assignments (both finished and unfinished) in appropriate places.					

Executive Skills Tip Sheets

This sheet gives definitions of each executive skill included in the Executive Skills Problem Checklist, along with tips and things you can say to yourself to get better at that skill. As you read through the suggestions, circle or highlight those ideas that you think might work for you.

Response Inhibition—being able to control your impulses so that you can think before you act, resist peer pressure, and make good choices (for example, choosing to study rather than do more appealing activities).

Tips	Self-Talk*
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be aware of your unique temptations and make a plan to avoid them.• Ask yourself, “Good choice or bad choice?”• Practice waiting (for example, add a little more time or work before giving yourself the reward).• Other strategies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First work, then play.• Learn from your mistakes.• Stop and think.• Your own idea:

Working Memory—being able to keep in mind everything you have to remember—and remembering what worked the last time.

Tips	Self-Talk
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get teachers’ permission to e-mail assignments.• Do all work on iPad or tablet so it’s always with you.• Use colored markers to highlight instructions (use different colors to signal different things, such as green for the most important, red for things you might be likely to forget).• Set reminders with time and sound cue on your smartphone.• Make checklists.• Other strategies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Am I forgetting anything?• Check your list.• Check your agenda.• Your own idea:

*Self-talk means giving yourself instructions, words of encouragement, or prompts to remind you what you’re working on and what your goal is.

Executive Skills Tip Sheets (cont.)

Emotional Control—being able to manage your feelings so they don't get in the way of getting work done or meeting goals.

Tips	Self-Talk
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Label the feeling and let it go.• When you can, walk away from the upsetting situation, get ahold of yourself, and come back.• Look into learning meditation techniques.• Pat yourself on the back when you stay cool.• Other strategies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take 10.• Take deep breaths.• This, too, shall pass.• Big deal or little deal?• Your own idea:

Sustained Attention—staying on task, getting things done in the time you've given yourself to do them, even if you're tired, bored, or have more appealing distractions.

Tips	Self-Talk
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set realistic work goals and stick to them.• Take planned breaks and get back to work on schedule.• Gather all necessary materials before beginning a task.• Build in rewards for completing tasks.• Other strategies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You can't walk away from this.• Don't quit now.• Back to work.• First work, then play.• Your own idea:

Task Initiation—being able to make yourself start a task. If you've seen yourself getting closer to your goal, this is the first step on that path. If you don't take this step, you can't get closer.

Tips	Self-Talk
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pick the task (make it small).• Pick the start time.• Pick the minimum work time.• Pick the cue to start.• Other strategies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Just do it.• Take baby steps.• Start small.• Your own idea:

Executive Skills Tip Sheets (cont.)

Flexibility—the ability to adapt to unexpected events and to come up with multiple solutions to problems.

Tips

- Notice the physical warning signs of inflexibility (muscle tightness, breathing changes) and ask yourself if you can find a way to be flexible.
- Whenever you have to make a decision about something, ask yourself, "What could go wrong and what's Plan B if this doesn't work?"
- **Other strategies:**

Self-Talk

- Big deal or little deal?
- What are your options?
- What's Plan B?
- Is there another way to think about this?
- **Your own idea:**

Planning/Prioritization—planning is your road map, your GPS. When you have a good plan, you know all the turns you have to make and how to get past the roadblocks along the way. You also know how to focus on what's most important and let the little things go.

Tips

- Use the planning forms in this agenda (long-term projects; test study plan).
- Ask teachers for a preview of a lecture or to tell you what are the most important concepts to focus on when studying for tests. (Teachers who provide study guides for tests make this easy!)
- When you have written instructions for homework assignments, underline and number each instruction that's an *action*.
- **Other strategies:**

Self-Talk

- What's your destination?
- Your plan will be a built-in GPS to get there.
- Map the route.
- What comes first, next, and next, and what do you need to give up to get there?
- First things first.
- **Your own idea:**

Organization—having a system for keeping track of information and materials, especially the things you need every day (homework, notebooks, keys, phone, sports equipment, etc.)—putting everything in its place, so when you look for it, it's there.

Tips

- Use laptop or iPad for managing information/assignments/class notes.
- Use a note organizer app such as OneNote or Evernote.
- Spend five minutes every day staying organized.
- **Other strategies:**

Self-Talk

- A place for everything and everything in its place.
- Do you have it together?
- **Your own idea:**

Executive Skills Tip Sheets (cont.)

Time management—Each day is a 24-hour shot clock. Time management allows you to manage the tug of war between what you want to do, what you need to do, and what others ask you to do.

Tips	Self-Talk
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use this planner to make daily plans.• Estimate how long a task will take—and check to see if you were right.• Break homework down into short time segments. (Pomodoro is a smartphone app that helps you do that.)• Other strategies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How much time do you have?• Are you on track?• What you need to do comes before what you want to do.• Honestly, how long will it really take?• Each day is like a shot clock in a game.• Your own idea:

Goal-Directed Persistence—This is a giant version of sustained attention: You have a goal, and you're determined to get there. What you do on a day-to-day basis gets you to that goal, and keeping this in mind helps you connect immediate actions and consequences with other ones down the road.

Tips	Self-Talk
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make daily study plans to build a sense of accomplishment.• Set <i>any</i> goal related to schoolwork, and if the goal isn't met, make it smaller, more attainable.• Place a picture of your goal in a prominent place to remind you what you're working on.• Other strategies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are you working on?• Are you on track?• Don't give up now.• Keep your eye on the prize.• Will this help you get to your goal?• Your own idea:

Metacognition—What did I do + why did I do it = what will I do the next time? Metacognition is your brain's life lesson machine. It allows you to look at your past actions and behaviors, analyze them, and use that information to make more informed decisions about how to act in the future.

Tips	Self-Talk
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask teachers for a test study guide.• Create error-monitoring checklists (for example, a proofreading checklist).• Create your own study packets for tests by pulling together all important material and stapling it together with a cover.• Ask four self-monitoring questions: "What is my problem?" "What is my plan?" "Am I following my plan?" "How did I do?"• Other strategies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What's the big picture?• How are you doing?• What worked for you before?• What didn't?• What do you need or want for a grade?• Have you studied enough to get it?• Your own idea: