

Simple Teacher Techniques For Impulsive & Distractable Students

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Position Statement: Non-punitive cueing of positive, desired behaviors redirects 90% of behavior if the schoolwork itself is developmentally appropriate, of appropriate length and difficulty, and interspersed with physical movement and change of activities. Punishment is not necessary to refocus most behaviors if these criteria are met. Sustained, individual seatwork should never be a substitute for a rich menu of projects, collaborative work groups, discussions and other more engaging activities. Seatwork is, however, a viable method of practicing many basic skills, producing essays and other individual written products for one's portfolio, etc. For learners with difficulties involving impulsivity and distractibility, behavior support techniques and structure may be necessary to facilitate on-task behaviors when the student's personal choice cannot be exerted.

Enhancing On-task Behaviors During Independent Work, or When Working in Independent Collaborative Groups

Refocusing Off-task Behavior with Positive Verbal Cueing

*** Turtle Technique (for younger students)**

"Ok, boys and girls: Turtle! Pull in your arms, pull in your legs, ask yourself your 3 questions: Where am I? Where should I be? What **should** I be doing? Now: pull out your arms and legs and put them in the right places!" (With practice, eventually either a gesture, the spoken word, "Turtle!" or holding up a toy turtle will cue the behavior from a group or from an identified individual)

*** Radio Station Tuning (for older students)**

"I think I'm getting static! Focus in, fine-tune those dials! Ask yourself? What exactly am I listening to? What is the main channel I'm tuning in on here?" (With practice, eventually either a gesture, or the spoken words, "Tune that radio!" will cue the behavior from a group or from an identified individual)

Refocus with Verbal Cueing and Icons/Symbols

*** Point to the Rules You Are Following**

Have the student(s) point to the strip of icons/words that list the desired behaviors (In seat/Doing Assigned Work/Friendly Talking/Hands & Feet, etc.) being followed. The strips are attached to a work folder or on the desk or work surface.

*** Seatwork Time: Self-Recorded Surprise Points**

Have the students give themselves "points" on the monitoring sheet at their desk for each behavior they are following when a signal is given. Walk around and give an additional bonus point for honesty (i.e., I get a point for admitting I was off task) Variation: If you have a money-system, have the students give themselves "pay" for their rule-following behavior.

* **Green/Yellow/Red Behavior**

Have a green card with green behavior, yellow with yellow behavior, red with red behavior. Cards can be on the desks or prominently hanging from the ceiling via string and paper clip. Point to the card, or ask the students to read and check their behaviors against the standard. Typical rules may include:

Green: Talk about anything with anybody at a comfortable voice level. Work on anything/choose any activity. Sit anywhere.

Typical for free-time activities

Yellow: Be productive. Talk only with the person(s) next to you. Talk only about what you are working on. Your talk should help you, but not interfere with your classmate's work.

Typical for independent seatwork activities after instruction.

Red: No talking. Raise your hand and wait for permission to talk if necessary. Be patient. Yellow and Green are Coming!

Typical for very brief assignments (the first 3-4 problems when the teacher wants to see who understands and who does not) and of very brief duration (5-10 minutes). Also for standardized testing, spelling tests, quizzes of longer duration.

Refocusing Physically Active Learners Having Difficulty With Body Motions

* **Occasionally Allow Full-Body or Partial Body Support**

When squirmy behavior is temporarily interfering with output, allow the student to work lying on the floor. Alternatively, allow the student to sit on the chair "backwards", straddling the chair with the chairback up against the student's chest, supporting the upper body. The student then leans forward to work.

* **Recognize that body movement may actually HELP the student maintain focus. Modify only if interfering with, distracting, or irritating others**

If the student is moving his/her leg up and down repeatedly and this is difficult for someone to bear, suggest the movement be transferred to a less visible location such as touching one's index finger on one's thumb repeatedly.

Participation in Large & Small Groups

Hint: Using gestural cues in place of verbal prompts eliminates the need of impulsive/distractible students to screen "important verbal information in the lesson" from "redundant messages I can ignore." It also reduces the "verbal overload" students experience. By requiring the following of gestural cues, the teacher ends up with more students visually attending to a lesson.

*** Choral Responding**

Use a gestural cue to symbolize "get ready," such as a raised fist. Use a second gestural cue to symbolize "everyone verbally answer the question," such as an open palm. Young children may do the hand motions too.

*** Every Pupil Active Responding**

1. Use pre-made response cards. (Student assistants and parents who want to help at home can help prepare classroom sets for different lessons.) Have the students select their response (use a gestural cue to signal "find" the answer), then TOGETHER hold up their answer(s) in response to a second cue to "show."
2. Use write on slates/wipe off cards. Gesturally cue "prepare your answer(s)," "give your answer(s)" as above.

*** Cross Your Finger Technique**

Students cross their fingers as a "cue" they have something to say while awaiting their conversational turn. This is useful in social groups, and even for adults with impulsivity. This technique teaches impulse control, teaches others to finish their turn quickly, and teaches group members patience with the student who is striving to wait his/her turn.