

Friendly Work Station

Visual- Create a desk or table space that is free from distractions.

- away from windows if possible
- against the wall or a visual screen (cardboard trifold)
- have available only what is needed, reduce clutter
- consider lighting- need adequate light to work
- create a visual schedule- list of tasks with break at end. Have student check off tasks completed.
- use a visual timer for work

Auditory- Reduce noise in the learning space

- find a quiet room or space to work
- use headphones/earbuds
- play music in background or on headphones, nature sounds or classical music is relaxing/organizing

Tactile- Provide items to touch

- provide fidgets, or small items to manipulate with fingers to increase focus on task. Best used when listening to stories or looking at the screen. (putty, squeeze ball, smooth rock or shell. Pick one to use.
- be aware of room temperature- cool is best. Too warm can make a student sleepy. Use a heavy blanket or stuffed animal in lap for calming.

Movement- Provide alternative seating and movement breaks

- sit on a cushion or therapy/yoga ball
- stand as an option
- work for 20 min-> take a movement break
- remember to have feet planted on the floor and the table at the right height (elbows, hips, knees bent to 90 degrees when sitting)

Oral input- provide snacks to increase alertness/for calming

- crunching snacks increase alertness- pretzels, chips, popcorn
- chewy snacks are calming-fruit leather
- sugar free gum- can help focus during difficult tasks such as writing
- water bottle with straw- increases alertness and calms the nervous system



NOT GOOD
NO SUPPORT
CHAIR TOO BIG

GETTING THERE



WE MADE IT...
FEET SUPPORTED, 2 PILLOWS FOR
ENOUGH BACK SUPPORT
HEAD IN NEUTRAL

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ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL SITTING

PRONE (TUMMY)
IS A FAVORITE
ALLOWS CHILD TO GET
OUT OF THAT FLEXION
PATTERN THE CHAIR
CREATES
BEST WAY FOR PROVIDING
PROPRIOCEPTIVE INPUT
AND UPPER BODY
STRENGTHENING



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TALL-KNEEL OR HALF-KNEEL

BEST WAY
TO ENGAGE
CORE!



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COMPUTER NOT
AT EYE LEVEL
MEANS CHILD'S
NECK IS FLEXED
THE ENTIRE TIME

ELEVATE
COMPUTER SO
NECK IS IN
NEUTRAL POSITION



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USE A PEANUT OR THERAPY BALL

GREAT FOR
KIDDOS WHO
LIKE TO MOVE
OR WHEN KIDS
START TO GET
RESTLESS AND
TIRED OF
SITTING STILL



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CHAIR TOO BIG
DOES NOT ALLOW FOR
PROPER SEATING
POSTURE

STOOL BEHIND BACK
STOOL FOR FOOT
SUPPORT
ALLOWS FOR
90/90/90 POSITION



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PIC•COLLAGE

Checklist for Sitting Position for Handwriting



- Feet flat on the floor.
- Table at elbow height.
- Hips, knees and ankles at 90°.

Correcting a Poor Sitting Position

- Make use of a firm cushion if the table is too high.
- Use foot blocks or an old telephone directory if the child's feet do not touch the floor.



<https://thehappyhandwriter.co.za> ©bunty mcdougall, occupational therapist

Fidgets

I think of a fidget as any small item or toy that helps keep one's hands busy and helps them focus while completing an activity. Almost anything can be a sensory fidget. Even basic household items or small party favor toys can make great fidgets. You can make your own fidgets, or buy them from catalogs, online or even in local stores such as a party store, a craft store, or the dollar store.

A Toy or a Tool?

I have found fidgets to be a very helpful tool for me for many years. When I was much younger, I was taught that fidgets were to be used as a tool, and not like a toy. A tool is something that can help one focus, while a toy can distract both the individual playing with the fidget and others around them. This can be a hard thing for an individual to understand as some of the best fidgets that I have found are indeed toys, but they make great tools.

Finding the Right Fidget

It is important to remember that a person's needs, wants and preferences with regards to fidgets can change over time. A fidget your child or student likes and finds helpful one day, may be distracting the next. Be sure to have a wide variety of fidgets available and allow your child to choose their own. Different types of fidgets meet different sensory needs, so it depends on what movement the individual is seeking (twisting, squeezing, rubbing, bending, pulling etc.). Make sure that sensory fidgets are available to the child throughout their school day, at home, and while they are out in the community.

Ideas for Fidgets

Modeling Clay and similar compounds that make great fidgets:

- Theraputty
- Play-Doh
- PlayFoam/Floam
- Silly Putty
- Slime
- Gak
- Kneadable Erasers
- Model Magic
- Modeling Clay
- Bubber

You can also find recipes online to make your own play dough, flubber, gak, oobleck, etc.

Toys that make great fidgets:

- Bendable toys
- Small figurines
- Porcupine balls
- Slinkys (come in a variety of sizes, shapes, and colors)
- Puffer balls
- Stretchy animals
- Tangle toys
- a variety of balls and toys filled with different things that are meant to be squeezed: e.g., Gel squeeze balls, Pull and stretch bounce balls, Mesh squishy balls, Bead stress balls (Note, you can make your own fidget using a balloon and flour.)
- Stress balls
- Rubber band balls
- and so much more!

Everyday items that make great fidgets:

- Hair rubber bands
- Office rubber bands
- Keychains that can be twisted
- Paper clips
- Pipe cleaners
- Rubber wristbands
- and so much more!

Fidget Buying Tips

- Check the dollar discount sections in stores for great fidget items.
- Buy multiples of a fidget your child or student really likes, just in case the beloved fidget gets lost, or misplaced. This is especially true for very small fidget items that can easily fall out of one's purse, backpack, pocket or hands.

Read more at <http://special-ism.com/fidgets/#HLDCWA1fRqMy0sBJ.99>

Desktop Helper:

Tools for Focus!

- **1 item at a time.**
- **Make no noise (no tapping it, no clicking it).**
- **Must not distract your neighbor, your teacher, or yourself.**
- **If it's not helping you focus, put it away. It may not be right for you that day.**



Fine Motor Development Activities

To Strengthen the Arm, Hand, and Finger Muscles:

- Play with **play dough, clay or silly putty**. Use fingers to push, pull, flatten, roll and sculpt into various shapes. Try burying pennies, beads, or other small toys in the putty for a game of hide and seek.
- Place **clothes pins** around cardboard cutouts, on a box or can. Use clothes pins, chip clips to hang art projects for display, or create books by clipping pages of artwork together.
- Play with **squeeze toys** such as air rockets or stress balls. Use spray bottles to mist plants or spray letters or numbers on the sidewalk.
- Work on **vertical surfaces**, tape paper to a wall for drawing and writing.
- **Wheelbarrow walk** with a friend or over a large exercise ball. See if you can balance on one hand to pick up items from the floor or complete a puzzle in this position.
- Imitate your favorite critters using **animal walks**. Try bear, crab, seal, and inch worm walks.
- **Crawl** inside tunnels and under pillows.
- Side-sit and bear weight on your arms or lay **on your tummy propped** on your elbows while playing board games or doing puzzles.
- Go for a ride on a **scooter board** on your tummy and propel yourself using your arms. Don't let your feet drag on the ground.
- Get outside and play at a park or school **playground**. Climb on jungle gyms, monkey bars, and rock walls, or swing on a trapeze.
- Get involved in sports that will help build strong muscles: **swimming, gymnastics, bowling, or tennis**.

To Refine Grasping Patterns and Finger Coordination:

- **Store toys in** a variety of **containers** including Zip-lock bags, Tupperware, and plastic bottles or jars with twist off lids to incorporate fine motor practice into daily play.
- Play **card games** like Uno and Go Fish with friends and see if you can hold all your cards while you play. Practice shuffling and dealing the cards one at a time.
- Start a **wind-up toy** collection. Test your toys by racing them on different surfaces to see which one moves the fastest, travels the farthest or is best at staying on track.
- Use your fingers to place **coins or buttons** in a piggy bank.
- Play with **construction toys** with interlocking parts like **Legos, Mr. Potato Head**, and miniature snap beads. The smaller the toy the bigger the challenge.

- Pick up small items with **tweezers, tongs, strawberry hullers** or adaptive chopsticks and place them into containers.
- Use **broken crayons** or chalk to create works of art, or try painting using a small piece of sponge to dab and spread the paint.
- **String beads, cut up straws, cheerios**, paper clips or dried pasta to make necklaces, lace your shoes or play with lacing cards.
- Place **pipe cleaners or toothpicks** into the holes of an overturned colander or make designs in clay, play-dough or Gak, or make a porcupine with toothpicks in clay.
- Play **string games** like Jacob's ladders or Cat's cradle with loops of yarn or shoe strings.
- **Practice snaps, zippers and buttons.**
- Use **school tools** like **scissors, a tape dispenser, hole punch, or stapler.**
- Enjoy activity books with **dot-to-dot pictures, mazes, coloring, and find the hidden picture.**

Do Finger Gymnastics:

Use a Pencil:

- Do finger batons-twirling the pencil around between your thumb, index and middle fingers.
- Climb the pencil from point to eraser and back using only your thumb, index and middle finger.
- Roll the pencil from your knuckles to your finger-tips and back again.

Squirreling with Pennies or m & m's:

- Put 5 pennies in the palm of one hand then use your thumb to work one penny at a time to your finger tips, then use your thumb, index and middle finger to place the pennies into a container
- Place 3-5 raisins or m & m's into the palm of one hand then use your thumb to push one raisin at a time to your finger tips to put into your mouth.

Use Clay or Playdough:

- Poke individual fingers into the clay to work on finger isolation.
- Make snakes by rolling clay between the 2 hands or on a table surface.
- Make small balls and place them in the palm of one hand then using your thumb of the same hand roll one ball out to your fingertips, then put the ball into a cup or bag, repeat with the other clay balls one at a time to work on squirreling.
- Place a small ball of clay on the end of each finger, first with palms up and then with palms down and do finger push-ups with each finger.
- Smash small balls of clay with finger tips

Size of the Problem:

Traffic light analogy; It can be hard for children to differentiate problems they may face. This analogy helps children to decipher between a big deal (get adult help) vs a little deal (solve yourself/with peers). Simplistic categorizing of problems can allow for children to quickly categorize a problem to match their response so they can get on with their day and you as well (with less interruptions). This also helps with their social skills and staying focused online.

Red Light = Stop! These are big deal problems, with greater sized reactions and an adult needs to be notified. Examples, a fight, a fire, someone is getting hurt.

Yellow Light = Slow Down! These problems require the child to slow down and think of a solution before solving on their own or with help. Examples, don't have the supplies needed for Zoom, a sibling was mean to them.













Green Light = GO! Small problem, kids can solve on own and can get to be good at it! Put the problem back on them if they come to you for help. "What can you do to fix it?" Examples, didn't get color they wanted, was put in a breakout room in Zoom without any friends, sibling brushed up against them.

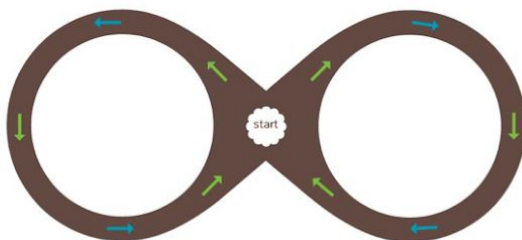
- Go over with your child(ren) different examples of a Green, Yellow and Red problem. Work together on what an appropriate solution would be, while asking for their input. Use examples that occur in your house. This helps personalize it, allowing for better retention of the problems.
- Use yourself as an example as real time problems for you arise. This also helps personalize it.
- When your child(ren) comes to you with what seems like a problem they should be able solve themselves, put it back on them. Ask them, "what would you do if I wasn't available to help you right now?"
- Consistency and positive reinforcement will help build the confidence they need to start categorizing their problems and solving more on their own!

Flexible vs. Stuck thinking Visual

Be flexible



 <p>BREATHE</p>	 <p>BREATHE</p>	 <p>BREATHE</p>	 <p>Say, OK</p>
 <p>Maybe next time.</p>	 <p>I need a break.</p>	 <p>I need help.</p>	 <p>Please stop</p>
 <p>Share and take turns.</p>	 <p>Get back On-Target</p>	 <p>Self-Talk</p>	 <p>Fidget</p>




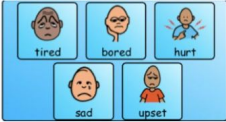





Blank Work Checklist - list out each task to be completed and have the reward at the bottom. The more specific you are with the task the easier it will be for your child to understand the expectations.

<input type="checkbox"/> TASK !
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>
REWARD

Sticker Chart - Put the goal at the top:

Ex. complete task, follow directions, write a sentence, etc. Everytime your child completes the listed goal they earn a sticker. Once the chart is complete they earn a reward.

Break Chart

<p>I'm in the Yellow or Blue zone.</p>			
			
			
<p>Water</p> 	<p>Jump/Move</p> 	<p>Eat</p> 	<p>Breathe</p> 
<p>Count</p> <p>1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10</p>		<p>Say, OK</p> 	
<p>Now I'm in the Green zone.</p>			
<p>Back to Zoom</p>			

Ways to give your child control:

- Choose where to work
- What to write with - pen, pencil, marker, crayon
- Order in which they complete work
- Color of paper to write on
- What book to read
- How long they work, "Do you want to work for 10 minutes or 12 minutes?"
- Let them set the timer
- They cross off the work completed on the list
- They pick visuals to add to any list or chart you make together
- Create their own visual schedule

Other ways to help your child feel in control:

PREP, PREP, PREP!

- Review daily schedule
- Anticipate difficult times and put support in place (visual, timer, break menu)
- Discuss changes in their day or schedule
- **Provide visuals**

The more your child knows, the more your child feels in control!

How to help your child through a tantrum, upset, outburst:

- VALIDATE EMOTION:
 - “I can see you are upset, I get upset too.”
 - “I can see you are frustrated. It is frustrating when you don’t understand.”
- SET BOUNDARY:
 - “It’s ok to be upset, but it’s not ok to rip up your paper.”
 - “It’s ok to cry, but it’s not ok to yell at me.”
 - “It’s ok to be silly, but you still need to get your work done.”
- OFFER SUPPORT:
 - “I’m here if you need me.”
 - “I’m here if you need a hug.”
 - “Let me know how I can help.”

At this point their brain is in flight, fight or freeze. Don’t try to teach anything new when they are upset. Let them be and experience the emotional they are feeling. Once calm, discuss and teach strategies.

Brain Research and Mindfulness

Process Praise in Student Work

Process praise is used to describe the reason for the praise so they are more apt to repeat good strategies on future tasks. Be specific.

Examples:

You worked to be more accurate in your reading by carefully sounding out those difficult words.

I like how you used different math strategies on that problem until you got it.

It was a long assignment but you persisted by staying at your desk and keeping your focus on the task.

Use Mindful Language in Discipline:

This makes it educational versus telling them what not to do.

Instead of saying:	Use mindful language by saying:
Be quiet!	The noise you are making is bothering me.
Close your mouth when chewing.	Chewing with your mouth closed is the polite and expected thing to do.
Stop interrupting me!	I like it when you wait your turn to speak.

You Can Reset Your Brain By Changing Your Thinking

Instead of frequently telling children the things they need to improve on, it's important to give attention to what they already do well.

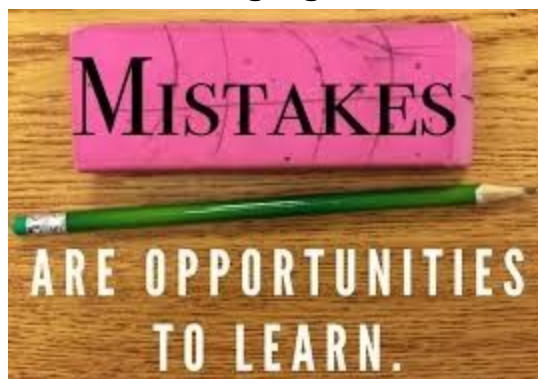
This type of thinking provides the building blocks that enable them to develop the confidence needed to take on more difficult skills.

Helpful words to encourage your child to use:

- I can't do this yet or not yet
- Focus time on strengths, "I can add and subtract."
- Teach other ways to vent frustration instead of saying, "I'm not good at math." Instead they can be coached to think, "I know **this is hard for me so I may need to take a break while working on this.**"

Proactive Strategies to Reset the Brain's Hard Drive

- **Get plenty of sleep**
- **Exercise/movement breaks**
- **Drink water throughout the day**
- **Eating nutritious foods**
- **Relaxing by closing their eyes, observing stressors as little clouds, acknowledge them and then blow them away**
- **Focus on a positive phrase (self-talk) "I can do this!" "I will get better everyday."**
- **Smile**
- **Humor (especially big belly laughs) gives us those feel good endorphins**
- **Enjoying positive interactions with family or friends**
- **Acknowledging that mistakes help us learn (celebrate them)**



Turn Taking

Turn taking takes more than just equal number of turns to make it a balanced conversation.

Quality vs. Quantity:

Topics-

Ideally choosing a topic that is mutual (something that is in common or a shared experience) or broad enough that all parties can contribute (videogames vs. Minecraft or Sports vs. hockey)

When talking about a non-mutual topic make sure to limit the length of the conversation and to allow others to switch topics when natural.

Stay on topic, introduce a topic and allow a few turns by making comments or questions before moving on. Let everyone in the group participate in a topic before moving on.

Types of turns-

Questions versus comments: Conversations should include both questions and comments.

Variety-

Use a variety of questions: there is asking for facts versus wondering questions. Asking for facts may involve Wh- Questions whereas wondering questions as for opinions, experiences and personal insights. If someone asks a question, you can repeat the same question back or say "How about you?"

Use a variety of comments: there are comments for agreeing ("me too!"), acknowledging ("cool") or making connections ("I don't play soccer now but I used too").

Body language-

When having a conversation, you turn your body to the speaker. On Zoom you have more need for pausing and may need to use their name when asking a specific person, a question or getting their attention.

Ideas for at home:

-Talk about Talking. Talk about these concepts, draw awareness and add supports when needed. Have a child that goes overboard talking about their latest videogame conquest? Give them a signal that they are going over their time by pointing to you watch. Have a child that doesn't allow for pausing? Hold up the palm of your hand like a stop to give them a cue.

-Practice. Make time to have conversations: at dinner, in the car, before bedtime. Practice the right way and the wrong way so you can see how both feel. Label as you go- "that was a great wondering question" or "oops you interrupted me and forgot to wait for a pause". Give them a chance to "correct" you.

-Use visuals. Find ways to make turns more visual.

- Give each person a color token or piece of paper and place it in the middle for each turn- see if the colors are equal at the end.
- Use a bullseye to represent "on target" turns versus "off topic" turns.



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- Make a paperchain or use post-its to show how long you can keep the conversation going. Can also think of it like a road with a car. Keep the conversation going or stop, on-topic means you are staying on the road.
- Use a ball to toss for each turn to increase eye contact and body language. Make sure the person is "ready" to catch the ball (message.) Talk about ways to get someone's attention (i.e. say their name, wait until body is turned.)

-Make it fun! Use a game that has turns or balance to do while you practice.