



21 Ways to Help Kids With ADD/ADHD



Get Organized

1. **Create and write down a schedule.** This should be clear and easily understood. It is often most useful if you and your child create the schedule together. This will increase understanding and investment in the process. It is also important to post the schedule where it can be seen easily by you and your child.



2. **Use a Daily School Report Card.** We are big fans of this idea, and have found such cards to work very well. You can create a simple half-page form that can be completed each day by your child's teacher. This form will give you feedback about how your child did at school that day. It should have a place for the child to write in homework assignments, and a place for the teacher to let you know if any assignments are overdue. This Daily School Report Card system gives you and your child nearly immediate feedback every day. When we let days or weeks go by without this type of school communication, very valuable time can be lost. Remember the old expression, "You can't un-ring the bell."



3. **Create a useful way for your child to carry papers around at school and between school and home.** Given that you know your child very well, sit down with him or her and develop a notebook/backpack system. Some kids work better with:

- A separate notebook for each subject;
- A large notebook with different pockets for each subject;
- Accordion files.

Simply try out different systems until you find the one that works best for your child.



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- 4. Create a good space for your child to do homework.** Make sure you remove distracting things (like TV) and that the homework spot is not in a high-traffic area. Stock the homework place with all the tools necessary to do the work and keep it stocked throughout the school year. You wouldn't ask a carpenter to build without making sure all the tools were available, would you?



- 5. Have extra supplies.** Try not to rely on your child to bring home all the pencils and notebook papers he or she may need. Avoid the stress of having to "hunt up" supplies when your child sits down to do homework. Remember that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!



- 6. Create a regular time for homework.** We are also big fans of what we call Read and Study Time. This is a time when the child goes to the homework location each day and sits and does homework. If no homework has been assigned that day, the child simply reads. This creates a structured routine and will remove much of the motivation for trying to get out of doing homework. We usually include this in our Point Charts, as you can see in the example Point Chart in Chapter 2.



- 7. Create a filing system.** Kids with ADD/ADHD often appear to be lost in a sea of clutter! Create places for kids to put papers and supplies when they are no longer needed. Some parents suggest giving kids their own small filing cabinet to use when creating a filing system. Small plastic filing boxes can also be a colorful and useful approach: Try using different colors for different subjects and/or different projects.





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8. **Pack everything away when homework is complete.** Have the child put all supplies away and place all items needed for the next school day in the backpack or book bag. This will help your child to avoid the pitfalls of procrastination – like completing homework only to forget to take it to school and turn it in!



9. **Label things.** Have your child get into the habit of labeling papers and homework assignments (with the date and subject). This will be very helpful when you and your child are trying to sort and file!



10. **Create a homework log.** This could be a simple list of assignments, their due dates, and a place for the child, teacher and parent to sign off after the homework is completed/turned in. This will help kids, parents and teachers keep in touch on a daily basis, and help prevent unpleasant surprises (like overdue projects)!



11. **Break large projects down into a series of small projects – and schedule them!** Large projects often present serious minefields for kids with ADD/ADHD. Breaking projects down into smaller, “doable” subparts will prove very helpful to your child and should reduce the frustration of an overwhelming project.



12. **When you are helping your child, or giving your child directions, have her or him repeat them to you to make sure they understand.** Kids often nod when adults pause in their talking, or say “OK” when we stop talking even when they have not processed everything we have said. Having kids repeat the instructions ensures that they know what is expected of them.



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- 13. Check the teacher's Web site.** Many teachers today have their own Web sites where they list things like homework and due dates. These can be very useful to review regularly with your child. Log in and read the Web site with your child and together update schedules, projects and files as needed. One of the best teacher sites around is run by a 5th grade teacher in Dr. Al's local area. Check it out at www.learningforkids.com.



- 14. Call the homework hotline.** Many schools have homework hotlines where parents can hear a recording about the assignments and projects of the day. If your school has one, call it with your child each and every day.



- 15. Use graphic organizers.** These can be simple things such as timelines, project maps, checklists and decision trees (diagrams). Create these with your child and agree on their meaning and their uses. Such aids allow kids to map their thoughts and to visually see the upcoming assignments.



- 16. Have your child organize their files on a computer.** The computer can be a very useful organizational tool if used correctly. Help your child develop a system for keeping track of projects and related computer files.



- 17. Use visual prompts.** Post noticeable reminders in key places like your child's desk or school locker. Placing them on the refrigerator door can be helpful to you as well as your child. Use displays like banners, charts or colorful pie graphs. Change the form of the reminders to keep them interesting. Put pictures on the outsides of notebooks to show what the subject is.





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- 18. Use Point Charts to target behavioral goals.** We discussed these in some detail in Chapter 2. Remember a very good way to prompt a child to be organized is to remind him or her to “Go check your Point Chart!”



- 19. Encourage the use of alternative tools.** This could be something as simple as having your child explore using a computer to type assignments rather than writing everything by hand. Kids with ADD/ADHD often have terrible handwriting and feel very frustrated when their hands cannot keep up with their thoughts! Allow older students to take notes at school with a laptop, or to record teachers with a microcassette recorder.



- 20. Develop time management strategies.** Time management is a very difficult task for kids with ADD/ADHD. Encourage the use of such tools as watches or timers. Many watches have vibrating alarms that can be used throughout the day in ways that won't disturb others.



- 21. Encourage and praise your child for their efforts!**

Remember to encourage them for trying – even when they fail. We are all works in progress and we want to instill in kids the motivation to continue to try even when things are difficult!



Once you have reviewed these suggestions, think about the ones that might work best for your child and give them a try.