

Planning and Organisation

About planning and organisation

Some children may need support in learning planning and organisation skills. This may include providing support in breaking a task down, working out what materials they will need, and planning their response, as well as organising and managing their time. They may require extra support to get started on a task and to complete a task within a set period of time. Some children may need help to remember to bring their homework to or from school and support with organising their desks or bags and keeping track of their belongings.

Evidence-based strategies

Consider how you communicate

- **Simplify instructions and learning.** Consider breaking down big tasks into smaller ones. For example, give step-by-step instructions or visual instructions (i.e. pictures). It may be helpful to check their understanding before moving on to the next step or activity. For example, ask them to repeat instructions or answer questions.
- **Model tasks and the underlying strategies or thinking.** Students may learn more effectively if shown how to do a task. Consider talking out loud to demonstrate the strategies you use to problem solve when working on the task.

Structure classes

- **Create a consistent daily routine.** Rules and routines help a child know what is planned for the day so that they know what to do if they have missed instructions. Consider using a daily visual schedule with a timer/clock that students can see at all times. Access AllPlay Learn's class schedule. Routines that include specific times for children to organise their materials (e.g. put things away, tidy up their belongings, pack their bag) and activities (e.g. write in diary their homework or checklist of things to take home) may be particularly helpful.



Support students to self-manage

- **Set simple and clear goals.** Consider letting children and their families choose goals. These could be short statements that describe positive and achievable behaviours that children understand. Check that the goals set include behaviours that can be seen and counted. For example, a goal might be handing in four items within a set time.
- **Teach self-instruction skills.** Consider guiding students to problem solve so they can persist with school work instead of getting frustrated. For example, they can follow these steps mentally or think out loud: “What is the problem?”, “What are my options?”, “I think this is the best option”, “Am I following my plan?” and “How did I do it?”
- **Teach students how to self-monitor.** Consider giving children a checklist of planning and organisation behaviours that they would like to work on (e.g. put their school hat in their tub after lunch). Prompt them to check off the list throughout the day.
- **Use a home-school communication system.** With parent support, children can practise newly-learned skills outside the classroom. Communicate openly and often with parents/caregivers. Use a daily or weekly school update to monitor how a student is going with their goals. Provide support and encourage behaviours similarly in school and at home.

Teach academic skills

- **Teach organisation strategies explicitly.** Tools such as colour-coded books/folders, planners or checklists can be used to help students keep track of notes, books, homework, assignments and key dates. For example, a self-monitoring checklist for organising a desk/tub might include items such as “no loose papers or items” or “books are stacked together”. Similarly, specific coloured books for different subjects can help a child easily locate the correct book.
- **Teach children how to plan and organise their work.** It may be helpful to teach children how to use a diary or planner and to give them prompts when they need to write things down. Teachers can check and sign diaries/planners. For example, teach students to (i) write tasks to be completed on the left side of the planner, and tasks to be handed in on the right, (ii) divide their work into “to do”, “doing” and “done” groups, or (iii) write a checklist in their diary each day so they can tick off completed items and write in incomplete items for the next day.



- **Teach children how to break a task down.** Some children may need to be shown how to break down projects and study into smaller tasks, and to manage their time. This may include teaching them how to define large tasks and the smaller subtasks, and scheduling these tasks so that they can complete the task by a set time.
- **Provide tools to help students get started on a task.** Some children may find it difficult to plan how to respond to a given task, and therefore may find getting started on the task challenging. Visual storyboards may help some children plan out a story, and writing a list of key points for an assignment may help some children organise their thoughts. Some children may respond well to discussion around the different directions they can take a task in, while others may find problem solving or “key questions to ask myself” helpful. Considering a child’s learning style and the nature of the activity can help identify which supports may be best suited to a child’s strengths and abilities.

Other considerations

Homework

- When setting homework consider what types of activities they could complete within a set time or to a set standard, and consider teaching students how to use a homework planner.
- Consider asking parents to use a consistent homework routine at home. This may be doing homework in a distraction-free area at a fixed time. They can also check that tasks in the planner are finished and provide encouragement.

Classroom transitions

- The time between ending a lesson (e.g. putting away a book) and starting a new lesson (e.g. listening to teacher instruction, carrying out the task, and waiting for start of lesson) may be challenging for some students.

Transitions

- A child with planning and organisation challenges may benefit from supports when moving across education settings.
- It may be helpful to teach and practise organisation and homework skills, and time- and self-management skills.



- For more information about supporting students with disabilities when transitioning to a primary or secondary school setting access AllPlay Learn's [transition page](#).
- For children transitioning to primary school access AllPlay Learn's Story A school day, and for children transitioning to secondary school access Access AllPlay Learn's story How to be Organised

Other co-occurring conditions

- Students may also have challenges with [behaviour](#), [emotions](#), [learning and memory](#), and [thinking/cognition](#), or experience [attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder](#), [specific learning disability](#), [intellectual disability](#) or [oppositional defiant disorder](#)
- Refer to information about these areas to help support the student.

Relevant resources

Visit our [resources page](#) for a range of resources that can help to create inclusive education environments for children with disabilities and developmental challenges. Some particularly relevant resources for children with planning and organisational issues include:

- Strengths and abilities communication checklist
- Student self-monitoring form
- Class schedule