

## **Reasons Your Child Might Have Trouble Paying Attention Some Strategies to Try**

### **LACK OF PRACTICE**

Many young children have a hard time focusing because they are in a different learning environment. They are not used to having “school at home.”

- Try this: Practice in short increments of time so that your child has opportunities to practice without getting frustrated.
- Try this: Single out one skill that your child already does easily at home (imitating a motor skill, singing an easy song or rhyme) and make a game of going to different areas of the home and doing that activity for about a minute each time.

### **DOESN'T UNDERSTAND THE MATERIAL**

What might look like a lack of concentration could actually be a lack of understanding the material. This lack of understanding can lead children to stop paying attention.

- Try this: Make the activity a little easier by letting your child do the first few steps and then give a lot of help near the end of the activity.
- Try this: Present only part of the activity to your child by completing parts of it up-front and then letting your child do the rest.
- Try this: Help your child by doing part or all of the activity first to show how it is done. Then let your child do it. Help your child by guiding his or her hand if needed.
- Try this: Talk to your child's teacher, express your concern, and get ideas.



### **DISTRACTED BY THINGS IN THE ENVIRONMENT**

The home can be a place full of distractions, from chatty siblings to toys in the area. Some children have a harder time than others filtering out these distractions making paying attention more challenging.

- Try this: Make a family schedule that includes a quiet time in a quiet area for each family member. Emphasize to all family members that each person needs specific times to work in that area.
- Try this: Make a “No Noise” sign to post near the area and collaborate with family members to designate times that the sign is displayed as a quiet time.
- Try this: If possible, set up an area that is away from other family activity for certain parts of the day. Try to make this area be a “Tech-free Zone”

### **BEING TIRED OR HUNGRY**

If your child is not getting the recommended 8-10 hours of sleep each night, he or she won't have the energy needed to concentrate. Skipping meals is another big cause of lack of focus. .

- Try this: Make a home schedule that has regular times for meals and rest.
- Try this: Use a timer to allow for extra time for staying at the table. This can help your child slow down a little and eat more slowly or eat a little more instead of hurrying in order to get up to do something else.
- Try this: Have a bedtime routine and set a time to begin getting ready. Make a schedule for the routine so your child will know what to expect. For example, a bedtime routine might include brushing teeth, toileting, getting on pajamas, turning down the covers, having a book read, a few minutes of looking at a book alone, then time for sleep.



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### **MISMATCHED LEARNING STYLE**

Different students have **different learning styles**: some learn best by seeing, some by hearing and others by doing. Vary activities so that you are including different learning styles.

- Try this: Combine methods of presenting information. When you are talking and explaining an activity, use pictures, gestures, and showing what to do along with your words.
- Try this: Show information in a variety of formats. Use real photos, drawings, and real objects to help your child understand the visual representation.
- Try this: Let your child touch items associated with the activity or lesson. Young children remember things better when they can touch it.
- Try this: Incorporate smell and taste if you can. For example, if your lesson, book, or activity is about food, try to let your child smell and taste it if possible.
- Try this: Build in motor activities during the lesson to help your child remember and to provide a break.
- Try this: Provide lots of repetition of ideas and lots of practice in skills by using different learning styles to teach skills.

### **ANXIETY or CONFUSION**

Anxiety about the activity or about “school at home” can be another issue leading to lack of focus. Children who are overwhelmed or stressed by an activity may simply check out, leading to lack of attention.

- Try this: Read a story or book about being home from school. Reassure your child that at some point school will open and he or she will be returning.
- Try this: Show the teacher’s videos of lessons. They are likely to include many familiar songs, books, and phrases used in the classroom. This might also help your child maintain connections with school staff and friends.
- Try this: Discuss feelings and worries with your child and show that you understand. Reassure them and praise them for their efforts in doing their “school work”.
- Try this: Keep activities short and provide frequent breaks.
- Try this: Understand that your child might need extra attention and reassurance during the “school at home” time.

### **References and Resources**

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