

# What Can Help You Pay Attention?

## What to Know

Sometimes you might struggle to pay attention, and when you are given a task that's challenging, you might want to give up before even trying! Here are some strategies that might help you pay attention long enough to complete important tasks.

- 1. Get Active.** If you just can't concentrate, try some exercise before you get to work, like, jogging in place, or doing jumping jacks. Doing 15 minutes of activity before a challenging task can help you stay more focused.
- 2. Take Attention Breaks.** Practice attentive behavior at non-crucial times, then take attention breaks. Using a timer or a phone app, have an alarm go off during the work period. Write down whether you were paying attention. This can help train your brain to understand what attention looks like, and how often you're tempted to let your attention wander.
- 3. Adjust Time Frames.** If you find that, no matter what you do, you can't stay on task, you might need to break content into smaller time intervals. Kids can usually concentrate on one task for 2-5 minutes per year old. For example, if you're 13-years-old, you should be able to pay attention for 26-65 minutes. If you need to adjust time frames, it's OK. Break up tasks and work without feeling overwhelmed.
- 4. Remove Distractions.** When you are having a hard time paying attention, clutter on your desk or workspace can make it impossible to focus. Remove unnecessary clutter from your space.
- 5. Rate and Change Tasks.** If you tend to avoid things or get really distracted, rate the level of challenge found in the activity on a scale of 1 (easiest) to 10 (hardest). If the activity is an 8 or higher, think about what you can do to make the task a 2 or 3.
- 6. Break Up Tasks.** If these strategies don't work, look at the task itself. Can you break it into smaller chunks? Do part of the task, take a break, and come back to the project to finish it. You might finish faster than if you try to complete it all in one sitting.

Write down the task you want to complete. Pick a strategy from the list above write the # in the second column. For example, if you choose #4, "Remove Distractions," just write 4. Describe how the strategy helped you pay attention. Then, rate how well you paid attention from 1 to 10, where 1 = I had a really hard time paying attention, to 10 = I had no trouble paying attention and I finished the task easily. If you didn't finish the task, write down 0 in the final column.

Task	# Strategy used	How it helped me pay attention	Rating 0 - 10

What strategy helped you the most? Why?

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What task was hardest to complete? Explain.

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Can you think of other things you can do to help you pay attention? List them.

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