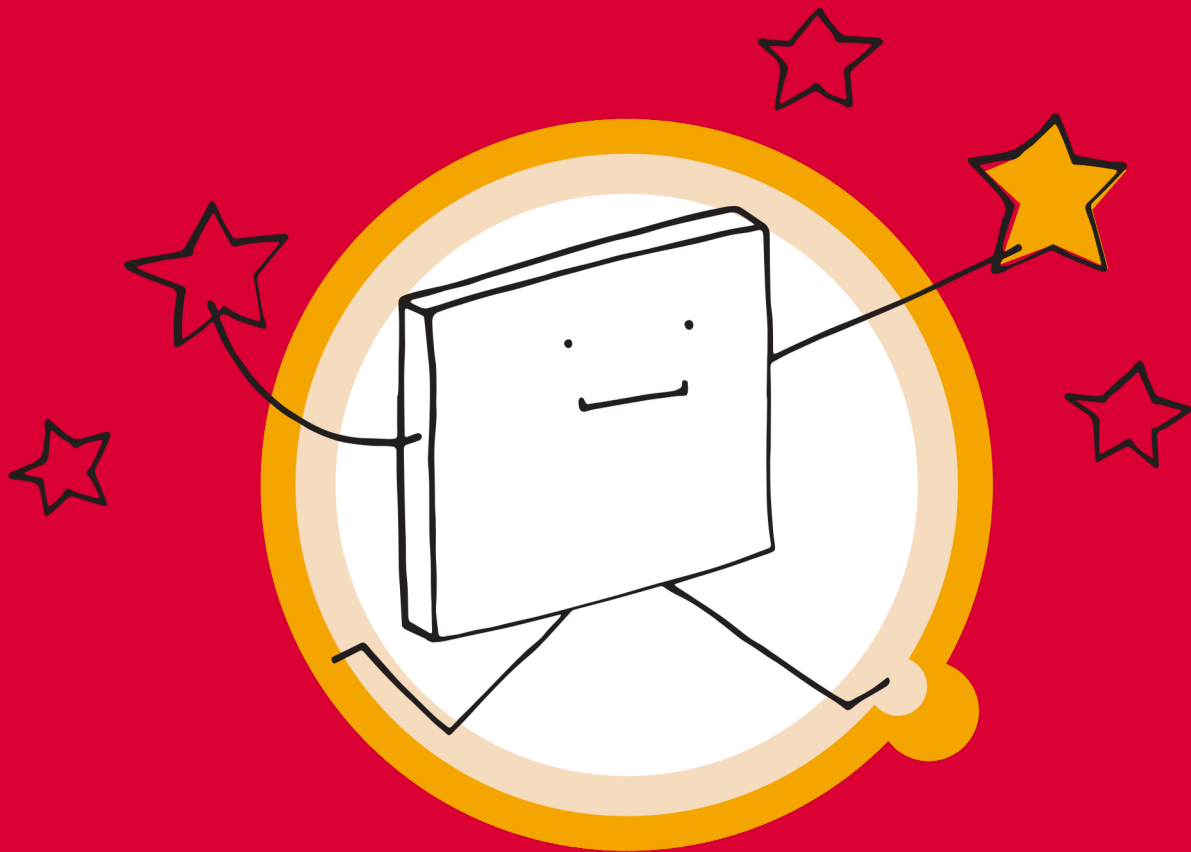


# The EPIC Strategy booklet: A guide for high-school teachers/college lecturers

These strategies apply to all students, and are particularly relevant to young people with ADHD, autism, Dyspraxia/DCD and those born prematurely.

These strategies can also be used by parents/carers at home.



**Edinburgh Psychoeducation Intervention  
for Children and Young People<sup>®</sup> (EPIC)**



THE UNIVERSITY  
of EDINBURGH



**EPIC**  
Think Learn

# EPIC Booklets

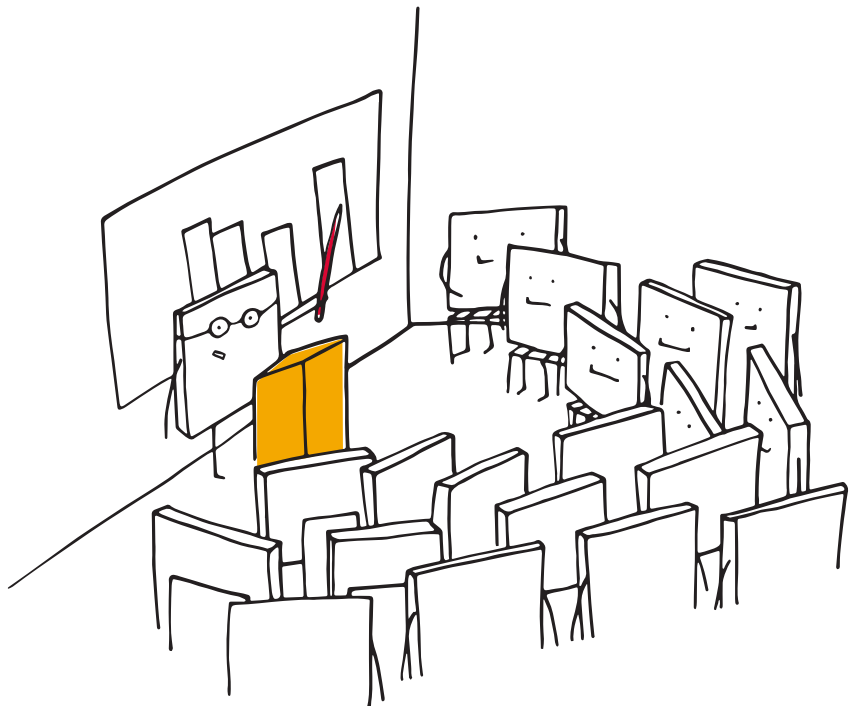
There are two types of EPIC booklets:

- 1) The EPIC Strengths and Difficulties booklet.
- 2) The EPIC Strategy booklet.

This is the **EPIC Strategy** booklet

If you would like to read more about ADHD and Dyspraxia/DCD see the EPIC Strengths and Difficulties booklet.

EPIC Website:  
[epicthinklearn.com](http://epicthinklearn.com)



There are also additional articles and resources on our:

- **EPIC Blog:** [epicthinklearn.com/blog](http://epicthinklearn.com/blog)
- **Free Resources section:** <https://epicthinklearn.com/resources-optin/>

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# Introduction

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## Who is EPIC for?



- The principles of EPIC apply to **all young people** but are particularly relevant to those with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Dyspraxia/DCD and those born prematurely.
- They may also help a young person who needs extra support but does not have a diagnosis.
- The strategies in the booklet can benefit the whole class by maintaining a positive learning environment and supporting every pupil/student to access the curriculum. These strategies can also be used at home by parents and carers.
- At the heart of this approach is understanding the individual's strengths and difficulties regardless of age, gender, or diagnosis. Co-occurrence, when a young person has two or more diagnoses, is common, e.g. having a diagnosis of both ADHD and autism. It is also very common to have one diagnosis and have traits of another that might not be diagnosed but still impacts how they learn and interact.
- The strategies described in this booklet are mainly useful for teenagers.

# Introduction

---

Should the same strategies be used with every young person?

---

**EPIC** involves an individualised approach to development that aims to facilitate learning and positive well-being in children and young people. You can select an area to develop based on what the pupil/student is struggling with.

---

When can the educational professional use the booklet?

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While the educational professional can use the booklet whenever they want, e.g. during a lesson, we think the optimal time to read it will be when planning a lesson.

---

How else might this booklet increase understanding?

---

You may have read this booklet with one pupil/student in mind, however you may realise there is another pupil/student in the class with similar challenges.

# Introduction

---

## How to use the strategies

---

1. **Identification:** The strategies can be used to identify the area a pupil/student is having difficulty with. Sometimes a young person can seem like they are struggling with attention, but really it is a memory problem or sensory issue. These strategies can help to work out the underlying difficulty.
2. **Understanding:** teachers/lecturers are already using many of these strategies. We are suggesting them as particularly important for pupils/students with difficulties. We are also promoting their use with added dialogue. Using strategies enables you to talk about the importance of things like planning or stopping and thinking, and can facilitate pupils/students' awareness of their difficulties and the need to take steps to help them (see example page **42**).
3. **Practise:** Doing the activities encourages the pupil/student to practise skills that are not necessarily automatic to them, such as the need to stop and think, and identify ways of working in a distracting environment.
4. **Personalisation:** We encourage teachers/lecturers to take a personalised approach to each pupil, e.g. incorporating their individual interests and personality into dialogues and choosing recommendations/resources that fit for them.

# Which area to develop?

Before choosing which strategies to try out with the pupil/student(s), think about:



Which area would you like to focus on developing?

Planning ahead

Sitting still for a long time

Following instructions

Thinking before they speak

Keeping track of the time

Thinking flexibly

Processing emotions

Starting or finishing a task

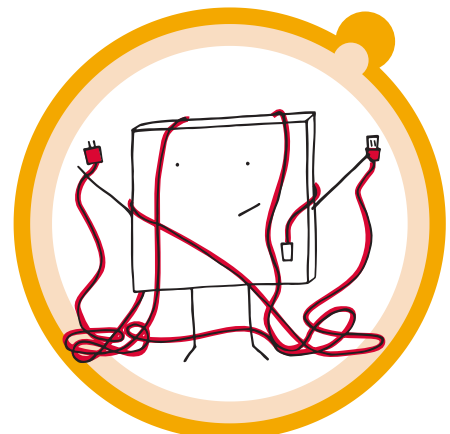
Waiting their turn

Moving from one task to another

Remembering things

Making friends

Staying focused



# Which area to develop?

---

These things can sometimes get in the way of...

---

Completing tasks  
in class

Being on time, with  
all equipment/kit

Completing  
homework

**But...**

Understanding the thinking processes behind these difficulties can help you identify and then manage the barriers to learning.

It is important to try to understand why sometimes a pupil/student wants to leave the classroom, not complete tasks, or talk out of turn (sometimes referred to as challenging or disruptive behaviours). For example, sensory overload, exclusion, or needing a movement break can cause feelings of distress. Recognising and reducing (or removing) triggers where possible can support their wellbeing.

## **Medication**

If a pupil/student has ADHD they may be taking medication. Medication helps a lot of young people with ADHD but does not tackle all the difficulties they might experience. Young people with other diagnoses commonly do not take medication.

Strategies, like the ones described in this booklet, are important regardless of whether the pupil/student is taking medication.

*See our website [www.epicthinklearn.com](http://www.epicthinklearn.com) for more information on medication.*

Next, we are going to explore some factors that underlie thinking skills difficulties and affect well-being. We will pair the difficulties with strategies that can help manage and resolve them.



# Notes on terminology

---

**Executive functions:** a set of thinking skills that include organisation, self-control, self-monitoring, working memory, time management, flexible thinking and planning.

Difficulties with executive function can make it hard to focus, learn, follow directions, and handle emotions.

Some young people have **sensory processing differences**.

**Sensory avoiding:** finding bright light, noises, smells, tastes and textures uncomfortable, overwhelming, or painful e.g. leaving the classroom when it is too loud.

**Sensory seeking:** being under-sensitive to input and looking for more sensory stimulation. Sensory input can help pupils/students regulate their sensory processing system and then engage with learning, e.g. fidget spinner, 'doodling' or a wiggle chair.

A lot of young people have a combination of both.

# Inhibition

---

## Starting a task – being prepared

---

Before the pupil/student starts a task or activity, it is important they STOP and THINK. Encourage them to think about what they are going to need to do the task before they start. They can plan out what they are going to need, what they are going to do, and how long this will take. This also gives them a chance to decide on a strategy they can use to approach the task, making it more habitual over time.

---

## Starting a task – distractors

---

Some pupils/students find it hard to STOP and THINK because they find it difficult to avoid responding to distractors. Often this may feel automatic.

This automatic response to a distractor can end up meaning they bypass the STOP and THINK process because they are focusing on something else that is not task related.

A key part of starting a task effectively is identifying what may act as a potential distractor(s). This often differs between pupils/students .

### **Think about:**

With this pupil/student, is it a sensory issue such as being distracted by sounds nearby? Does the distraction reflect something else in the classroom? Try using the Body Scan technique described on the next page to identify what key distractors are for them.

The attention section (page **12**) and games section (page **36 - 39**) of this booklet can also be used to target this difficulty.

# Inhibition

---

## Body Scan



Sometimes there can be so much happening, and so much to keep track of, it's difficult for the young person to know in the moment how they are feeling or what they are finding distracting. General feelings of 'overwhelm' are common.

The pupil/student can be encouraged to try 'scanning' themselves or what is around them. This can make it easier to know how they are feeling or what they are thinking, seeing, hearing and smelling, and what might be acting as a trigger.

Are they too hot in their full uniform? Are there sounds inside the classroom which are drawing their attention away from the task?

### How to do the Body Scan

Ask them to close their eyes so that they can start the body scan.

Start by thinking about your toes. What can you feel? (inside your body or on your skin). Move up your body, stopping at your legs, torso, arms, chest and head and think about what you can feel. Is anything uncomfortable?

Now listen to what is happening around you.  
What can you hear? Is anything distracting you?

Continue to run through each of their senses - taste, smell, temperature.

Finally ask them to open their eyes and explore what they can see.

# Attention

---

Some pupils/students find things around them very distracting. This can make it difficult to concentrate on a task.

---

This could be things they see, noises they hear, or a feeling that they need to move their body. It could also be thoughts they can't stop focussing on, even if they're not relevant in the moment. These distractions can become intense and make it difficult to stay on a task.

Some pupils/students' attention difficulty can lie in shifting their attention flexibly from one part of a task to another.

There are lots of things they can do to help them with this:

1. Getting up and moving around
2. Fiddling with an object
3. Taking a sensory break
4. Using attention flexibly: take part in games/  
activities for awareness and practise

# Attention

## 1. Getting up and moving around

---

Sometimes a young person might find it hard to stay sitting at their desk for a long time, e.g. needing a movement break.

---

You could talk to the pupil/student about when it is ok and not ok to move around the classroom throughout a lesson.

If a pupil/student often feels like they need to move their body, you could keep them in mind to run an errand such as handing out task sheets, opening the window when it's hot, or collecting some printing.

Giving the pupil/student the opportunity to stand while working can also help.

### **Teaching time**

For pupils/students who need to move around, time where the teacher/lecturer is instructing the class can be difficult, as they are expected to sit still and focus for a long period. An alternative may be to give students the option to stand whilst listening, or to get the whole class moving around as part of the explanation. For example, having the class move into groups to 'vote' for their answers to questions.

# Attention

## 2. Fiddling with an object

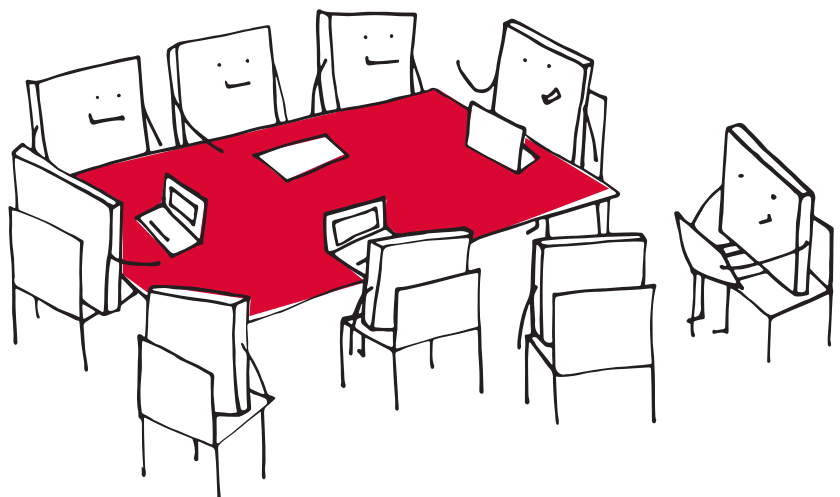
If the young person has lots of energy, they might feel like they need to move their arms, legs or move in other ways.

Having an object to fiddle with can be a useful way of managing the distraction of feeling like they need to move, helping them to focus on their task.

It is important to choose the right object for the pupil/student to fidget with. It is also important to talk to them about when and how it can be used.

An object should be chosen that does not distract other pupils/students – avoid one that makes any noise. Many teachers/lecturers prepare an approved list of objects that students can choose from.

Think about whether it will distract the pupil/student from the task they are doing. The intention is the opposite but it needs to be the right object for them.



## 3. Taking regular sensory breaks

Sometimes a pupil/student will need a break from what they are doing or where they are working because the classroom is becoming over stimulating, or they need to get up and move.

This is something that happens to everyone. Some pupils/students need more breaks than others.

A sensory break or “brain break” is taking a short break from seated learning activities. This can help the pupils/students to stay alert, on task, and focused. For this reason, it is important a pupil/student is not taken out of PE class or free time during breaks at lunch or between lessons.

Try using the body scan activity to work out if the pupil/student needs a break.

The body scan will help because then they can understand and explain to you why they feel that they need a break. See page **11**.

If they do need a break, encourage them to ask you.



# Attention

## 4. Using attention flexibly

---

Some pupils/students' attention difficulty can lie in shifting their attention flexibly from one task to another.

---

Playing Games for Awareness and Practise.

On page **36** we detail games and activities that can be used to help with attention flexibility such as switching the rules for well-known board and card games.

The games can be used to practise being flexible with attention. You can model how to be flexible with your attention and complete tasks more efficiently.

Also, playing the game may also help the young person to become aware of and understand their difficulty, and learn which strategies they need.



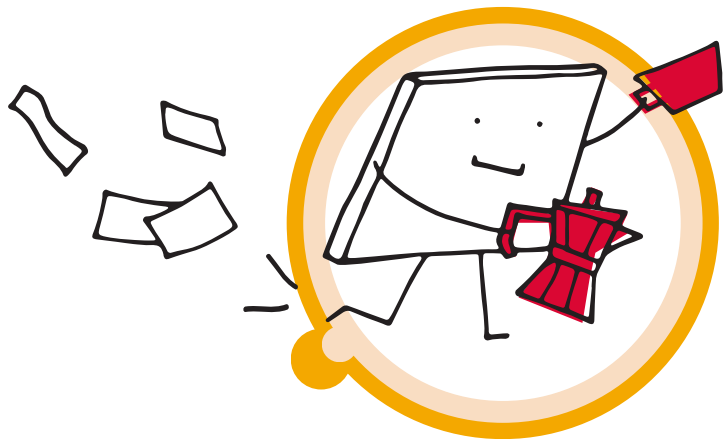
# Self-regulation

Some pupils/students can find it difficult to know how long it takes to do a task, or how much time has passed.

They can also find it hard to notice when they are doing something well or see how they have got better over time.

There are lots of things you can encourage them to do to help them plan ahead and be more organised, as well as recognising and celebrating their progress.

1. Using a timer
2. Keeping a diary
3. Tracking personal targets/habits



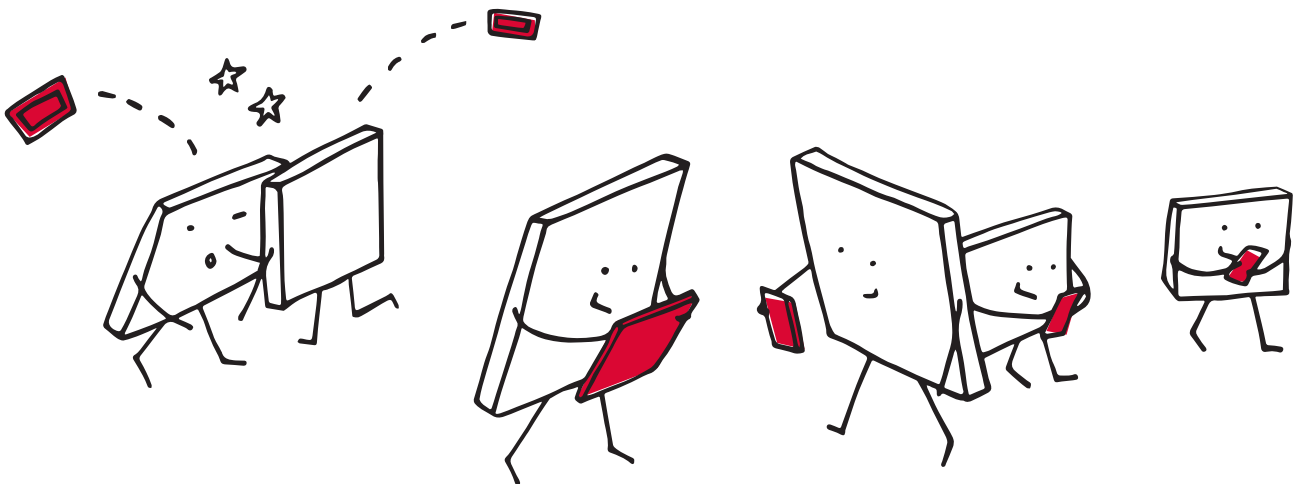
# Self-regulation

## 1. Using a timer

A timer can be useful for some pupils/students so that they can visually keep track of their progress.

Sometimes if a young person knows someone else is timing them, it can make them feel stressed or anxious. Having control of their own timer for classroom tasks, or being able to see a clock in the classroom, can help them to get used to sticking to time and make it easier when they do not have control of the time.

They can use this strategy when completing homework too.



# Self-regulation

## 2. Using a diary or planner

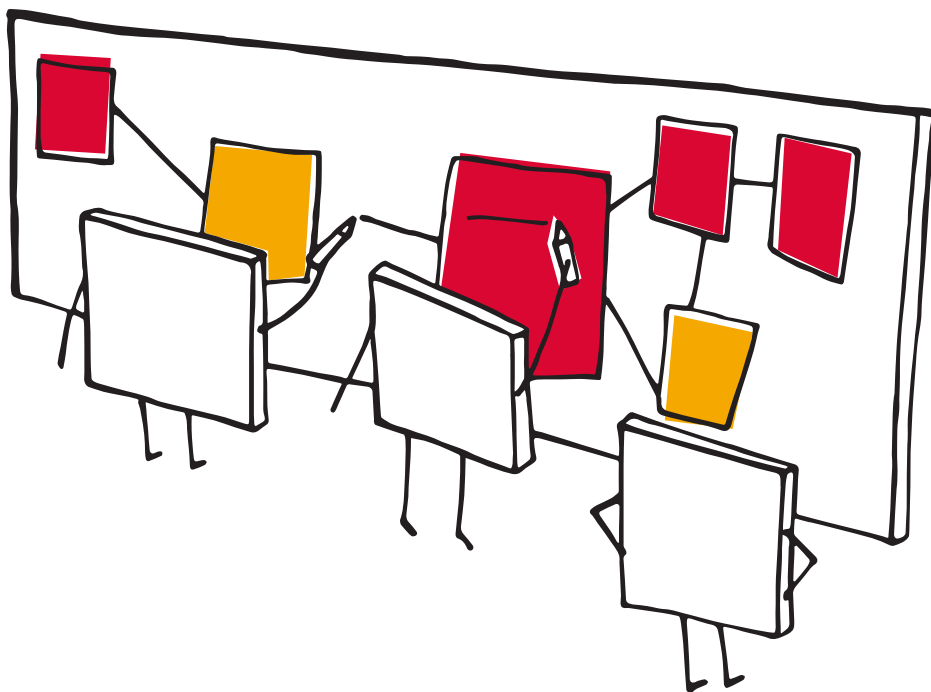
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A good way to learn to keep track of time is to use a diary.

---

A diary or planner can be useful for planning a day and for breaking down tasks into multiple steps using colour coding or other similar grouping techniques.

This makes them less reliant on their working memory and allows them to focus on smaller tasks in sequence, without forgetting parts of the bigger task or running out of time.



# Self-regulation

## 3. Target or activity tracking

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A good way to get used to self-reflection, stay on task and recognise their progress.

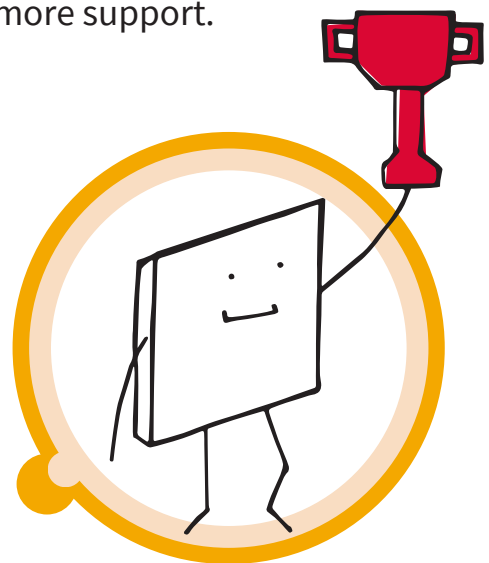
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Setting personal targets based on their own strengths and difficulties, and tracking how often they achieve them, can help a young person to recognise where they have made progress, and where they might need more support.

For example, setting the target of, 'pack my bag every night before bed' can encourage them to put time aside to prepare for the following day:

What lessons do they have scheduled? What homework will they need to hand in?

They can then track whether they hit this target (or completed this activity) each day, in their diary, calendar or using an app. At the end of each week, they can reflect on how they did in achieving their target. It's important to recognise the wins, as well as reflecting on where they may want more support. ✓



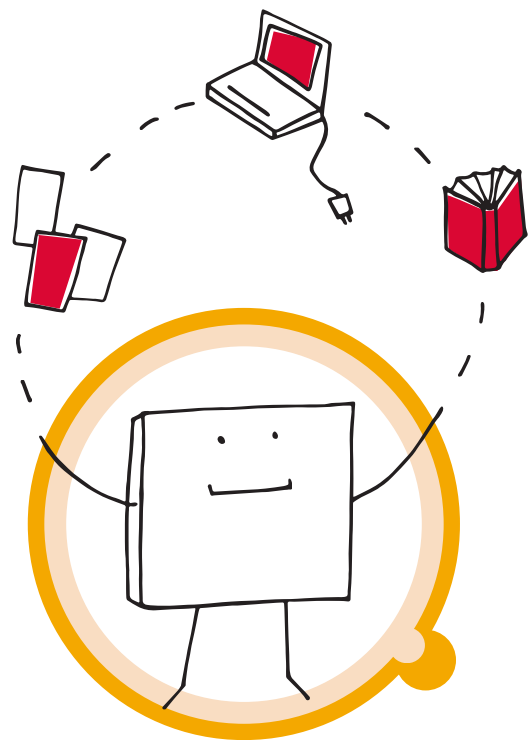
# Planning and being organised

Some young people “live in the moment” and focus on what is happening now. This means they can sometimes find it hard to think ahead into the future.

This can make it difficult to plan what is coming next. Young people who have these difficulties can also find it hard to be prepared as they do not know what they need to complete a task or goal.

There are lots of things you can do to help someone plan ahead and be more organised:

1. Setting goals
2. Step by step planning
3. Mapping it out
4. Using a planner or journal
5. Practising planning



# Planning and being organised

## 1. Setting goals

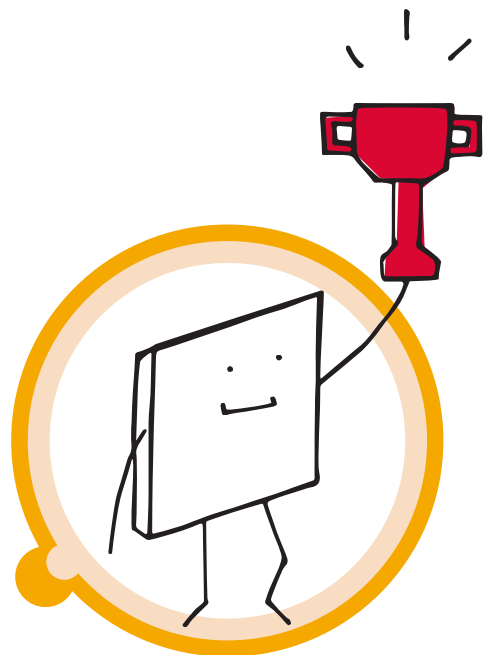
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Setting goals before starting activities can help a young person complete a task.

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These goals can act as reminders if they get distracted.

1. Encourage them to focus on just one or two goals at a time.
2. Make sure they are realistic goals that you think they could achieve.
3. Set a realistic time to check in and see how close they are to achieving the goal.



# Planning and being organised

## 2. Step by step planning

---

You can encourage a pupil/student to break down a task in to smaller, more manageable chunks.



It shows the order in which steps need to be done to reach the end goal.  
If the instructions are in one block of text, encourage them to chunk it into steps.

1. First do this...
2. next do this...
3. then finally do this.

Encourage them to tackle each part one step at a time.

For example, for an essay task...

1. Mindmap (page **24**) what the question is asking you to do.
2. What are your key points going to be?
3. What order would make the most sense for your points? (Planning the essay structure)
4. ....

# Planning and being organised

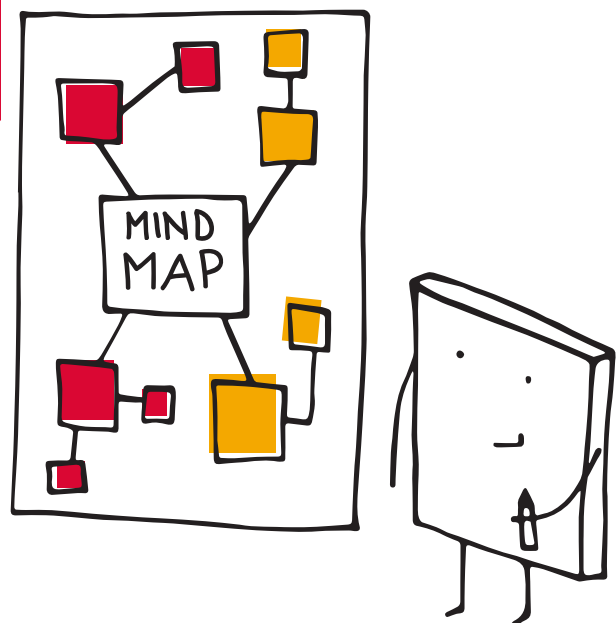
## 3. Mapping it out

A mind-map is a visual way to organise thoughts and ideas.

A mind-map has a main focus in the middle, with ideas/themes branching out from it. Using these branches can represent relationships between ideas.

Encourage the pupil/student to use a mind map to plan how to answer a question. Write the question in the middle of your page and have branches for:

First thoughts, then ideas that 'spring' from those thoughts, any links between ideas...





# Planning and being organised

## 4. Using a planner or journal

A planner can be used to write down notes to remind the pupil/student what is coming up next and what they might need to plan for.

## 5. Practising planning

Page **38** gives some examples of activities which might help to practise planning.

Activities which involve thinking ahead like building structures from random materials, crafting or reading a book to review later are a great way to practise planning.



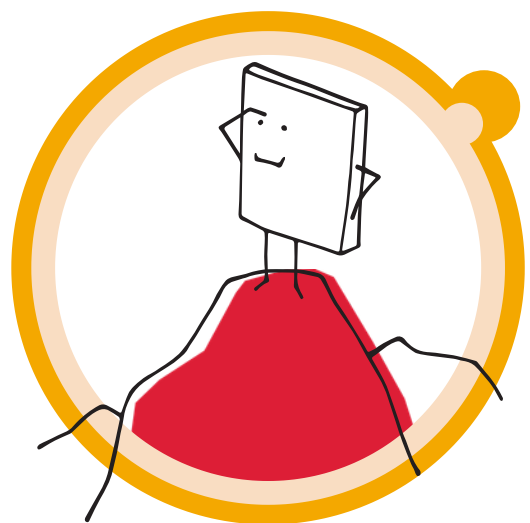
# Memory

Some young people find it difficult to remember lots of things at once, or they forget things easily.

This can make classroom tasks difficult if they can't remember what they need to do next or forget what came before.

There are lots of things the young person can do to help themselves with this:

1. Breaking it down (chunking)
2. Writing it down
3. Rehearsing or repeating
4. Representing items visually
5. Active learning
6. Visual aids
7. Mental imagery



# Memory

## 1. Chunking (breaking it down)

Chunking is breaking down or grouping information to make it easier to manage.

Chunking allows the pupil/student to take smaller bits of information and put them together to make more meaningful and memorable wholes. Take bigger bits of information and break them down into easier to manage pieces.

Chunking can be used generally to help someone organise themselves such as when following instructions. It can also be used to remember longer sets of instructions, such as the rules for a new sport/game, or an assigned task.

### **Example:**

#### **Following Instructions**

If a pupil/student finds it hard to remember or process instructions for a task, they can chunk it.

If the instructions are in one block of text, try chunking it into steps.

1. First do this...
2. Next do this...
3. Then finally do this.

Tackle each part one step at a time.

### **Example: Reading Large Texts**

Encourage pupils/students to break larger texts up in a way that works for them. This might involve using sticky notes or different-coloured highlighters, and/or adding important points in the margins as they go through.

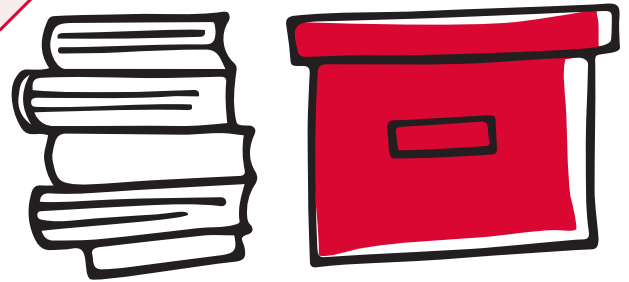
# Memory

## 2. Writing it down

If a pupil/student finds it difficult to remember things, encourage them to write it down somewhere they will see it.

It can also be helpful for pupils/students to receive instructions in different ways.

Writing instructions on the board or giving a handout, as well as saying them out loud, can give them more time to process instructions, as well as helping them remember everything.



# Memory

## 3. Rehearsing or repeating

---

Rehearsal is a simple memory strategy that involves repeating information in order to get the information processed and stored as a memory.



There are many ways a young person can use rehearsal to help in school/college.

It is important they understand they may need to repeat instructions out loud or in their head in scenarios where their peers may not.

Playing memory games:

Playing games that use memory (such as Eyewitness or Round Robin Storytelling) can help young people practise strategies like rehearsal.

See page **38** for more examples.

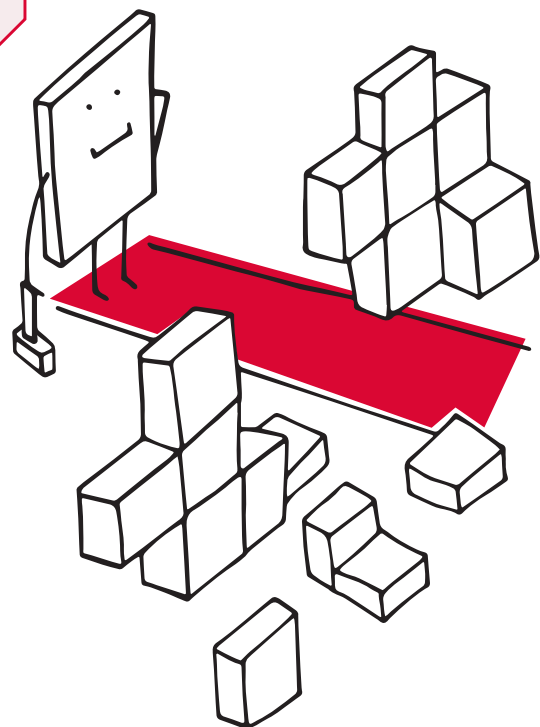
# Memory

## 4. Representing items visually (using manipulatives)

If a pupil/student finds it difficult to remember things, think about whether visually representing ideas could be useful.

Examples include using different colours for different points on the whiteboard, or using models and diagrams to explain more abstract concepts, e.g. labelled diagrams in biology.

Pictures of literary characters might be helpful in English class; putting a face to the names!



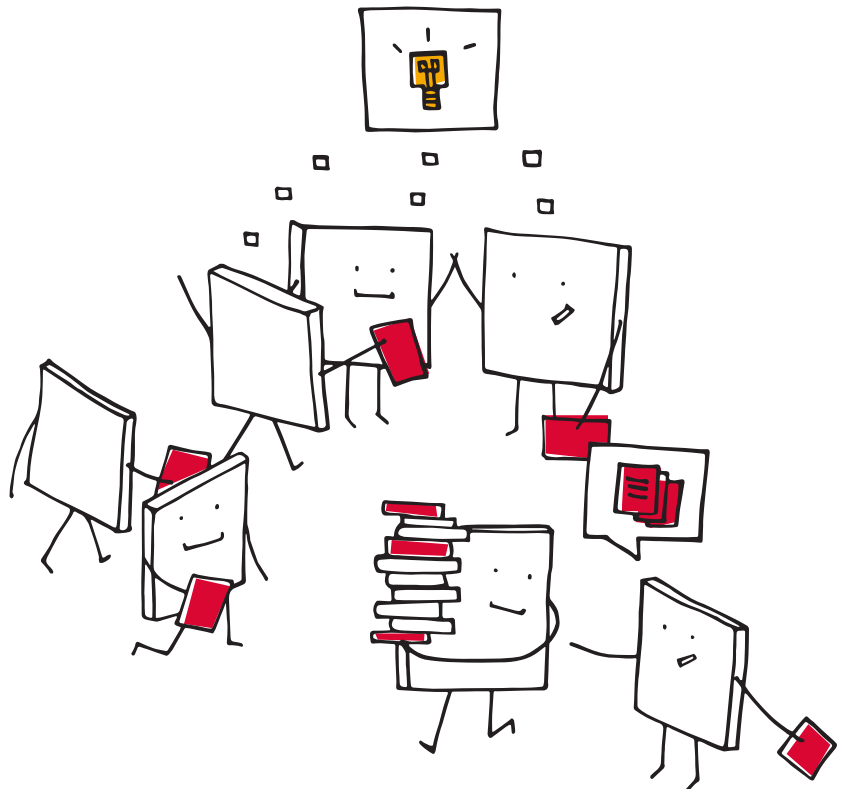
# Memory

## 5. Active learning

Teachers/lecturers can encourage all pupils/students to be an active participant in their learning.

Active learning is great for improving our recall in general, and may be **especially** useful for young people with memory difficulties.

See page **36** for examples of active learning such as games and using visual aids.

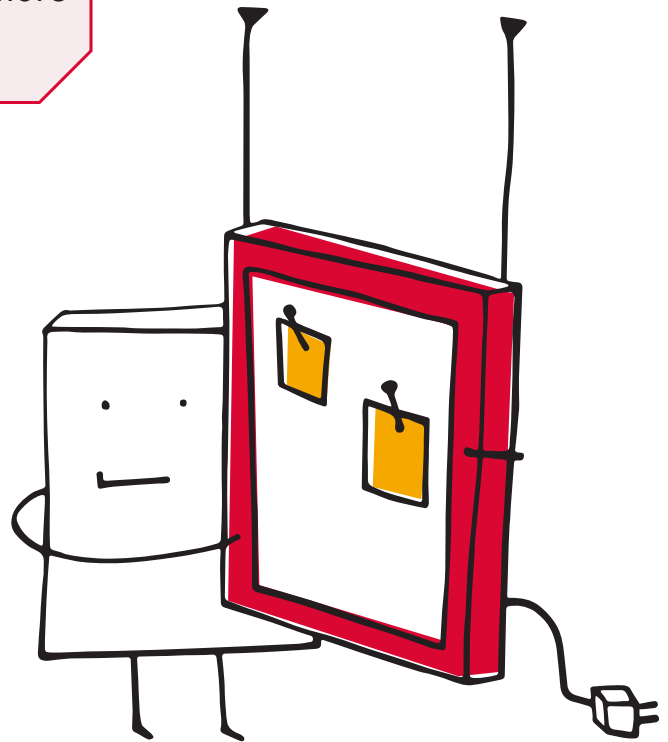


# Memory

## 6. Using Visual Reminders

If a pupil/student finds it difficult to remember things, think about whether a visual aid such as a post-it note or diary could be useful.

Encouraging the pupil/student to have a visual reminder of steps in a task or the different parts of an instruction is a good life skill and one that can become more habitual over time.





## 7. Mental imagery

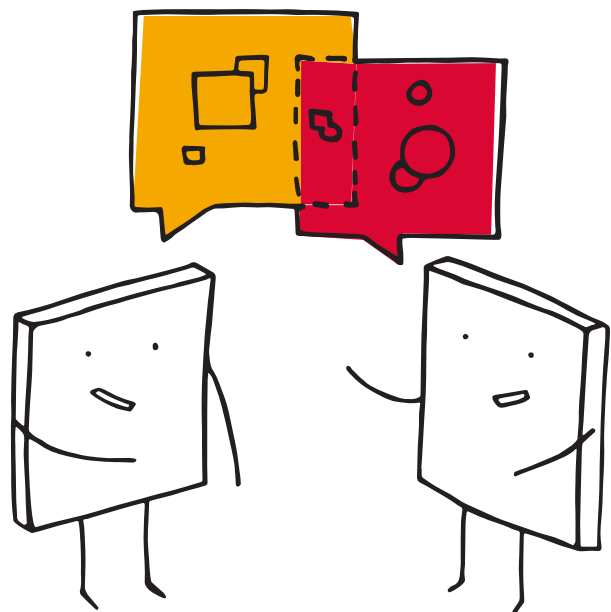
Creating a mental image in your mind to remember an item or a set of items is known to help memory.

An example is remembering lines in a poem or a book.

Encourage pupils/students to picture items in the text in their mind – the more dramatic images they create, the better.

‘Silly’ imagery through mnemonics can also help list items or longer concepts stick in memory.

For example, to remember the planets in order from the sun, you could encourage pupils/students to create a sentence like “My Very Excited Mother Just Served Us Nachos” to recall Mercury Venus Earth Mars Jupiter Saturn Uranus and Neptune.



# Emotions

## Reactions to the environment

It is important to be aware and to try to understand why sometimes a pupil/student wants to leave the classroom, not stay seated, or to talk out of turn (sometimes referred to as challenging behaviours). For example, sensory overload or needing a movement break can cause feelings of distress or physical discomfort.

Recognising and reducing (or removing) triggers can support a young person's wellbeing.

## Monitoring responses

Some young people are able to stop and think when they get upset and before they act. Others find it difficult to stop and think, acting more on impulse.

### Using the STOP method

For some young people, stopping their immediate response to emotions is more difficult. STOP is one external strategy you can suggest, which might help.

- **S - Stop:** physically freeze when they feel a strong emotion (e.g., clenching fists or a racing heart).
- **T - Take a Breath:** take slow, deep breaths.
- **O - Observe:** identify what they are feeling without judgment. Naming the emotion (e.g., "I am feeling angry" or "I am feeling embarrassed").
- **P - Proceed:** brainstorm a constructive way to handle the situation.

# Emotions

## Supporting emotional well-being

### Supporting self-reflection

The young person can be encouraged to use techniques that effectively pause their responses and allow them to stop and think (e.g. doing a body scan).

This gives them time to reflect on what is going on around them, how they are feeling, and how they are currently responding. It gives them space to identify the next strategy they want to use, rather than responding automatically.

These techniques can also be calming and relaxing when the young person is upset.

### Examples of these strategies are:

1. Body scan (described on page **11**)
2. Breathing (page **44**)
3. Visualisation (thinking of a calm situation)
4. Stretching/yoga poses/tensing and relaxing muscles
5. Grounding technique (page **44**)

### Other examples of calming items and toys:

Fidget toys, stress ball, listening to music (if school/college has resource/capacity).

### Supporting well-being

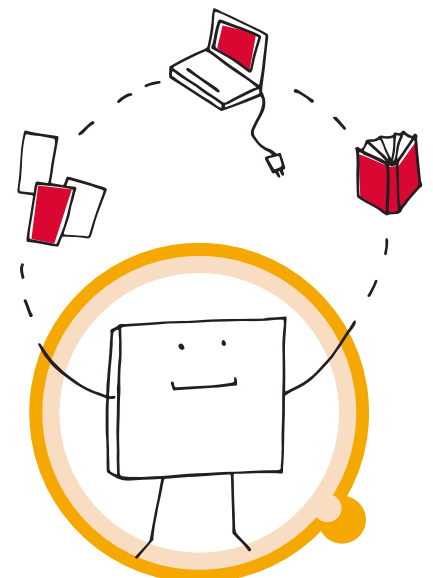
Examples of strategies for supporting a young person to process their emotions and reframe their thoughts are on page **43**.

Further resources are also suggested on page **45**.

# More useful activities and games

## Active learning examples

- **Think-Pair-Share:** Pose a question to the students. Give them one minute to brainstorm independently, pair them up to discuss their ideas, and then open the discussion to the whole group.
- **Jigsaw Method/Peer Teaching:** Break a complex topic into smaller subtopics. Place pupils/students into "expert groups" to research one subtopic, then shuffle them into new groups so they can teach their specific area to their peers.
- **Mnemonics:** Task the class with designing their own mnemonic for a new concept, and test whether they remember them next lesson.
- **Chunk reading:** When reading a large text, such as a book chapter, encourage the pupils/students to take turns reading sections out loud.
- **Back to the board:** This is great for learning new vocabulary or concepts. Ask one student to sit with their back to the board, with the others facing it. Write a word or phrase on the board. The class must describe, act out, or mime the word until the student in front guesses correctly.



# More useful activities and games

## Planning, thinking flexibly, inhibition, and strategy use

---

### **Chess and checkers**

Chess and checkers require young people to use a number of executive functions, including organization, planning, impulse control, memory, and flexible thinking.

They can play with physical boards, or online, to practice these skills in a competitive, fun way.

### **Board or card games – Planning and Switching the Rules**

There are a lot of other games young people can play to help practise planning. These include different card games and board games like Four in a Row. When playing, encourage them to tell you out loud what their strategy is for winning and talk to them about what your strategy might be.

Half-way through, switch the rules. In Four in a Row, ask them to switch colour counters with you. In a board game, you could remove the dice and choose a new rule for moving around, to change their approach to winning. Chat through with them the difficulties around switching rules during a task, and how their strategies need to change.

This doesn't need to take up lesson time. If possible, you could make games accessible during breaks or before school starts, or encourage board games clubs/societies in the school! Online versions are also available for many of these games, which might suit young people more when they're at home.

# More useful activities and games

## Memory games

Memory games can be a great way to incorporate active learning in lesson time, as well as practicing memory strategies outside of the classroom.

### Round Robin storytelling

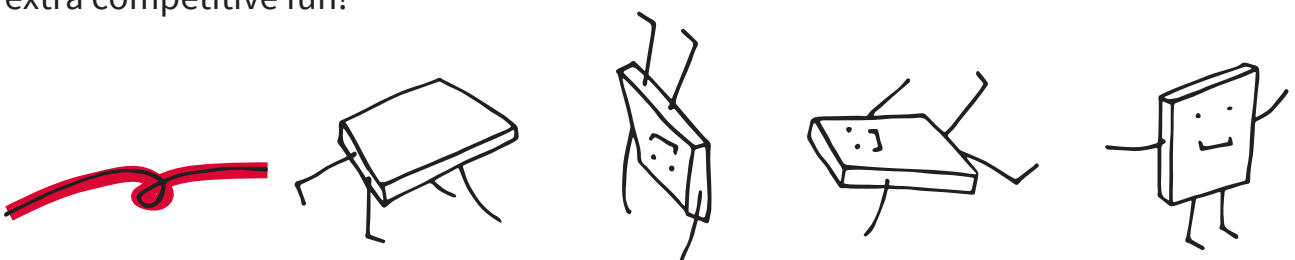
Create a collaborative story where each student repeats the previous sentence and adds one of their own, testing both sequential and narrative memory. This could be made to fit the topic of the class, for example, recalling what happened in the last chapter of a book, or recounting the steps in a long set of lab instructions.

### Eyewitness

Have someone briefly enter the classroom to perform several specific actions. Students write down every detail they recall. You could award points for each key detail and choose a winner, or just use this to strengthen their memory of an important concept.

### Item Match

This is particularly good for learning important vocabulary/definitions. Prepare matching sets of terms on two differently coloured sheets of paper (e.g., phrasal verbs or scientific prefixes and suffixes). Lay them face down and have students flip two cards at a time to find the correct combinations. You could add a time limit for extra competitive fun!



# More useful activities and games

## Practice planning

### Activities with instructions:

This activity is suitable for any task that needs instructions. Examples include: cooking recipes, lab work or long essay tasks.

Before you start, encourage the pupils/students to check:

- What the end goal is (i.e. what are they making or looking to find out?)
- What they need before they can start (e.g. ingredients, equipment)
- Take the instructions step by step, covering up every step except the current one if needed. This will help them to ignore information that is currently irrelevant.

### Book Review

Reading a book in the context of conducting a book review is a great way to practise recalling information and organising and using it flexibly.

Some helpful ways to plan how they use information later might include colour-coding with highlighters, or keeping a separate list of quotes/scenes which fit into certain categories.

All of these skills are important for planning. These activities will help young people get used to planning and enable them to use similar strategies in other contexts.

# Exam Season

## Putting it all together for exams

Exams can be hard for everyone, and difficulties with planning, emotion regulation or memory can make them feel even harder. Applying the strategies in this booklet early allows students to practise the ones which help them and apply them when exams come around.

### Before Exams

- **Make a plan** - How much time is given for each exam, and how should this be split between questions? What strategies might be helpful to practice before the exam?
- **Prioritise wellbeing and mental health** – encourage students to use strategies like brain dumps (page **43**) to keep a clear mind and reduce stress, and reflect on how they are feeling. Encourage them to allow enough time for sleep, movement / physical activity and hobbies.

### Active Revision

**Take study breaks** - focusing for long revision sessions can be difficult and make it harder to remember information. A study break can be a great time to do a physical activity. Setting timers for regular study breaks and switching between different activities can really help with revision.

**Memory games and active learning strategies** can help young people revise effectively and remember important information going into exams (pages **36 - 38**).

Every young person will benefit from different strategies. They might try flash cards, making mind maps, creating mnemonics, practising previous exam questions, teaching other people about a topic, and quizzes.





# Exam Season

## Putting it all together for exams

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Discussing **accommodations** for students, such as extra time in exams or completing assessments in a separate room, can be really helpful.

By identifying the barriers a young person faces early, accommodations can be put in place to help.

Encouraging young people to use strategies can also help relieve the pressure during exams.

### During Exams

- Encourage them to allow plenty of time to prepare for each assessment, think: What equipment is needed? Where is the exam happening? What time do I need to arrive?
- Encourage them to find techniques that work for them, like grounding and flower breathing (page **44**), if they're feeling stressed or anxious.
- Remind them to read questions carefully and plan for time at the end to check over their answers.
- Remind them to stay hydrated and sit comfortably.

### After exams

- Encourage pupils/students to reflect on what went well in the exam, and what they can learn about preparing for exams in the future.
- Remind them to be balanced, reflecting on the progress they've made and what went well, not just anything that didn't go as well.

# Using dialogue

## Using dialogue to support psychoeducation

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**We encourage the use of the strategies in this booklet, with the adult adding dialogue to promote awareness and understanding of difficulties.**

Here is an example of an adult talking to a young person about remembering instructions.

The adult could say:

“Have you noticed that remembering instructions is something you find hard?”

Or “How do you find remembering instructions?”

We would suggest avoiding using comparison language like, “do you find this harder than your friends?”

The adult can validate the young person’s experience by saying, for example:

“That sounds difficult.”

“Yes, remembering such detailed instructions is hard.”

“Sometimes ADHD/DCD (or other relevant diagnosis) makes planning ahead hard.”

The adult can then explain there are strategies which can help by saying, for example:

“You know, there are things you can do to make it easier. You can repeat the instruction in your mind until you have written it in your diary.”

# Supporting well-being

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## Supporting balanced thinking

Encourage the young person to write down their negative thoughts. This allows them to get thoughts off their chest, reflect on them and feel heard. Then, encourage them to write down some positive thoughts too.

## Encourage a young person to express their emotion in another way

Encourage pupils/students to use the STOP method, outlined on page **34**. It's important for young people to hear that it is okay to experience a range of emotions, e.g. feeling upset, angry, or overwhelmed, and that responding immediately isn't always the best option. STOP can help them slow down and reflect on their feelings, and give you the chance to work together to reduce or remove any triggers they are struggling with.

## Using a 'brain dump'

The young person can set a time - for example 10 minutes - and write everything they think of, in one long stream, for that time. Remind them that structure and rules like punctuation aren't important here, the goal is to put all their thoughts and feelings onto the page, so they're not stuck in their head.

This can help shift their brain from a stressed, overloaded state to a calmer, more reflective one, so they can work through a problem more easily. It also frees up some memory space and reduces distractions, so they can focus on their task and complete it more effectively.

# Supporting well-being

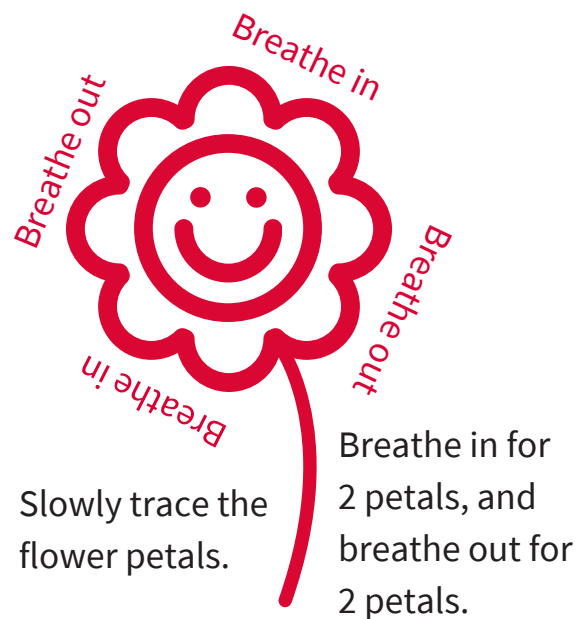
## Grounding Technique

Encouraging the young person to focus on sensory experiences and their surroundings helps them process how they feel and helps with relaxation.

- 5 Things you can see
- 4 Things you can feel
- 3 Things you can hear
- 2 Things you can smell
- 1 Good thing about yourself

## Flower breathing

Encouraging them to use a visual aid to do deep breathing can help them focus



# Resources

We have a range of *free* resources on our EPIC platform:  
<https://epicthinklearn.com/resources-optin/>

EPIC Website:  
[epicthinklearn.com](https://epicthinklearn.com)



These include...

## **For teachers/lecturers...**

- Communicating with schools: a guide for meetings
- Small changes, big difference: helping neurodivergent individuals thrive
- (Webinar) Co-occurring neurodevelopmental conditions: behaviour, learning & wellbeing
- (Webinar) Introduction to whole class approach

## **For parents...**

- Communicating with school: the partnership model
- Communicating with schools: a guide for meetings
- Masking at school
- School attendance anxiety
- 5 ways to cope with masking
- (Webinar) Anxiety in autistic children

## **For young people...**

- The building blocks of me: a guide for neurodivergent teenagers
- School meetings: a guide for teens
- Strengths & difficulties: a guide for teens

Our Strengths and Difficulties booklet can also help to identify what support a young person might need, so you can choose the best strategies for them

# The EPIC Strategy Booklet

## Edinburgh Psychoeducation Intervention for Children and Young People<sup>©</sup> (EPIC)

### A guide for teachers/lecturers

EPIC is co-produced with children, young people, parents, clinicians, and educational professionals.

This work has been funded by the  
Waterloo Foundation and a Wellcome  
Trust Institutional Translation  
Partnership Award.

thewaterloofoundation\*



We hope this guide has been useful in giving you some ideas of how to help a child with their strengths and difficulties.

We very much welcome feedback on our resources: please contact  
Professor Sinead Rhodes at [hello@epicthinklearn.com](mailto:hello@epicthinklearn.com) with any comments.

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