



Planning

Planning is the process of thinking about how to handle activities ahead of time in order to reach a desired goal or outcome. Planning can be thought of as developing a roadmap or a set of strategies using skills such as prioritization, sequencing, and foresight. A child must be able to estimate possible outcomes based on previous experience and, as a result, form an approach to reach the desired outcome. Responsiveness to the environment, recognition of social cues, and the estimation and anticipation of outcomes are especially important in planning.

Home and School Situations Requiring Planning

- Completing projects and tests in an allotted time period
- Dressing appropriately (taking into consideration the event and the weather)
- Packing and bringing a lunch to school
- Preparing for and competing in a sporting event
- Organizing and cleaning one's room
- Leaving enough time to complete tasks, such as chores or homework
- Setting priorities in terms of importance
- Saving money to buy something (video games, toys, clothes, etc.)
- Bringing toys and activities for a long trip

Hints and Strategies to Improve Planning

- Have your child identify a desired daytrip or outing. Then, assist your child in identifying what is needed to plan such a trip. For example, a child who enjoys nature and animals could benefit from planning a trip to a zoo, where he would be responsible for printing out a zoo map from the computer, finding out the entrance fee and park hours, and prioritizing what exhibits he would like to see.
- Prepare your child for transitions and changes. For example, provide your child with a 10-minute warning, and then with a 2-minute final warning as necessary, prior to sitting down to dinner or getting ready for bed. This will allow your child to practice planning transitions between activities. A kitchen timer or cell-phone alarm can also be helpful in keeping track of time.
- Schedule a specific homework time for each night. Making homework part of your family's regular routine through the establishment of a consistent schedule will allow your child to gain practice in planning what he hopes to accomplish during each homework block. If necessary, divide homework time into two blocks (one after school, one after dinner) and have your child plan what he hopes to complete during each block.

- Share a hobby with your child that requires planning. For example, work with your child on a hobby such as making jewelry, building models, gardening, or completing a full collection of stamps or coins. Both organization and planning skills are required to figure out what you need and then what to do. Gradually place your child in charge of determining what materials you will need to pursue your joint hobby.
- Initiate conversations about topics of interest that involve cause-and-effect relationships. This can help your child to focus on planning and persistence. Brainstorm topics such as global warming, the effects of exercise, and what makes a movie popular. Help your child to see the connection between planning, effort, and results. For example, explore how a popular movie (e.g. Harry Potter or Shrek) required years of planning, production, and the efforts of many people.
- Encourage your child to play video and internet games that require planning skills. Games such as Rollercoaster Tycoon, Sim City 3000, and Bejeweled are excellent opportunities for the development of planning skills. After your child has familiarized himself to the game, talk with him about how he used planning skills to help improve his performance in gameplay. You may even wish to ask him to show you some of the specific planning strategies that he used in gameplay.
- Plan a vacation with your child. This could range anywhere from a day trip to a full week vacation. First, brainstorm about what you would like to do on the vacation, things you will need to pack, supplies or clothing that you will need for the vacation, and what will need to be done at home in your absence. For an older child, encourage him to go on the internet and investigate activities that you might want to do on your vacation. Work with your child to generate an electronic list of your plans and what you want to bring. Update your plans as you get closer to the vacation and help your child to see how plans might change.

Books and Articles on Planning

Cooper-Kahn, Joyce, Ph.D. and Laurie C. Dietzel. (2008). *Late, Lost, and Unprepared: A Parents' Guide to Helping Children with Executive Functioning*. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House. [Chapter 15]

Cox, Adam J., Ph.D. (2007). *No Mind Left Behind: Understanding and Fostering Executive Control--The Eight Essential Brain Skills Every Child Needs to Thrive*. New York, NY: Penguin Books [Chapter 6]

Dawson, Peg, Ed.D. and Richard Guare, Ph.D. (2009). *Smart but Scattered*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press. [Chapter 16]

Richard, Gail J. and Jill K. Fahy. (2005). *The Source for Development of Executive Functions*. East Moline, IL: Lingua Systems.

Roehlkepartain, Jolene L., and Nancy Leffert. (2000). *What Young Children Need to Succeed: Working Together to Build Assets from Birth to Age 11*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit.

Websites on Planning

LearningWorks For Kids (<http://learningworksforkids.com/EF/planning.html>): The premier resource for executive function information, offering a detailed explanation of planning, tips for parents, and activities to improve this skill.

PBS (http://www.pbs.org/parents/strugglingtolearn/supporting_practices.html): This site offers a short but informative list of techniques parents can use to help instill successful daily planning skills in their children.

Cozi (<http://www.cozi.com/>): The site provides the opportunity to create a free family calendar online, with different color tags for each family member, grocery lists, and a reminder function.

ADDitude (<http://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/4024.html>): This site offers organizational and planning tips that can be used to help children at both home and school.

Games and Activities That Can Practice Planning

- The Sims
This game enhances planning because it requires the player to take control of a human and to try and maintain and plan their daily and long-term aspects of life.
- Rollercoaster Tycoon, Zoo Tycoon, and Civilization
These games allow your child to replay them many times, allowing him to set different goals each time and to recognize how changing these goals affects his strategies.
- Prepare a meal
Work with your child to do all the planning for a family meal, including making a shopping list, going shopping, cooking the meal, setting the table, and cleaning up.
- Putting on a back-to-school fashion show
Help your child select school-appropriate outfits under the guise of a "back-to-school fashion show." This will help him to recognize the benefits of planning and also allow him to recognize appropriate outfits when dressing during the school year.
- Chess, Checkers, and Connect Four
You can use these strategy games to help your child practice identifying different techniques that produce successful outcomes.
- Play-date activities
Have your child plan the activities he wants to do when a friend is coming over for a play-date and assist him in setting these activities up in advance. Remind him that this will allow him and his friend to use more of their play time actually playing, rather than deciding what to do or setting up.