

Improve 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 to improve 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

1. Have your child identify a desired day-trip 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; 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.

2. 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.

3. 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 (s)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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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 him/herself to the game, talk with your child about how (s)he used planning skills to help improve his/her performance in gameplay. You may even wish to ask him to show you some of the specific planning strategies that (s)he used in gameplay.

7. 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/her 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.

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 aspirations and tasks.

“Rollercoaster Tycoon,” “Zoo Tycoon,” and “Civilization” – these, or similar games allow your child to set different goals each time they play through, which in turn allows your child 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/her to recognize the benefits of planning and also allow your child 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 (s)he wants to do when a friend is coming over for a play-date and assist him/her in setting these activities up in advance. Remind your child 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.

Websites on Planning

[LearningWorks for Kids](#): The premier resource for executive function information, offering a detailed explanation of planning, tips for parents, and activities to improve this skill.

[PBS](#): This site offers a short but informative list of techniques parents can use to help instill successful daily

planning skills in their children.

[Cozi](#): 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](#): This site offers organizational and planning tips that can be used to help children at both home and school.

Books and Articles on Planning

[Boosting Executive Skills in the Classroom: A Practical Guide for Educators](#) by Joyce Cooper-Kahn and Margaret Foster. (Ch. 3,4,7) “A guide for helping students with weak Executive Function skills to learn efficiently and effectively” -Amazon

[Brain Hacks: Work Smarter, Stay Focused, and Achieve Your Goals](#) by Lara Honos-Webb, PhD. (Ch. 3) “Filled with actionable strategies proven to improve focus, increase productivity, and promote well-being, Brain Hacks will help you transform the way you work, live, and feel by tapping into the power of your executive functioning skills.” – Amazon

[Executive Functioning Workbook](#) by Melissa Mullin, PhD. and Karen Fried, Psy.D. (Unit 6,7) “This EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING WORKBOOK increases student’s ability to plan, start, and finish work independently. It identifies student’s aims and challenges, builds thinking skills, and provides tools to help build organizational strategies.”- Amazon

[Executive Functioning Skills Printables Workbook: For Students Learning Life Skills](#) S.B. Linton (pg. 3-9) “For teens and youth with special needs. These are Executive Functioning Skills Printables Worksheets for Students with Autism, Similar Special Needs, ADHD, LD and Executive Functioning Needs.”- Amazon

[Executive Functioning Workbook for Kids: 40 Fun Activities to Build Memory, Flexible Thinking, and Self-Control Skills at](#)

[Home, in School, and Beyond](#) by Sharon Grand, PhD, BCN. (Ch. 3,5) “Help kids grow their executive functioning skills with activities for ages 6 to 9!”- Amazon

[Learning to Plan and Be Organized: Executive Function Skills for Kids With AD/HD](#) by Kathleen Nadeau, PhD. (Ch. 3,4,5,9) “Featuring real-life advice, strategies, and tips, Learning to Plan and Be Organized is a practical guide that teaches kids with AD/HD how to enhance their executive function skills of planning and organization.” -Amazon

[Organizational Skills Training for Children with ADHD](#) by Richard Gallagher, Howard B. Abikiff, and Elana G. Spira. (pt. 2) “This indispensable manual presents an easy-to-implement intervention with proven effectiveness for children with ADHD in grades 3 to 5.”- Amazon

[Playing Smarter in a Digital World: A Guide to Choosing and Using Popular Video Games and Apps to Improve Executive Functioning in Children and Teens](#) by Randy Kulman, Ph.D. (Ch. 9) “A book to help parents to make their children’s digital playtime educational”- Amazon

[School Made Easier: A Kid’s Guide to Study Strategies and Anxiety-Busting Tools](#) by Wendy L. Moss, PhD, and Robin A. DeLuca-Acconi, LSCW (Ch. 4) “ The book teaches students ways to reduce their anxiety, increase their confidence in school, and study more effectively.” – Amazon

[Smart but Scattered: The Revolutionary “Executive Skills” Approach to Helping Kids Reach Their Potential](#) by Peg Dawson, EdD, and Richard Guare, PhD (Ch. 16) “Small changes can add up to big improvements–this empowering book shows how.”- Amazon

[The Organized Child : An Effective Program to Maximize Your Kid’s Potential–in School and in Life](#) by Richard Gallagher, PhD, Elana G. Spira, PhD, and Jennifer L. Rosenblatt, PhD. (Ch. 10) “Concrete examples, tips for strategically using praise and rewards, and practical tools (you can download and

print additional copies as needed) help you implement each step of the program. Maximizing your kid's potential starts now—here's how.”- Amazon

[The “Putting on the Brakes” Activity Book for Young People With ADHD](#) by Patricia O’Quinn, M.D. | Judith M. Stern, M.A. (pt.4) “Provides people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder with suggestions, puzzles, and activities to help them understand and gain control over their condition and improve their study habits.”- Amazo

[Train Your Brain for Success: A Teenager’s Guide to Executive Functions](#) by Randy Kulman, Ph.D. (Ch. 4) “ Beginning with a test to determine executive-functioning strengths and weaknesses, the book then explores in detail eight distinct sets of skills, including planning, organization, focus, time management, self-control, , memory, and self-awareness.”- Amazon