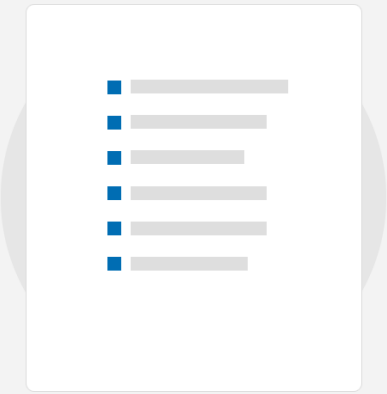
Checklists for Teachers



Getting students' attention

- [ ] Ask an interesting, speculative question, show a picture, tell a little story, or read a related poem to generate discussion and interest in the upcoming lesson.
- [ ] Try "'playfulness," silliness, a bit of theatrics (props and storytelling) to get attention and peak interest.
- [ ] Use storytelling. Students of all ages love to hear stories, especially personal stories. It is very effective in getting attention.
- [ ] Add a bit of mystery. Bring in an object relevant to the upcoming lesson in a box, bag, or pillowcase. This is a wonderful way to generate predictions and can lead to excellent discussions or writing activities.
- [ ] Signal students auditorily: ring a bell, use a beeper or timer, play a bar of music on the piano or guitar, etc.
- [ ] Vary your tone of voice: loud, soft, whispering. Try making a louder command "Listen! Freeze! Ready!" followed by a few seconds of silence before proceeding in a normal voice to give directions.
- [ ] Use visual signals: flash the lights or raise your hand which signals the students to raise their hands and close their mouths until everyone is silent.
- [ ] Frame the visual material you want students to be focused on with your hands or with a colored box around it.
- [ ] If using an overhead, place an object (e.g., little toy car or plastic figure) to be projected on the screen to get attention.
- [ ] Use eye contact. Students should be facing you when you are speaking, especially while instructions are being given. If students are seated in clusters, have those students not directly facing you turn their chairs and bodies around to face you when signaled to do so.
- [ ] Color is very effective in getting attention. Make use of colored dry-erase pens on white boards, colored overhead pens for transparencies and overhead projectors, and colored paper to highlight key words, phrases, steps to computation problems, spelling patterns, etc.
- [ ] Model excitement and enthusiasm about the upcoming lesson.

- [ ] Clearly signal: "Everybody…Ready…"

Focusing students' attention

- [ ] Employ multisensory strategies when directions are given and a lesson is presented.
- [ ] Maintain your visibility.
- [ ] Project your voice and make sure you can be heard clearly by all students.
- [ ] Be aware of competing sounds in your room environment (such as noisy heaters or air conditioning unit.)
- [ ] Call students up front and close to you for direct instruction (e.g., seated on the carpet by the board).
- [ ] Position all students so that they can see the board and/or overhead screen. Always allow students to readjust their seating and signal you if their visibility is blocked.
- [ ] Incorporate demonstrations and hands-on presentations into your teaching whenever possible.
- [ ] Explain the purpose and relevance to hook students in to your lesson.
- [ ] Use a flashlight or laser pointer. Turn off the lights and get students to focus by illuminating objects or individuals with the light.
- [ ] Use study guides/sheets that are partial outlines. While you are presenting a lesson or giving a lecture, students fill in the missing words based on what you are saying and/or writing on the board or overhead.
- [ ] Use visuals. Write key words or pictures on the board or overhead projector while presenting. Use pictures, diagrams, gestures, manipulatives, and high-interest material.
- [ ] Illustrate, illustrate, illustrate: It doesn't matter if you don't draw well to illustrate throughout your presentation. Give yourself and students permission and encouragement to draw even if you lack the skill or talent. Drawings don't have to be sophisticated or accurate. In fact, often the sillier, the better. Have fun with it. These silly illustrations get and maintain attention and help students understand and remember the material (sequence of events, key points, abstract information, etc.).
- [ ] Point with a dowel, a stick/pointer, or laser pointer to written material you want students to focus on. If you can find a pointer /dowel with a little hand/ finger on it, even better.
- [ ] Block out material by covering or removing from the visual field that which you visually don't want students to focus on. Remove the distracting clutter from the board or screen.
- [ ] Have students write down brief notes or illustrate key points during instruction.

Maintaining students' attention

- [ ] Move around in the classroom to maintain your visibility.
- [ ] Teach thematically whenever possible, allowing for integration of ideas/concepts and connections to be made.
- [ ] Present at a lively, brisk pace.
- [ ] Be prepared and avoid lag time in instruction.
- [ ] Use pictures, diagrams, gestures, manipulatives, and high interest materials.
- [ ] Use higher-level questioning techniques. Ask questions that are open-ended, require reasoning, and stimulate critical thinking and discussion.

- [ ] Decrease the amount of time you are doing the talking. Make all efforts to greatly increase student responses (saying and doing something with the information being taught).
- [ ] Use direct instruction techniques and other methods of questioning that allow for high response opportunities (i.e., unison responses, partner/buddy responses).
- [ ] Structure the lesson so that it can be done in pairs or small groups for maximum student involvement and attention.
- [ ] Alter the way students are called on to avoid calling on students one at a time. Instead, have students respond by "telling their partner," writing down or drawing their response, or other alternative way.
- [ ] Make frequent use of group or unison responses when there is one correct and short answer. While presenting, stop frequently and have students repeat back a word or two.
- [ ] Use the proper structure of cooperative learning groups (i.e., assignment of roles, accountability). It is not just group work. ADHD students do not typically function well in groups without clearly defined structure and expectations.
- [ ] Allowing students to use individual chalkboards or dry-erase boards throughout the lesson is motivating to students and helps maintain attention. If used properly it is also effective in checking for students' understanding and determining who needs extra help and practice.
- [ ] Use motivating computer programs for specific skill building and practice (programs that provide for frequent feedback and self correction.

Keeping students on-task during seat work

- [ ] Check for clarity. Make sure directions are clear and understood before sending students back to their seats to work independently.
- [ ] Make sure necessary supplies are available.
- [ ] Give a manageable amount of work that the student is capable of doing independently.
- [ ] Give other "failproof " work that student can do in the meantime if he or she is stumped on an assignment and needs to wait for teacher attention or assistance.
- [ ] Study buddies or partners may be assigned for any clarification purposes during seat work, especially when you are instructing another group of students while part of the class is doing seat work.
- [ ] Have students use signals to the teacher/aide for "I need help!" Some teachers use a sign or a colored signal that students may place on their desk that alerts any adult scanning the room that the student needs assistance.
- [ ] Scan classroom frequently. All students need positive reinforcement. Give positive comments with high frequency, praising students specifically whom you observe to be on-task. This serves as a reminder to students who tend to have difficulty.
- [ ] Consider using a timer for some students who work well with a "beat the clock" system for work completion.
- [ ] Use contracts, charts, and behavior-modification systems for on-task behavior.
- [ ] Reward for the certain number of completed items that are done with accuracy.
- [ ] Provide desk examples for reference.
- [ ] Use response costs and natural consequences for off-task behavior. Students might "owe you time" at the end of the day, before school, or for part of recess time. If they are on a point system, they may be fined points if a reasonable amount of work isn't accomplished.
- [ ] Make use of study carrels or quiet office areas for seat work.

- [ ] Teach students to self-monitor their own on-task behavior. Some teachers use an auditory signal (e.g., audio tape with intermittent beeps) and students reward themselves with points if they are on-task when the beeps go off.

Make and Share Free Checklists
checkli.com