



# Online Learning for Children and Adolescents with ADHD

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## Possible benefits of online learning for students living with ADHD

- being able to schedule schoolwork during the best time of day for optimal learning often when medication is at its peak;
- students can adapt their pace if more, or less time is required to absorb the lesson;
- the ability to minimize disruptions and distractions;
- tasks can be chunked into smaller portions;
- more one on one attention if working with a parent;
- more opportunity for movement breaks and to move while working (exercise ball, standing desk, fidget toys) if hyperactivity is an issue; and
- the ability to use aerobic exercise to assist with focus before doing school work.

## Possible difficulties with online learning for students living with ADHD

- more independent work and less structure;
- access to inappropriate environments for learning such as the living room couch;
- working on a home computer with easy Internet, e-mail, YouTube, Facebook and computer game access can lead to significant online distractions;
- poor executive function can result in challenges including difficulty with understanding instructions, breaking down larger tasks, organization, time management, prioritizing tasks, getting started and completing work, forgetting assignments and the inability to set long term goals;
- less self regulation means a greater need for outside support and structure which will be more difficult to access;
- easier to procrastinate with less immediate accountability;
- parents become the teacher and principal may take a toll on the parent/child relationship.

## Home Strategies for Online Learning for Students Living with ADHD

As a parent, you will need to be more involved with your child's learning. Sit down with your child and discuss the pitfalls listed above and the strategies listed below. They may be thinking that online learning will be easy. They may be anticipating sleeping in and being able to work when they feel like it, but without structure they will fail.

**Note:** not all strategies are uniformly beneficial for all students living with ADHD

- Make sure that the sleep schedule is as consistent as possible.
- Put tools in place so computers automatically shut down at a defined time.
- Put structure in place. Work at the same time each day and limit distractions.
- Set up a place to learn away from distractions.
- Work when most alert and medication is working well.
- Use aerobic exercise prior to starting work to increase focus.
- Use a timer for periods of work and break time.
- Use a clock that allows for the viewing of time passing.
- Allow movement breaks and use things that allow for movement while working such as an exercise ball for a chair, standing desk, seat that allows for squirming and fidget toys.
- Review your progress every few days and decide what needs to be improved.
- When internal distracting thoughts and worries occur write them down and then let them go while working, rather than voicing them or dwelling on them.
- Use electronic reminders to prompt work times and assignment due dates.
- Ask for and print written instructions. Review and underline important points and refer to them frequently.
- Rewrite instructions in bullet point form if they are too lengthy and wordy.
- Find someone responsible to help keep you accountable.
- Reward after work times are complete.

## Tips for reading and note taking

- Highlight in different colours as you read to categorize information.
- Doodle notes in the margin when you come to an important point.
- Use your phone or other recorder to make audio notes.
- Try standing while you read.
- Read out loud to yourself with enthusiasm.
- If possible, get the audio version of the book so you can make notes while listening.
- Tips for Educators when their Students with ADHD are working Online

## Teaching Students Living with ADHD Online

Since students living with ADHD will have fewer self regulation and executive functioning skills than other students online learning will cause a greater challenge. The structure to their day and classes will no longer exist when they are online. They will have greater difficulty initiating work, understanding and not misinterpreting instructions, staying focused and motivated to complete assignments, chunk larger assignments down into manageable pieces and time managing their work. They will over and underestimate the amount of time required. They find it easier to procrastinate when they have less oversight and accountability.

Parents will find online learning very stressful. They will not only need to take on the role of teacher, they will need to put in place the required structure, time management and accountability required while also solving any problems that arise. Most parents find that normal homework times already strain their parent/child relationships. It is also important for educators to also understand that many parents of students living with ADHD are also living with their own ADHD.

## Tips for Educators

- Realize that parents may need to be a part of the communication chain.
- Ask the student and their parents where they anticipate problems and how you can assist.
- Share tips on how parent can put more structure in place.
- Design ways for easy communication between you, the parent and the student.
- Make yourself available to clarify instructions and answer questions.
- Confirm understanding of the instructions and ensure that there has been no misinterpretation or gaps.
- Start with a summary of what the goal of this learning exercise is. Those with ADHD are more engaged when they understand the point of the exercise.
- Start with a bullet list of important points about the assignment and add more details later.
- Supply instructions that can be downloaded and printed in easy to understand bullet points.
- Try to make the online learning experience as multisensory as possible. Colour code information if possible.
- Smaller, shorter assignments with fewer steps are preferable.
- Supply a bullet point list of the steps in the process.
- Assist students to break down larger assignments and time manage individual chunks.
- Make allowances for errors in detailed work.
- Provide a visual checklist of steps required or parts necessary to complete the assignment.
- Flexibility on due dates when load of assignments is overwhelming.
- The more immediate the feedback and praise for completion the better.

## CADDAC Resources for Educators

- <https://caddac.ca/adhd/understanding-adhd/in-education/information-resources-for-educators/>
- <https://caddac.ca/adhd/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/EF-and-ADHD-Teaching-Strategies-Accommodations-FINAL2018.pdf>
- <https://caddac.ca/adhd/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Elementary-Impairment-Accomm-chart-with-check-boxes-FINAL.pdf>
- <https://caddac.ca/adhd/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Secondary-School-Impairment-Accomm-chart-with-check-boxes-FINAL.pdf>

### Sources used in this document that can be accessed for additional information

- <https://openforest.net/6-ways-e-learning-meet-adhd-needs/>
- <https://www.noodle.com/articles/10-ways-college-students-with-adhd-can-succeed-in-online-courses>
- <https://soarnc.org/online-school-for-students-with-adhd/>
- <https://www.verywellmind.com/college-students-with-adhd-20820>
- <https://thisisreno.com/2020/03/covid-19-online-learning-solutions-present-challenges-for-students-with-autism-adhd-kunr/>
- <https://elearningindustry.com/how-develop-online-courses-learners-with-attention-deficit-disorder>