Low-Tech DIY Strategies
For Students With Learning Challenges

EDUCATION
MODIFIED

Calming Manipulatives

Summary

Provide your child / student with a Calming Manipulative so that they are able to keep their hands busy while keeping their mind focused on learning.

Best For Students Who

Frequently change from one activity to the next; Are fidgety or always up and on the go; Seem to be thinking about something other than the activity taking place in front of them.

DIY Tips

- Use what you have around the house such as a stress ball, velcro, small ball of play-dough, artist's kneadable eraser, bendy straw, foam packing peanuts, etc.
- Take care that the object doesn't make excessive noise or else it will become a distraction instead of a support.
- Explain the purpose of the object. Be clear that it is not a toy. Nor is it to take the place of the work or task at hand.

Related Articles

[What Makes a Good Fidget](#)

[Teacher Tip: The Dos and Don'ts of Fidgets for Kids](#)

[The Benefits of Fidgeting for Students With ADHD](#)

Elastic Chair Band

Summary

Provide your child / student with an Elastic Chair Band tied around the legs of a chair so that they can move their legs while quietly doing seated work.

Best For Students Who

Have a lot of energy; Are easily distracted; Are kinesthetic learners.

DIY Tips

- Create your own chair band using elastic exercise bands, bungee cords, or rope.
- Document when during the day when your child / student is most hyperactive and needs physical stimulation.

Related Articles

[Wiggle While You Work: Study Finds Bouncy Bands Keep Students On Task (EdWeek)](#)

[17 Ways to Help Students With ADHD Concentrate (Edutopia)](#)

Timer

DIY Tips

- Find a small sand timer from an old board game such as Boggle or Taboo.
- Set your oven or kitchen timer.
- Use our **Analog Time Management GoogleDoc** to help your child / student know how long they should stay on-task.
- If you have a computer / internet, use these fun online timer tools: **Fun Online Classroom Timers (FREE)**

Summary

Provide your child / student with a visual Timer so that they are able to see how much time has passed, monitor their own time-on-task and make better time management decisions.
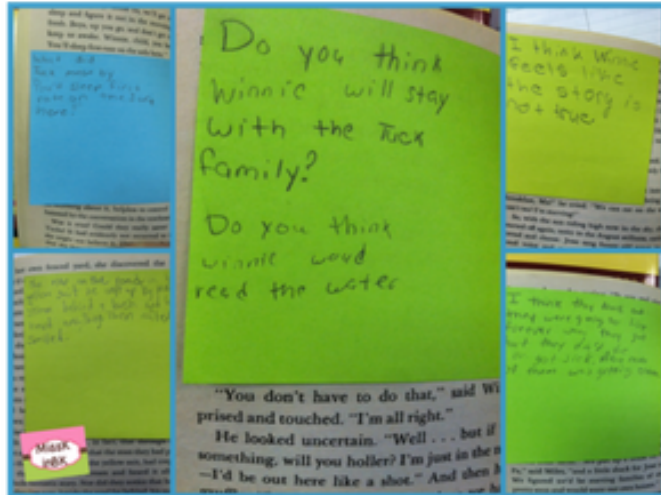
Best For Students Who

Are easily distracted internally or by outside stimuli; Delay task initiation.

Related Articles

ADHD in School: Focus and Time on Task

Sticky Note Annotation

DIY Tips

- Use any type of Post It Note or self-sticking pad of paper.
- Make sure the sticky note is big enough for your student to write on. The square size is usually sufficient.
- Have students label pages in a book that contain their favorite quotes or questions about the plot.

Summary

Teach your child / student to develop the practice of Sticky Note Annotation so that they can mark, add a note, or ask a question about an important part of a text.

Best For Students Who

Spend too much time and energy finding parts of a text; Struggle with note taking; Get lost in a text.

Related Articles

How sticky notes help my students read novels independently

Aiding Reading Comprehension With Post-its (Edutopia)

Closed Captioning

DIY Tips

- If possible, adjust the size and color of the subtitles so they are large enough and bright enough.
- Closed captioning can also be easily activated on streaming services such as YouTube, Netflix, etc.

Summary

Activate the Closed Captioning feature on your TV so that your child / student can read the dialogue while they watch and listen.

Best For Students Who

Have trouble integrating sight and sound information; Are easily distracted; Need multiple avenues for engagement.

Related Articles

Captioning to Support Literacy

Find closed-captioned and subtitled content

Netflix subtitles

How Closed Captions Help ESL Learners Improve Their English Skills

Speech Out of Sync for Autistics

Choice Board

TIC-TAC-TOE Choice Board For a Book Report

Draw a picture of the main character.	Perform a play that shows the conclusion of a story.	Write a song about one of the main events.
Write a poem about two main events in the story.	Make a poster that shows the order of events in the story.	Dress up as your favorite character and perform a speech telling who you are.
Create a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the introduction to the closing.	Write two paragraphs about the main character.	Write two paragraphs about the setting.

Summary

Present your child / student with a Choice Board so that they are able to communicate their preferences and stay motivated and engaged with learning activities.

Best For Students Who

Are in need of strong communication strategies; Need motivation to take initiative; Are visual learners; Can readily interpret pictures.

DIY Tips

- A Choice Board can be presented as a Menu or a Tic Tac Toe board of options.
- Nothing fancy is required – just sketch a Tic Tac Toe board and add several options for your child / student to choose from.
- Create a Choice Board with pictures, objects, or in writing to show what the options are.
- Must be a minimum of 2 choices.
- Use Choice Boards proactively – before your child / student refuses to complete a task.

Related Articles

Giving Students a Choice with Their Learning.
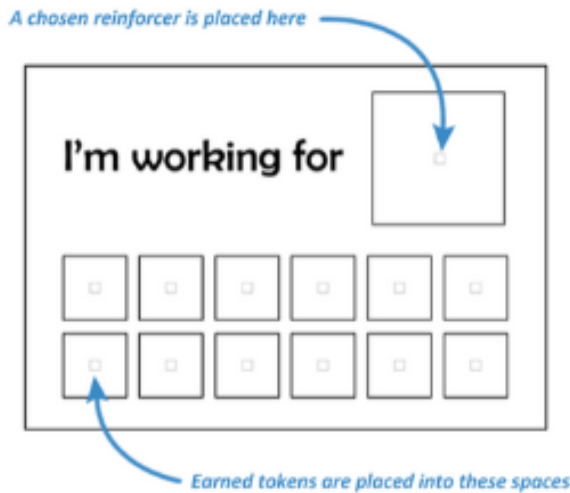
Using Choice Boards to Increase Student Ownership

What are choice boards?

For ASD Students: Choice Boards (Autism Circuit)

Tic-Tac-Toe Choice Menu Template

For ASD Students: Choice Board Template Downloads (OCALI)

Token Economy

A chosen reinforcer is placed here

I'm working for

Earned tokens are placed into these spaces

DIY Tips

- First, select the behavior you wish to help your child / student improve upon.
- Second, make sure that the token reinforcement program is designed to increase positive behaviors and habits.
- Next, be sure to develop a way to track the tokens or points the student receives.
- Choose a reward that is something that is desirable to your child / student.
- The next step is to establish the number of needed tokens to achieve the reward.
- Always follow through and provide the reward to your child / student.

Summary

Create a Token Economy to motivate your child / student to maintain appropriate learning behavior so that they can be more successful with the task at hand.

Best For Students Who

Are in need of powerful motivational tools to succeed; Are in need of robust incentives; Benefit from visual and tangible rewards.

Related Articles

How to Create a Token Economy System to Improve Your Child's Behavior

How to Use a Token Economy at Home

PBISWorld School Reward Dollars

Token Board Download (FREE)

The Dos and Don'ts of a Token Economy

Classroom Interventions for Children with Attention Deficit Disorder

Color Coded Folders

DIY Tips

- If you don't have colored folders, make your own by coloring 1) large envelopes, 2) manilla folders, or 3) legal sized paper folded in half.
- Make sure folders are clearly labeled with the subject.
- Make a folder checklist and tape it to the front of the folder so they know what materials should be in each folder.

Summary

Provide your child / student with Color Coded Folders for each subject so that they can keep their work organized.

Best For Students Who

Struggle with organization; Often lose or misplace handouts or assignments; Need stronger structure for organizing.

Related Articles

15 Ways to Teach Better Organization to Kids with ADHD

7 Color-Coding Tips to Get Your Child Organized

Color-Coding Helps with Executive Functioning Issues

Finished Box

DIY Tips

- You can use any letter-sized container such as 1) a large shoe-box, 2) cardboard shipping container, 3) tray, 4) pizza box, or 5) plastic container.
- The Finished Box should be in a central place in the home, not tucked in a hard-to-reach corner.
- It is important to be consistent with its use – if your child / student turns work into you directly, redirect them to the box.

Summary

Set up a Finished Box for your child / student's completed work so that they improve their organizational skills, turn in work on time, and feel a sense of accomplishment doing so.

Best For Students Who

Often do not pass in assignments even when they are complete; Are disorganized; Complete work then lose it.

Related Articles

How to set up a finished work box

Creating structured work systems in the classroom

Helping students with ASD garner independence