



# 4 Proven Strategies for Teaching Students with ADHD

Helping students with ADHD succeed in  
your classroom



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This information was created and shared by a former Special Education Teacher and Teaching Channel Curriculum & Instruction Specialist with nearly a decade of special education experience.

I have worked with several students with ADHD, each with unique characteristics. Some demonstrated mainly characteristics of inattention, while other students presented more hyperactivity and impulsivity. A few of my students struggled with regulating their emotions and maintaining friendships, while others struggled with organization, time management, and completing tasks.



I had to adjust my standards for focus and for discipline. Notice that I didn't say "lower" my standards, I simply had to adjust them. I had to identify what they needed and recognize what they needed was some understanding.

It is better to provide strategies that allow students to focus on class rather than fight the discipline issues of fidgety, squirmy and sometimes detached students. These interventions were self-monitored (except on a very rare occasion when I needed to step in), and I really feel like it made the kids more responsible for their own behavior and their own learning.



# Four of my favorite, go-to methods for teaching students with ADHD

Perhaps these methods can also be beneficial for your students

## 1. Movement Breaks

To manage both hyperactive and inattentive behaviors, I incorporated "movement breaks" several times throughout each day for my students. These were as simple as standing up to stretch, striking a fun yoga pose, or taking a quick lap around the school. At least once per week, I would throw a "one-song dance party." I am a terrible dancer, but this truly was a great way to re-energize and refocus everyone. My students made song requests for upcoming dance parties and they invited special guests, such as the principal, to join in on the fun. I found that even short movement breaks provided an energy release for my students, which refocused and relaxed them, making them ready to learn.

## 2. A Consistent, Structured Schedule

Students with ADHD thrive when they know what to expect throughout the day, so posting a consistent, structured daily schedule or class agenda in my classroom helped students stay on-task during instruction times and organized during transitions. When there were inevitable schedule changes,

I informed my students in advance of what to expect.

During independent work time and other less-structured parts of the day, I provided clear expectations and used a timer to encourage students to work on a given task until the timer went off, promoting focus and time management

## 3. Share Time

To increase social skills and academic achievement, I facilitated a brief “share time” on a regular basis in my classroom. Students would tell the class what they did over the weekend or they would share something they were looking forward to later that day. Sharing helped students find common interests, which fostered relationships for those who had difficulty with maintaining friendships.

Through share time, I also learned so much valuable information about my students, including what they were interested in.

Because students with ADHD often struggle with academics

I tailored my lesson plans around their interests and strengths to promote success.

## 4. Calming/Relaxation Strategies And Visuals

Students with ADHD often experience more intense feelings than other students and they often need support with regulating emotions. Some go-to calming techniques my students used include: deep breathing, slowly counting backwards from 10, using positive self-talk, requesting a walk to the drinking fountain or to the bathroom, drawing, reading a book, listening to calming music, and squeezing a stress ball. It is important that students learn and practice calming/relaxation strategies before experiencing strong feelings or losing control. We practiced various techniques as a whole-group on a regular basis (for example: first thing in the morning and right after lunch). Using visuals, I posted a menu of my students' favorite relaxation techniques on the wall to refer to as needed. Visuals are an effective method for students with ADHD to regain control of their emotions and behaviors.

The best part is that several strategies were beneficial as whole-class strategies. Many students benefited from movement breaks, cooperative learning opportunities, and multi-modal instruction.

Though the focus of these interventions and supports would be implemented to provide relief from ADHD symptoms, they also improved the environment for all.

**Looking for more methods to help students with ADHD succeed?**

[Register](#) for Teaching Channel Course 5027 - ADHD: Focusing, Learning, Teaching to shed some light on the questions/issues you likely struggle with the most, and learn how to better meet the needs of students with ADHD in your classroom.

A Special Education teacher from Maine recently completed [Teaching Channel Course 5027, ADHD: Focusing, Learning and Teaching](#), and compiled visuals to illustrate example techniques that could be used to address these behaviors with reinforcers to promote and support corrected behaviors. Check out her charts below and use them to succeed with students with ADHD in your classroom.

## Techniques and Strategies for Distractibility at School

Strategy	Reasoning
<b>Clearly establish/post rules and expectations</b>	Knowing being on task is expected of all kids may help the student know that any time the teacher prompts them or attempts to correct their behaviors, it is because she is helping her adhere to the expectations.
<b>Reward time on task fun motor breaks</b>	Providing students with miniature “recess breaks” where they can exercise some of her energy off with help them focus afterwards.
<b>Allow for periods of work time with a peer</b>	Obviously a peer would not be expected to monitor another student’s behavior, but there would be a good possibility that the little bit of engagement with a peer would help the student think that school was a tad less boring, and would hold their attention for a longer period of time.
<b>Use intentional engagement; probe/question the student often</b>	Keeping the student on their toes by actively engaging then will let them know that her attention (and opinion) are valued. Make sure the student is praised for their ability to respond to the probes and questions, and forgive times when they are not able to.

## Category A (annoying and non-compliant behaviors)

Behavior Needing Correction	Ignore or Student Break Appropriate?	Reward(s) or Reinforces(s)
Clearly establish/post rules and expectations	Either, depending on the force being used and if the student might hurt themselves.	Tell student of their positive contributions to the classroom environment.
Reward time on task fun motor breaks	Ignore	Call on student often when demonstrating appropriate behaviors. Invite them to model problems or "be the teacher" at the whiteboard after prolonged improvement.
Allow for periods of work time with a peer	Ignore	Initiate conversations with the student; allow for social free time to demonstrate and practice; praise throughout.
Use intentional engagement; probe/question the student often	Ignore	Nice notes home to family on days where there are improvements. Tangible prize for prolonged improvement s(pencils, gum, popcorn, etc.)

**"Call on student often when demonstrating appropriate behaviors. Invite them to model problems or "be the teacher" at the whiteboard after prolonged improvement."**



## Category B (physically aggressive/dangerous behaviors)

Behavior Needing Correction	Ignore or Student Break Appropriate?	Reward(s) or Reinforces(s)
<b>Pushing the line</b>	Student break	Appropriate behavior in line could result specific complement first, and then eventually line leader privileges if prolonged.
<b>Kicking another student under the table</b>	Student break	Thank student when being safe, long-term safety could result in free choice of seat or sit at teacher desk.
<b>Throwing books</b>	Ignore if students are not at risk; time out if throwing books towards peers	Thumbs up for safe handling, and choose the read-aloud book after prolonged safe handling.
<b>Punching students</b>	Student break	Thank student when being safe, long-term safety could result in time manipulating clay/Play-Doh for sensory stimulation.

With a clear plan for addressing and correcting behaviors, a teacher is prepared for immediately responding to behaviors, and supporting students in their journey towards self-improvement.



# Want to become an expert at helping students with ADD/ADHD?

Explore our special populations courses!

## **Course 5027 - ADHD: Focusing, Learning Teaching**

This online course for teachers will shed some light on the questions/issues you likely struggle with the most, and help you better meet the needs of students. This course will explore such issues as diagnosis, recommended interventions, and methods for increasing appropriate behaviors. Also discover some relaxation and stress management techniques for you- the educator- to help you help students along the way.

[Register Here: Course 5027](#)

## **Course 776 – Across the Spectrum: Teaching Students with Autism**

This course has been designed to help you work with students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the mainstream classroom. You will explore the following components associated with

ASD: anxiety, sensory processing, engagement, classroom communication, parent/teacher communication and collaboration, and associated behaviors. You will learn many strategies designed to help your students with autism experience success in the mainstream classroom.

[Register Here: Course 776](#)