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# BACK TO SCHOOL...

## WITH ADHD!

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### Techniques to help your grade-schooler this Fall

#### What's a 504 plan?

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Refers to Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which states that schools must provide students with disabilities with accommodations that help them meet their educational needs. A 504 plan is established by a school-parent team and can include accommodations like reading test items aloud, extra time during tests, or dividing assignments into smaller parts.

#### What's an IEP?

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An IEP (Individualized Education Program) is related to IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). To qualify, a student must require "specialized instruction and related services". Students with IEP's may get services like speech therapy or participate in one-on-one reading help. They also can get accommodations in the classroom, just like with a 504 plan. An IEP should be periodically updated and the student's progress measured with a school-parent team.

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### Don't Be Afraid to Advocate

Advocating for your child who has ADHD doesn't mean that you have to be aggressive, adversarial, or mean. In fact, advocacy can start with a gentle and non-confrontational introduction. Take your child to the school with you to meet teachers and administrators before the school year begins. Get to know your child's teacher and guidance counselor. Make sure they are aware of your child's specific challenges, their goals, and strengths.

Many parents are afraid to tell teachers that their child has ADHD because they fear their child will become the classroom scapegoat. While this can certainly happen, the benefits of having a teacher who is prepared for a few challenges from the start can outweigh the risks of being "outed" for having ADHD. It also increases the odds that your child will have a smooth school year—right from the beginning!

Consider sharing the resources listed (p.2) with teachers to help them with ideas and strategies that help with ADHD in the classroom. If your child has a hard time with their particular teacher, don't be afraid to ask for a meeting with the teacher and other administrators to see what can be problem-solved.



## Avoiding Homework Meltdowns

Any parent of a child with ADHD knows the horrors of what can ensue when homework-time goes wrong. Here are some techniques to try:

- Get a kitchen timer, sand-timer, or visual timer like the "Time Timer" to help your child work in small increments to avoid getting overwhelmed
- Intersperse homework with exercise or active time- even a few jumping jacks or a lap around the backyard can be a big help
- How much homework is too much? Some experts say 10-20 minutes per grade level. So if your 3rd grader is spending more than 30-60 minutes a night, you may want to talk to the teacher about cutting down on the number of homework problems.
- Be near-by. Some kids with ADHD just need an adult near them to keep them on track. This doesn't have to mean sitting next to them and watching their every move, either. It can be as simple as having them do homework while you cook dinner in the next room and checking on them every 10-15 minutes.
- Ask if your child's teacher can help with checking an assignment folder, in order to decrease missed work and make sure worksheets actually make it home.

## Keep An Eye On Self-Image

Kids with ADHD can struggle with self-esteem from a surprisingly early age. Competition, grading, and noticing differences can all contribute to lack of confidence. Social skills development can also be challenging for some kids with ADHD and trouble making and keeping friends can be hard to cope with. Monitor your child's mood and offer to help them work through difficult situations. If you feel your child's issues need more support than you can offer, ask your child's guidance counselor for help or get in touch with a licensed therapist in your area.

## Ready, Set, ROUTINE!

Many families get out of their normal routines during summer, it happens! Know your child and how long it usually takes them to adapt to a new schedule. Starting at least a week before school, try to ease back into the school-season bed times and wake times that will help them succeed. Transitioning back to school is hard enough when your child isn't cranky and sleepy from having their schedule change. You can also start having your child get in the routine of picking out clothing the evening before and other behaviors that make mornings run smoother.

If your child took a "medication vacation" this summer, be sure to get in touch with your pediatrician and talk about a plan of action to get back into a medication routine that works for your child. You may also want to find out the school's policy for children who need medication during the school day or talk to the school nurse if necessary.

## Don't Underestimate the Power of Positives

Having a child with ADHD is challenging and it is not uncommon for parents to get discouraged or worried about their child. When talking to teachers and school administrators, try and focus on the strengths your child has- what makes them spectacular? what are they exceptionally good at? These can be used as avenues to help compensate for problem-areas.

Use positive language when talking to your child about the upcoming school year and their abilities. Ridicule, shaming and name-calling are BIG no-no's. Work on giving positive feedback and keep an eye-out for good behavior to praise: "I like how you remembered to pick your clothes for tomorrow, that will help make this school year a lot easier!"

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# RESOURCE GUIDE

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## General ADHD Info:

ADDitude: Strategies & Support for LD and ADHD. Information on parenting and treatment approaches.

<http://www.additudemag.com>

National Institute of Mental Health: What Is ADHD?

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder-adhd/index.shtml>

## Websites for 504 & IEP Information:

National Center for Learning Disabilities: Info on 504/IEP including holding successful meetings, reasonable accommodations, legal rights

<http://www.ncld.org/students-disabilities/iep-504-plan>

US Department of Education: Guide to IEP

<http://www2.ed.gov/parents/needs/speced/iepguide/index.html>

Educational Rights for Children with ADHD

<http://www.helpforadd.com/educational-rights/>

## Parent & Classroom Support:

PsycCentral. Tips for ADHD Parenting Challenges-

<http://psychcentral.com/lib/parenting-kids-with-adhd-16-tips-to-tackle-common-challenges/0006557>

Creative ADHD Parenting Blog

<http://creativeadhdparenting.blogspot.com>

Using positive language at home and in the classroom to get behavioral results

<http://www.responsiveclassroom.org/article/want-positive-behavior-use-positive-language>

Classroom Accommodations List:

[http://addwarehouse.com/shopsite\\_sc/store/html/article4.htm](http://addwarehouse.com/shopsite_sc/store/html/article4.htm)

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