# 1. Task Initiation

## Getting Started

### WHAT YOU MAY SEE

Your child knows they have work to do but cannot seem to begin. They may wander, negotiate, get a snack, check their phone, complain, organize unrelated things, or simply sit there. From the outside, this can look like laziness or defiance. Sometimes the difficulty is activating and taking the first step.

### TRY THIS

- Shrink the start: identify only the first action.
- Use a two-minute start: commit to working for just two minutes.
- Prepare first: open the Chromebook, find the assignment, get materials out.
- Use a start time: “Math starts at 6:30” is clearer than “Do math tonight.”
- Try body doubling: quietly work nearby while your child gets started.

### SAY THIS

*“What’s the very first thing you need to do?”*

*“You don’t need to finish it right now. Let’s just get started.”*

*“Would it help if I stayed nearby while you begin?”*

### WATCH OUT FOR

Repeatedly saying “Go do your homework!” louder and with increasing frustration does not make the first step clearer.

### TRY ONE THING THIS WEEK

Choose one starting strategy and use it consistently for several days before deciding whether it works.

# 2. Planning & Prioritizing

## Figuring Out What to Do

### WHAT YOU MAY SEE

Your child has several assignments but does not know where to begin. They may spend 45 minutes on something minor while tomorrow's test or major project gets ignored. Large assignments are especially difficult because "complete the project" is not actually an action.

### TRY THIS

- Get the workload out of their head and onto paper.
- Create one short list of current tasks.
- Sort tasks into Must / Should / Could.
- Turn large assignments into specific next actions.
- Work backward from important deadlines.
- When overwhelmed, plan today rather than the entire week.

### SAY THIS

*"Let's see everything before deciding what to do."*

*"What actually has to happen tonight?"*

*"What's the next action—not the whole project?"*

### WATCH OUT FOR

Do not become your child's project manager. Teach the planning process rather than creating increasingly sophisticated plans for them.

### TRY ONE THING THIS WEEK

Before homework begins, spend two minutes identifying what needs to happen and in what order.

# 3. Organization

## Keeping Track of Things

### WHAT YOU MAY SEE

Missing papers. Forgotten materials. A chaotic backpack. Completed assignments that somehow never reach the teacher. Sometimes the student's organizational system simply requires more executive functioning than they currently have.

### TRY THIS

- Reduce the number of places things can live.
- Create one landing zone for school materials at home.
- Simplify folders rather than creating complicated systems.
- Keep frequently used supplies together.
- Schedule a brief weekly backpack/binder reset.
- After finishing, ask: "Has it actually been submitted?"

### SAY THIS

*"Where does this live?"*

*"Let's give this one permanent home."*

*"The work is finished. What's the last step?"*

### WATCH OUT FOR

An elaborate color-coded system may look fantastic and still fail if maintaining it requires more EF than the child has. Simple beats impressive.

### TRY ONE THING THIS WEEK

Choose the school item most frequently lost or forgotten and create one consistent home for it.

# 4. Working Memory

## Keeping Information in Mind

### WHAT YOU MAY SEE

You give your child three directions. They complete one and forget the other two. They may genuinely have understood you; the information simply did not remain available long enough to use it.

### TRY THIS

- Get information OUT of the brain.
- Write directions down.
- Use short checklists.
- Give one or two steps at a time.
- Keep instructions visible while the student works.
- Ask the student to explain the next step in their own words.
- Place visual reminders where the behavior actually occurs.

### SAY THIS

*“You don’t need to remember all of this. Let’s write it down.”*

*“What’s the one thing you’re doing next?”*

*“Tell me the plan in your own words.”*

### WATCH OUT FOR

“I already told you!” may be true, but hearing information and being able to hold and manipulate it are different things.

### TRY ONE THING THIS WEEK

Replace one repeated verbal reminder with a visible cue or checklist.

# 5. Time Management

## Understanding & Using Time

### WHAT YOU MAY SEE

Your child sincerely believes a 45-minute assignment will take ten minutes. They begin too late, rush, lose track of time during preferred activities, or seem surprised when bedtime arrives. Reading a clock is not the same as sensing duration.

### TRY THIS

- Use visible timers.
- Ask for an estimate before beginning and compare it with actual time afterward.
- Establish start times, not only deadlines.
- Connect work to predictable anchors: “After dinner = math.”
- Give advance warnings before transitions.
- Break long work periods into visible chunks.

### SAY THIS

*“How long do you think this will take?”*

*“If it’s due tomorrow, when do you need to start?”*

*“We have 25 minutes before dinner. What fits into that time?”*

### WATCH OUT FOR

Constant parent countdowns can turn you into the clock. The goal is to gradually build the student’s own awareness of time.

### TRY ONE THING THIS WEEK

Have your child estimate and then measure the time for one regular task each day.

# 6. Sustained Attention

## Staying With It

### WHAT YOU MAY SEE

Your child starts but does not stay with the work. They get up repeatedly, switch tabs, stare into space, find unrelated things to do, or turn 30 minutes of homework into a two-hour event.

### TRY THIS

- Work in short, defined sprints.
- Establish a clear finish line before starting.
- Build in intentional movement breaks.
- Reduce unnecessary visual and digital distractions.
- Decide where the phone will be before work begins.
- Alternate demanding and easier tasks when appropriate.

### SAY THIS

*“What’s our finish line for this round?”*

*“Let’s give this 15 focused minutes.”*

*“What is distracting you right now?”*

### WATCH OUT FOR

Not every movement means a child is not paying attention. The goal is productive engagement, not perfect stillness.

### TRY ONE THING THIS WEEK

Experiment with a consistent work / short-break rhythm and see what duration works best.

# 7. Cognitive Flexibility

## Getting Unstuck

### WHAT YOU MAY SEE

One difficult problem stops the entire assignment. A change in directions creates major frustration. Your child may struggle to move past mistakes, insist there is only one acceptable way, or spend too long making work perfect.

### TRY THIS

- Create Plan A and Plan B.
- Teach skip and return.
- Decide how long to remain stuck before asking for help.
- Model changing your own approach when something does not work.
- Define what “good enough” means before beginning.
- Separate making a mistake from being bad at something.

### SAY THIS

*“Plan A isn’t working. What’s our Plan B?”*

*“Do we need to solve this now, or can we mark it and come back?”*

*“What would good enough look like?”*

### WATCH OUT FOR

“Just move on” makes sense to someone who can already shift. If flexibility is the missing skill, teach the process of getting unstuck.

### TRY ONE THING THIS WEEK

Introduce one family phrase: “What’s Plan B?” Use it whenever anyone needs to change course.

# 8. Emotional Regulation & Inhibitory Control

## Staying Regulated Enough to Work

### WHAT YOU MAY SEE

Homework turns into anger, tears, shutdown, or arguments. Your child may impulsively quit, slam the Chromebook, or say school is stupid. At high emotional activation, access to other executive functions can become much harder.

### TRY THIS

- Regulate first. Problem-solve second.
- Pause rather than escalating.
- Reduce how much you are saying.
- Use a brief, purposeful reset.
- Return to the problem after intensity decreases.
- Identify what specifically triggered the frustration.
- Develop a predictable reset routine when everyone is calm.

### SAY THIS

*“I can see you’re frustrated. We don’t have to solve this second.”*

*“Let’s reset for ten minutes and come back.”*

*“What’s making this feel impossible right now?”*

### WATCH OUT FOR

Avoid both extremes: forcing work while productive thinking has stopped, or removing every expectation whenever frustration occurs. Regulation and accountability can exist together.

### TRY ONE THING THIS WEEK

Agree on a simple reset routine before the next difficult homework night.

# 9. When Schoolwork Goes Sideways

## The Life Lifted Friction Finder

### START WITH WHAT YOU SEE

Can’t START → Task Initiation
Doesn’t know WHAT TO DO → Planning & Prioritizing
Can’t FIND anything → Organization
Keeps FORGETTING → Working Memory
Always RUNNING OUT OF TIME → Time Management
Can’t STAY WITH IT → Sustained Attention
Can’t GET UNSTUCK → Cognitive Flexibility
Emotion TAKES OVER → Regulation / Inhibition

### THEN ASK

What is the smallest support that would help them move forward?

### A FIVE-STEP RESPONSE

NOTICE → IDENTIFY → REDUCE → SCAFFOLD → RELEASE

### BEFORE YOU BLAME EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

Ask whether you are looking at a skill problem, task problem, environment problem, EF problem, or motivation/behavior problem. Often more than one is happening at the same time.

### REMEMBER

The goal is not to eliminate every struggle. The goal is to provide enough support for your child to practice the skill successfully—and gradually need less help.

# 10. Our Home EF Plan

## Reduce the Friction. Build the Skill.

**The schoolwork situation creating the most friction in our home is:**

_____

_____

**What do we usually see?**

_____

_____

**The executive-function skill that may be involved is:**

_____

_____

**What can we change about the task or environment?**

_____

_____

**What strategy will we try?**

_____

_____

**My child's responsibility will be:**

_____

_____

**My responsibility will be:**

_____

_____

**Something I will intentionally STOP doing:**

_____

_____

**WE'LL TRY THIS CONSISTENTLY BEFORE EVALUATING IT**

Start date: _____ Check-in date: _____

☐ It's helping — keep going ☐ It's partly helping — adjust it
☐ It's not helping — try another support ☐ The difficulty may be something other than EF

**REMEMBER**

DO FOR → DO WITH → WATCH → CHILD DOES

The goal is increasing independence.