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# Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder / ADD or ADHD

**AD(H)D is defined at a behavioural level and is identified through observation of inattentive, impulsive and sometimes hyperactive behaviours. It can affect both children and adults.**

Current thinking suggests there may be chemical, structural and electrical brain differences that may underpin AD(H)D, or at least an imbalance in the brain's neurotransmitter chemicals. In addition people with AD(H)D often appear fidgety and easily distracted and have great difficulty staying 'on task'.

Not all people display hyperactive impulsivity and, particularly in girls, the inability to pay attention can be displayed as dreamy behaviour instead. Furthermore as with all Specific Learning Difficulties, AD(H)D often co-occurs with other SpLDs such as Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Autism Spectrum Disorder.

## Typical strengths *may* include:

- ◆ Innovative thinking, imaginative, see the big picture / broad outlook
- ◆ Sense of humour
- ◆ Willingness to take risks, adventurous spirit
- ◆ Tenacity and resilience
- ◆ Create connections easily
- ◆ Outgoing
- ◆ Problem solving
- ◆ Spontaneity
- ◆ Resourcefulness

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## Typical difficulties *may* include:

- ◆ Trouble concentrating or following details
- ◆ Being forgetful
- ◆ Losing things
- ◆ Not being able to focus when others are speaking
- ◆ Poor organisation skills
- ◆ Restlessness and fidgeting
- ◆ Short attention span
- ◆ Speaking too loudly or quickly
- ◆ General impatience
- ◆ Tendency to interrupt
- ◆ Constant mind-changing
- ◆ Irritability at small things

Some of these symptoms can apply to any of us at any one time, but a diagnosis of AD(H)D would need a positive response to 6 or more of these types of symptoms and for the behaviours to be prevalent for more than 6 months.

Often a combination of medication, psychological and coaching techniques and diet / lifestyle changes can be beneficial.

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## Tips for supporting AD(H)D learners:

### **Keep lessons engaging with interactive lesson starters**

Use open questions, make use of pictorial representations of ideas, asking which is the odd one out or how the images are connected for example.

When introducing a new topic, have the student generate questions about it before providing them with much information.



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**Incorporate the student's interests into a lesson plan**

Allow the student to engage with the topic and discuss their ideas openly. Increase the novelty of lessons by using films, tapes, flashcards and so on.

**Remove unneeded stimulation from the learning environment**

This means removing toys or anything that can be attractive or played with to avoid distraction. Eliminate background noises and music where possible to keep the environment calm.

**Play attention and listening games**

Some great ideas can be found at the [National Council for Special Education](#).

**Provide structure and routine**

Be clear how long a task will last, making use of a clock/watch to show children how long they will be working on an assignment. Make use of timer apps, such as Time Timer and Forest App.

Divide work into manageable chunks and allow for short breaks to aid focus and attention.

Encourage planning by frequently using lists, calendars, charts and pictures.

**Alternate physical and mental activities**

Encourage students to stand up and move around for a couple of moments during a break and encourage them to drink water.

**Communicate the value of accuracy over speed**

**Be encouraging and patient in your approach**

Often students can find themselves lacking confidence and self-esteem due to focusing on all the things that they feel they don't do as well as other people. Confidence can be built through a mastery of skills, a sense of achievement and patient support.

Allow students freedom of choice and autonomy where possible and encourage them to take ownership of a task.

Give comments in a feedback sandwich (+ / - / +).



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*Students with ADHD present interesting challenges in lessons: hyperactive behaviour can spin lessons away from the subject at hand; whereas loss of interest and attention can result in passive learning attitudes which impedes progress.*

*From experience, I think it is critical for a tutor to balance and maintain the intensity of the lesson in order to steer the students away from both extremes.*

*To increase focus and attention I might use a competitive element such as see who finishes questions first or point scoring, thought experiments, role reversal, physical exercises and time pressure exercises.*

*To calm a student down, I might use deep breathing exercises, talk slowly and clearly, give clear parameters and expectations such as, “pay attention, I’m only going to say this once”, or a simple reminder of how much time there is to finish the topic.*

*Maintaining the balance is very situational and I think it’s important to blend these techniques seamlessly into the lesson so the student doesn’t feel like his/her behaviour is being manipulated.*

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**Pan, maths and science tutor**

## Useful websites:

Through our website you are able to link to other websites which are not under the control of Osborne Cawkwell Tuition. We have no control over the nature, content and availability of those sites. The inclusion of any links does not necessarily imply a recommendation or endorse the views expressed within them.

- ◇ [Connections in Mind](#)
- ◇ [ADHD Institute](#)
- ◇ [NHS](#)
- ◇ [Psych Central](#)
- ◇ [The ADHD Centre](#)
- ◇ [The ADHD Foundation](#)



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## Further reading for parents:

- ◆ *The Parents' Guide to Specific Learning Difficulties: Information, Advice and Practical Tips*, by Veronica Bidwell
- ◆ *Smart but Scattered*, by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare
- ◆ *Understanding A.D.H.D. A Parent's Guide to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Children*, by Dr Christopher Green and Dr Kit Cheet
- ◆ *Calmer, Easier, Happier Boys: The revolutionary programme that transforms family life*, by Noel Janis-Norton
- ◆ *Kids in the Syndrome Mix of ADHD, LD, Autism Spectrum, Tourette's, Anxiety, and More! : The one stop guide for parents, teachers, and other professionals*, by M.D. Martin L. Kutscher
- ◆ *ADHD – Living without Brakes*, by Martin L. Kutscher
- ◆ *ADHD Diet: Healthy Foods and Snacks Eating Program for Kids*, by Kathleen Martin

## Further reading for students with AD(H)D:

- ◆ *The Survival Guide for Kids with ADHD*, by John F Taylor
- ◆ *Learning to Slow Down and Pay Attention: A Book for Kids About ADHD*, by Kathleen G. Nadeau and Ellen B. Dixon
- ◆ *The ADHD Workbook for Kids: Helping Children Gain Self-Confidence, Social Skills, & Self-control*, by Lawrence E. Shapiro