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# Areas of Executive Function

Not all experts look at executive function (EF) in the same way. But many view it as a group of three skills that allow kids to manage their thoughts, actions and emotions in order to get things done. They also enable kids to plan, manage time and organize.

*Kids with ADHD struggle with executive function. That's because the three main EF skills are responsible for attention and self-regulation.*

## 1. Working Memory

Being able to keep information in mind and then use it in some way. A child might use this skill to read a passage on an English test, hold on to the information, and use it to answer questions.



## 2. Cognitive Flexibility (also known as flexible thinking)

Being able to think about something in more than one way. A child might use this skill to answer a math problem in two ways or to find relationships between different concepts.



## 3. Inhibitory Control (includes self-control)

Being able to ignore distractions and resist temptation. A child might use this skill to keep from blurting out an answer in class. It helps kids regulate their emotions, and keep from acting impulsively.



### Executive function is responsible for these five skills:



- Paying attention
- Organizing and planning
- Initiating tasks and staying focused on them
- Regulating emotions
- Self-monitoring (keeping track of what you're doing)

# Skills Related to Executive Function



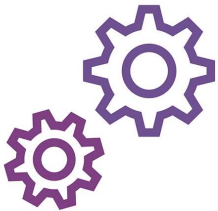
## Hot Executive Function

This skill comes into play in situations that aren't emotionally "neutral." It helps kids manage their emotional reactions so they can use their executive skills to perform a task. A child might rely on hot executive function during a spelling bee to keep his excitement or anxiety in check. Kids also use it to resist temptation in order to get a larger reward.



## Reflection

Reflection is a process that allows kids to notice challenges, pause, think about their options and put things into context before they respond. This skill is central to solving problems, and kids can build it. The more they practice reflection, the easier and faster the process becomes.



## Processing Speed

Kids need to go through the reflection process quickly and efficiently to solve problems on time. That's where processing speed comes in. Some experts view this skill as the engine that drives how well kids can use their executive skills to solve problems and achieve goals.

# Understood

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