

ADHDchildhood



# Navigating Elementary School



# Anticipate Changes and Share With Your Child



Planning ahead may help you and your child with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) work together to develop a plan to navigate elementary school. Here's what you and your child can expect day to day at a typical elementary school:

- ▷ Primary teacher in homeroom teaches almost all subjects
- ▷ Coordination of tests and project due dates to avoid overburdening students
- ▷ Extracurriculars are built into the day-to-day
- ▷ Social life is centered on the school day

# What Is Different in Elementary School?



An elementary student's school day varies by the grade. In the beginning, children are learning how to be good students and how to get along with others. They develop skills in academics, organization, and independent completion of school work. As they get older, the academics pick up and they are being prepared for the next step: middle school. Developing skills related to organization, problem solving, and planning can be important characteristics in responding to these demands.



## 1. Discuss upcoming changes

Elementary school may bring on different types of stress for all children. Discuss whether your child with ADHD is being affected by the changes happening around him or her. As a part of this discussion, consider pointing out the importance of managing your child's ADHD.

Anticipating potential changes may help you and your child work together. General tips include:

Identify the specific pressures your child might encounter as he or she enters elementary school, so you can better understand what your child is facing.

List the stabilizing factors that can help your child during this time and do your best to continue them.

Reflect on any recent disagreements with your child to see if they are related to the tension he or she is experiencing and to identify ways you might be able to help.



## 2. Be present

### How many of these do you already do?

- ▷ Acknowledge what they're good at through giving plenty of honest praise and appreciation.
- ▷ Listen to their views and offer choices when they are trying to make up their minds.
- ▷ Let them follow the activities they love, and love them for who they are.
- ▷ Show your child that you value him or her by spending time together.
- ▷ Reinforce their sense of belonging and connection by demonstrating care, sharing activities, and talking together.
- ▷ Give them an environment that is safe both physically and emotionally.
- ▷ Keep to a routine as much as possible.
- ▷ Offer them your trust as they develop autonomy.
- ▷ Model calmness.

### **3. Build a support team: at school**

Each school year brings new teachers and schoolwork, changes that may be difficult for a child with ADHD. If your child needs help, work with the school to create a support team to work together to assist your child.

#### **An academic support team may include the following:**

##### **▷ Your Child's Teachers**

Your child's teachers observe your child each day and play an important role on the support team. Teachers may help identify strengths and challenges, create a plan to address any concerns, and establish a system of review to measure academic progress.

##### **▷ School Counselors**

Consider working with the school to identify whether there are ways that school counselors might help your child. For example, it may be helpful if your child's school counselor could collect feedback from multiple teachers and help coordinate a plan, if necessary, for your child. School counselors may also be able to work directly with your child to make sure he or she is organized and keeping up with assignments. Eventually, your child's guidance counselor may be available to help your child prepare for the future by discussing long-term goals.

Your child's support team can work with you to identify your child's goals and needs. Forming positive partnerships with the team may help support your child at school.

## 4. School accommodations

Students with ADHD may qualify for extra support in school to help with issues such as organizational skills, incomplete work, or forgetting to turn in work. See next page for a list of some common accommodations that students with disabilities, such as ADHD, may qualify for.

There are two federal civil rights laws that protect the educational rights of children with ADHD and other disabilities. Students may be eligible for accommodations through Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 or through an Individualized Education Program (IEP) as part of the Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA). These laws provide guidance for the education of all students with disabilities in public schools that receive federal funds.

- ▶ **Section 504** defines disability more broadly than IDEA, so it may be less burdensome to qualify for and may get implemented faster.
- ▶ **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** is best known for its main provision, the IEP, or Individualized Education Program. An IEP can be harder to qualify for and can take longer to get, though it may offer more comprehensive educational benefits.

**Some of the possible accommodations for elementary school students include:**

- Structured learning environment
- Simplified instructions
- Visual aids
- Use of behavior management
- Modified test delivery
- Use of audio recorder
- Computer-aided instruction
- Modified textbooks or workbooks
- Tailored homework assignments
- Consultation
- Reduced class size
- One-on-one tutors
- Special resources
- Classroom aides
- Note taker
- Services coordinator
- Modified nonacademic times (lunchroom, recess, PE)

## 5. Building a support team: outside of school

It may be helpful to build a support team for your child outside of school, too. There are professionals who can play a variety of roles in helping your child with ADHD. Consider enlisting a support team to work with your child to help address his or her needs.

### ▷ Academic tutors may help your child with academics.

Your child may benefit from tutoring. A tutor could be a classmate or a peer. In addition, you might consider hiring a private tutor. Tutors may be able to help by providing specialized instruction and help with difficult subjects, suggesting test-taking strategies, developing a note-taking system, and offering encouragement.

### ▷ Therapists may help your child deal with issues.

Therapists may talk through current problems with your child to try and change patterns of thinking that are not helpful.



# Attitude Changes



Part of maturing is your child's interest in independence. If the doctor has been managing your child's ADHD with medication, consider that your child may be reluctant to continue taking medication.

## Medication Management

- ▷ Some children may want to stop their medication because they don't want to be different from their friends, they may not like the way medication makes them feel, or they may want to try managing ADHD on their own. Your child should not stop the medication or change the dose unless directed by a doctor.
- ▷ Children may not fully understand the impact that their ADHD symptoms may have.
- ▷ Talk to the doctor if you or your child has any questions about the ADHD treatment plan.

## Include your child in the conversation

Whenever possible, make sure your child is actively involved and has input into the choices and decisions concerning health care and treatment. Encourage your child to talk about potential changes or symptoms that need to be managed. Your child should feel comfortable participating in the conversation.

## Teach your child to self-advocate

It's never too soon to start. If a child is old enough to understand ADHD, he or she may be ready to learn how to self-advocate. This type of encouragement may help your child to take more responsibility for managing his or her ADHD. For example, ask your child to make a list of questions to raise at the next doctor's appointment or talk to the teacher about a concern with class work.



# Where can I get more information about ADHD?

For more information, visit  
**[ADHDchildhood.com](http://ADHDchildhood.com)**.

Keep this guide as a handy resource for facts about ADHD.

This information is brought to you by Shire for your educational purposes and is not intended to imply any medical diagnosis. Only a healthcare professional can diagnose ADHD or any other disease.



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