

Creating An IEP/504 Plan *for* Your ADHD Child

*11 Action Steps and
40 Great Accommodations*



From **ADDitude's** Experts

ADDITUDE
LIVING WELL WITH **ATTENTION DEFICIT**

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CONTACT INFORMATION

New Hope Media
1-646-366-0830
39 West 37th Street, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10018

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How to get a winning individualized education plan (IEP) for your ADHD child—the legal document of special services and accommodations for your child’s educational program

Before the IEP meeting:

- 1. Create a list of your child’s academic challenges along with potential strategies to address each.** Before you set up an IEP meeting, list the different ways ADHD symptoms affect your child at school. Does she forget to turn in her homework? Does he fail to follow directions? Is she impulsively aggressive on the playground? List specific problems, then read up on strategies that address them and/or list strategies you’ve used in the past that have worked. Include your child’s strengths, passions, and skills as well so everyone gets a well-rounded, positive picture of your child.

At the IEP team meeting, where you’ll write the IEP

- 2. Do not accept an IEP that has already been put together without your input.** Parents should not be handed a completed IEP at the meeting and asked to sign it without having had input into the final document. Come prepared with the list you’ve created to facilitate communication between you, the teacher, and the IEP team, and you will send the message that you are a valuable resource. To ensure that parents are actively involved in the IEP development, federal regulations state that a finalized IEP should not be written before the meeting. Parents can be more effective, equal participants if they participate in the IEP development and implementation.

As a teacher, I let my kids take their shoes off in the classroom. It helps them relax, especially the kids with ADHD. It makes the room a little stinky sometimes, but it is worth it.

What to include in the IEP:

- 3. Address behavior and academic challenges.** All too often only behavior problems, such as talking back or emotional blowups, are addressed. Most IEPs do not, but should, address common academic problems and executive-function deficits, such as disorganization, impaired sense of time, or tardiness. When academic challenges are dealt with effectively, behavior problems are often reduced.
- 4. Develop a list of specific, measurable, and achievable goals for the school year.** Time limits should be included: For example, “Johnny will reduce his interruptions from 10 times a day to two a day by month three” or “Julie will be able to decode words at the 50th percentile by the spring semester.”
- 5. List the specific objectives used to help your child achieve goals.** For instance, to improve written language skills, the IEP may include: “Richard will use prewriting strategies to organize his thoughts using webs and outlines.” Or to increase memory, “Joanna will use at least two memory strategies to compensate for memory deficits: mnemonics, visualization, chunking/associating, etc.” Parents can’t enforce objectives that aren’t written down.
- 6. Ask for proof.** If the school insists on certain interventions, ask for written evidence that what they’re suggesting is effective.
- 7. Think outside the box.** Many schools will give a menu of recommended accommodations, but don’t limit yourself to only the ideas on the list. These are only suggestions and any needed accommodation may be added.
- 8. Include instructions to have the results be evaluated.** Note who is responsible for implementing the objectives and state what measures or tests will be used—and how often—to evaluate progress. Will it be daily work samples, weekly reports, teacher records, or grades?
- 9. Share responsibility for IEP goals.** Delineate the responsibilities of teachers, therapists, parents, and the child. One common shortcoming of many IEPs is that the child is the only one asked to make changes.
- 10. Document every step of the IEP process.** As you secure services for your child, put all requests, concerns, and thank-yous in writing—and keep copies on file. A note asking the teacher for your child’s test scores can be valuable if you later have to document that the request went unmet. After each IEP meeting and conference with school staff, summarize the main points in a letter to participants to establish a written record of what was said.

Sitting at the front of the class keeps my son focused.

If my son doesn’t finish an assignment, giving him the opportunity to finish it later helps a great deal.

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After the IEP Is in Place

11. Embrace change. An IEP may require tweaks and modifications. Sometimes it doesn't work as well as the parent and teacher thought it would. Write the need for change into the IEP: "In addition to the accommodations listed in the IEP, the teacher and parent will communicate with each other immediately if the student begins to struggle. Adjustments to the IEP may be made and accommodations may be added as needed."

40 Great Accommodations for Your ADD/LD Child

Increase the odds of your child succeeding in school by pinpointing his problems in the classroom and including effective accommodations in his IEP or 504 Plan to remedy them. Below is a list of challenges your child may face during the school day along with specific accommodations to overcome them. Talk with your child's teacher about implementing these strategies.

Problem: ACTS UP IN CLASSROOM

"Erik is easily distracted by classroom activity, acts out in class to gain negative attention, and reaches across desks to talk to or touch other students."

Accommodations to request

- Seat him front and center, near the teacher, and away from doors or windows where noise or passing students may distract him
- Tweak the seating plan so he sits next to a good role model
- Increase the distance between desks, if possible
- For younger students, mark an area with tape around his desk in which he can move freely

Problem: INCOMPLETE ASSIGNMENTS

"Julie is unable to complete work within the given time, isn't able to keep up the quality of work, and has difficulty following instructions."

Accommodations to request

- Allow her extra time to complete assigned work
- Break long assignments into smaller segments
- Shorten assignments or work periods
- Pair written instructions with oral instructions
- Set a kitchen timer for 10-minute intervals and have the student get up and show you her work

Untimed testing and taking exams away from peers have helped.

A homework planner. His teacher and we have to reinforce the habit of using it, but it has been a godsend.

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Problem: GETS DISTRACTED

“Jennifer falls behind during classroom discussions; when taking notes, complains that lessons are boring, and turns in work with careless mistakes.”

Accommodations to request

- Provide her peer assistance in note taking and ask her questions to encourage participation in discussions
- Enlist her to help present the lesson
- Cue her to stay on task with a private signal—a gentle tap on the shoulder, for example
- Schedule a five-minute period for her to check over work before turning in homework or tests.

Problem: INTERRUPTS

“Richard constantly engages in attention-getting behavior, blurts out answers, and interrupts others. He needs reinforcement and long-term help with improving behavior.”

Accommodations to request

- Ignore minor inappropriate behavior
- Increase immediacy of rewards and consequences for good and bad behavior
- Acknowledge correct answers only when his hand is raised and he is called upon
- Send daily/weekly progress reports home
- Set up a behavior contract with student and parents

Problem: LOSES FOCUS

“Alex daydreams a lot and isn’t able to stay focused on the subject matter that is being taught.”

Accommodations to request

- Use clear verbal signals: “Freeze,” “This is important,” or “One, two, three...eyes on me”
- Use a flashlight or a laser pointer to illuminate objects or words you want him to pay attention to
- Illustrate vocabulary words and science concepts with small drawings or stick figures
- Ring a bell or chimes; play a chord on a guitar or keyboard.

Having teachers who understand that there are differences in children’s learning styles is a huge bonus after years of my child’s having a “bad kid” reputation at other schools.

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Problem: RESTLESS IN CLASS

“Robby is constantly tapping his foot and fingers in class and has difficulty focusing for long periods of time.”

Accommodations to request

- Allow him to run errands, to hand out papers, or to stand at times while working
- Give him a fidget toy in class to calm him down and to increase concentration
- Provide short breaks between assignments
- Give him an air-filled rubber disk to sit on that allows him to wiggle.

Problem: DISORGANIZED, POOR PLANNER

“Anita can’t keep track of papers and has trouble remembering homework assignments. She loses books all the time.”

Accommodations to request

- Color code binders to specific academic subjects—green for math, red for English
- Provide handouts that are three-hole punched in advance
- Use brightly colored paper for project assignments, providing details and due dates
- Provide student with assignment book and supervise writing down of assignments
- Appoint monitors to make sure that students write down homework assignments at the end of the day
- Allow student to keep a set of books at home

Problem: SOCIAL PROBLEMS

“Marnie is unclear about social cues. She does not work well with others and isn’t respected by her peers. As a result, she has low self-confidence.”

Accommodations to request

- Set up social-behavior goals with her and implement a reward program
- Encourage cooperative learning tasks
- Assign special responsibilities to her in presence of peer group
- Compliment positive behavior and work
- Give her an opportunity to act in a leadership role
- Encourage social interactions with classmates
- Plan teacher-directed group activities
- Acknowledge appropriate behavior and good work frequently

Smaller groups, incentives for completing work, and going to school with kids who have similar struggles.

Keeping a journal and learning how to use a graphic organizer.

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