ADHD Classroom Strategies Quick Reference

STIMMING & SELF-REGULATION

Many students with ADHD require repetitive movements, actions, or sensory input to help regulate attention, energy, and emotions. Providing appropriate options in the classroom supports focus and learning.

CLASSROOM TOOLS & SUPPORTS

Fidgets & Sensory Tools

• Velcro strips
• Tactile fidgets (quiet options)
• Marbles
• Beads
• Tangle toys
• Gum
• Chewlry
• Weighted lap pads/weighted animals
• Water bottles with straws

Movement & Regulation

• Theraband on chairs
• Heavy work activities
• Deep breathing
• Under-desk bikes
• Foot fidgets

Alternative Seating

• Rocking chairs
• Wobble stools
• Stability balls

Sound & Environmental Supports

• Quiet music (no lyrics)
• Sensory videos on SmartBoard
• White noise
• Metronome

ATTENTION & FOCUS

Monotasking

Focus on:

• One activity at a time
• One key concept at a time
• Avoiding multitasking

Pomodoro Technique (Adapted)

1. One task
2. Set a visual timer
3. Stop when timer ends
4. Take a movement break away from workspace
5. Repeat

Age	Work Time	Break Time
Ages 4–6	10–12 min	3–5 min
Ages 7–9	12–15 min	3–5 min
Ages 10–12+	15–25 min	5 min

Long Break: After 3–4 work cycles, take a 15–30 minute break.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Reduce Visual Clutter

• Visuals should be intentional and support learning.
• Ask: *From the back of the room, is the teacher/lesson the most engaging thing students see?*

Organization & Preparedness

• Provide printed notes/slides.
• Students write directly on handouts.
• Ensure materials are ready before work begins.
• Reduce unnecessary movement that may increase distractions.

Memory & Learning Supports

• Pair sounds/tasks with key concepts.
• Use rhymes and mnemonics.
• Colour-code materials.
• Repeat instructions repeatedly the same way.
• Add gestures, movement, or sign language to concepts.

INTEREST & ENGAGEMENT

Increase Engagement Through

• Project-based learning
• Hands-on learning
• Teaching key content first
• Connecting lessons to student interests
• Games and challenges
• Student involvement
• Models, demonstrations, and examples
• Diagrams, charts, and graphic organizers

Active Participation ("Tasking")

Requires an observable response:

• Stand/sit response activities
• Use of hands and gestures
• Whiteboard responses
• Movement-based participation - around the world

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Direct Instruction

• Point and guide attention.
• Pair verbal directions with visual representation.

Visual Supports

• Checklists
• Materials lists (words or pictures)
• Hand counting/gestures
• Diagrams, charts, and graphic organizers
• KWL Charts:

- What I Know
- What I Want to Know
- What I Learned

Structure & Predictability

• Consistent routines
• Predictable schedules
• Break tasks into smaller chunks
• Use timers
• Highlight main ideas using:

- Colour
- Bolding
- Different fonts
- Student highlighting

Novelty & Choice

• Work in a new location
• Use different tools:

- Coloured pencils
- Pens
- Markers
- Different paper

ACCOUNTABILITY & FEEDBACK

Explicit Deadlines

Instead of: "Finish before the end of class."

Try: "In 5 minutes I expect questions 1 and 2 completed."

Support with this with Checklist, Timers and Check-Ins

Motivation

- Connect tasks to interests whenever possible.
- Provide immediate positive feedback and praise.
- Delayed feedback has less impact.

RELATIONSHIPS

Strength-Based Practice

Focus on:

- Strengths
- Interests
- Effort
- Growth

Rather than deficits.

Daily Supports

- Positive affirmations
- Discuss positive outcomes from difficult situations
- Help students set manageable, achievable goals

2 × 10 Strategy

Spend 2 minutes per day for 10 consecutive days talking with a student about something they are genuinely interested in.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Students with ADHD benefit from movement, sensory supports, structure, engagement, and strong relationships. Small environmental and instructional adjustments can significantly improve regulation, attention, and learning.