

## ○ **Teaching Students with ADHD to F.O.C.U.S.: A Learning Strategy**

### ○ **Developing a Learning Strategy for Listening**

- Good learners are strategic, meaning that they possess a variety of ways to meet cognitive challenges. Good listeners use strategies that improve their performance when they are asked to listen. From the observations and literature, a learning strategy was developed to cue students into critical actions that they can take to attend to and process verbal information, commit it to memory, and communicate to the speaker that they are interested. Each step of the strategy corresponds with a specific task students should complete while engaged in improved listening. FOCUS is the mnemonic developed to outline this learning strategy. Each key word is an action verb that cues students on what to do (Figure 1).

Memory Device	Intended Associations
Focus on speaker	<p>F1. Eyes and mind on the speaker.</p> <p>F2. Resist talking to your neighbors.</p> <p>F3. Keep your hands and feet quiet.</p>
Open your mind	<p>O1. Clear your mind of distracting thoughts. (Ignore distractions)</p> <p>O2. Be ready to learn and remember.</p> <p>O3. Set your mind on the subject.</p> <p>O4. "Your brain is like a parachute. It only works when it's open."</p> <p>O5. Think about what is being said.</p>
Connect	<p>C1. Try to relate what you are hearing to things that you already know and are related to the lesson.</p> <p>C2. Create a picture in your mind of the new information.</p> <p>C3. Listen to other students' related comments.</p>
Use your eyes	<p>U1. Pay attention to the book, chalk board, worksheets, overheads, or other visual materials.</p>
Select	<p>S1. Select the important parts so you know what to remember.</p> <p>S2. Say the important parts to yourself in your own words.</p> <p>S3. Ask questions to make sure you understand.</p>

**FOCUS Observation Chart**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name	Give eye contact	Resist talking to neighbors	Keep hands and feet quiet	Listen to other students' comments	Use of relevant comments and questions	Follow directions
1)	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹
2)	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹
3)	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹
4)	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹
5)	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹
6)	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹
7)	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹
8)	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹
9)	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹
10)	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹	☺ ☹

- Highlight the appropriate happy/unhappy face to indicate the child's behavior during the mini-lesson.
- Record score on Progress Chart.
- 4 out of 5 happy faces indicates mastery of FOCUS

- **This activity can help students practice focusing for long tests. It can also be used throughout the year to practice focusing.**
- **Materials: black dry erase marker, stop watch or watch/clock with a second hand**
- Place a black dot (at least 2") on the board at eye level. Ask students how long, as a class, they think they can focus on the dot without moving or making noise. (Typical answers are 10 minutes or longer.) Tell them you will watch and time them and that when anyone moves, time is up. Let them know that you will never tell them who moved first.
- Use a stopwatch or watch/clock with a second hand. Have students get in "listening position"- *feet on floor, hands folded on the desk or in their lap, eyes forward, mouths closed*. Tell them they are allowed to blink and breathe!
- Typically, someone moves soon the first time. Write the time on the board and do it several times, challenging them to work individually and as a group to see if they can improve their time. (They usually want to know who moved first but just tell them it was a few students.)
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- Follow up by doing this a few days a week. As their time improves, **you can add distractions like sneezing, coughing, dropping a book, opening the door, etc. and challenge them not to move, look around, etc.**
- Kids love competition and usually want to do this again and again to improve their time and it is a great way to practice focusing and not paying attention to distractions. This is also a good tool to share with teachers to use after transition times to help kids get quiet and settled.

### Games to Build Focus and Self-Control in Kids

- **"I Spy."** In the car you can play "I Spy" games. For example, the parent can say, "I spy something wet." The child who guesses correctly with "Is it a water park?" gets to offer the next clue of what they spy. This game increases attention skills and helps children learn to focus on their surroundings.
- **Work puzzles together.** Solving developmentally appropriate puzzles helps your child focus on several different perspectives and patterns simultaneously. As your child manipulates the puzzle piece and discovers where it belongs in the puzzle, his or her brain forms new connections. Researchers describe this process as cognitive flexibility or the ability to adjust to changing patterns or perspectives.
- **Name the animal by its laughter or voice.** This game begins by either laughing or speaking the way you think certain animals might laugh or speak. For example, you could meow while laughing and see if the child guesses you are a laughing cat. Or you could say a sentence while mooing to see if your child can guess you are a talking cow. This game is a creative way to improve children's auditory focus and self-control.
- **The waiting game.** To play this game go into a store and explain to your child that if they can sit still in the cart or walk next to the cart, while you shop, he or she can pick out a dollar item from the dollar bins at the end of your shopping trip. The waiting game helps children practice self-control through delayed gratification. This game also promotes working memory by having the child prioritize what needs to be done in order to achieve the desired outcome.
- **Ears are for hearing mouths are for speaking.** If everyone in your family talks over one another then you can practice the ears are for hearing mouths are for speaking game. To start have one member of the family point to his or her mouth before speaking. Everyone else present touches their ears, focuses on the speaker, and actively listens to what the speaker has to say. The use of tactile movements while learning helps children remember what to do when someone else is speaking. After several of these experiences children begin to automatically listen when others are speaking.