Executive Skills Questionnaire — Adults

Peg Dawson & Richard Guare

Step I: Read each item below and then rate that item based on the extent to which you agree or disagree with how well it describes you. Use the rating scale below to choose the appropriate score. Then add the three scores in each section. Use the Key on page 2 to determine your executive skill strengths (2-3 highest scores) and weaknesses (2-3 lowest scores).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Tend to agree</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tend to disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item                                               Your score
1. I don’t jump to conclusions                        
2. I think before I speak.                           
3. I don’t take action without having all the facts.  

YOUR TOTAL SCORE:

4. I have a good memory for facts, dates, and details.
5. I am very good at remembering the things I have committed to do.
6. I seldom need reminders to complete tasks

YOUR TOTAL SCORE:

7. My emotions seldom get in the way when performing on the job.
8. Little things do not affect me emotionally or distract me from the task at hand.
9. I can defer my personal feelings until after a task has been completed

YOUR TOTAL SCORE:

10. No matter what the task, I believe in getting started as soon as possible.
11. Procrastination is usually not a problem for me.
12. I seldom leave tasks to the last minute

YOUR TOTAL SCORE:

13. I find it easy to stay focused on my work.
14. Once I start an assignment, I work diligently until it’s completed.
15. Even when interrupted, I find it easy to get back and complete the job at hand.

YOUR TOTAL SCORE:

16. When I plan out my day, I identify priorities and stick to them
17. When I have a lot to do, I can easily focus on the most important things.
18. I typically break big tasks down into subtasks and timelines.

YOUR TOTAL SCORE:

19. I am an organized person.
20. It is natural for me to keep my work area neat and organized.
21. I am good at maintaining systems for organizing my work.

YOUR TOTAL SCORE:
22. At the end of the day, I've usually finished what I set out to do.
23. I am good at estimating how long it takes to do something.
24. I am usually on time for appointments and activities.

YOUR TOTAL SCORE:

25. I take unexpected events in stride.
26. I easily adjust to changes in plans and priorities.
27. I consider myself to be flexible and adaptive to change.

YOUR TOTAL SCORE:

29. I am able to step back from a situation in order to make objective decisions.
30. I "read" situations well and can adjust my behavior based on the reactions of others.

YOUR TOTAL SCORE:

31. I think of myself as being driven to meet my goals.
32. I easily give up immediate pleasures to work on long-term goals.
33. I believe in setting and achieving high levels of performance.

YOUR TOTAL SCORE:

34. I enjoy working in a highly demanding, fast-paced environment.
35. A certain amount of pressure helps me to perform at my best.
36. Jobs that include a fair degree of unpredictability appeal to me.

YOUR TOTAL SCORE:

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**KEY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Executive Skill</th>
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<th>Executive Skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 3</td>
<td>Response Inhibition</td>
<td>4 - 6</td>
<td>Working Memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 - 9</td>
<td>Emotional Control</td>
<td>10 - 12</td>
<td>Task Initiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 - 15</td>
<td>Sustained Attention</td>
<td>16 - 18</td>
<td>Planning/Prioritization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 - 21</td>
<td>Organization 22 - 24</td>
<td></td>
<td>Time Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 27</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>28 - 30</td>
<td>Metacognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 33</td>
<td>Goal-Directed Persistence</td>
<td>34-36</td>
<td>Stress tolerance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strongest Skills

Weakest Skills
Executive Skill Definitions

• **Response Inhibition**: The capacity to think before you act – this ability to resist the urge to say or do something allows us the time to evaluate a situation and how our behavior might impact it. In the young child, waiting for a short period without being disruptive is an example of response inhibition while in the adolescent it would be demonstrated by accepting a referee’s call without an argument.

• **Working Memory**: The ability to hold information in memory while performing complex tasks. It incorporates the ability to draw on past learning or experience to apply to the situation at hand or to project into the future. A young child, for example can hold in mind and follow 1-2 step directions while the middle school child can remember the expectations of multiple teachers.

• **Emotional Control**: The ability to manage emotions in order to achieve goals, complete tasks, or control and direct behavior. A young child with this skill is able to recover from a disappointment in a short time. A teenager is able to manage the anxiety of a game or test and still perform.

• **Sustained Attention**: The capacity to maintain attention to a situation or task in spite of distractibility, fatigue, or boredom. Completing a 5-minute chore with occasional supervision is an example of sustained attention in the younger child. The teenager is able to attend to homework, with short breaks, for one to two hours.

• **Task Initiation**: The ability to begin projects without undue procrastination, in an efficient or timely fashion. A young child is able to start a chore or assignment right after instructions are given. A high school student does not wait until the last minute to begin a project.

• **Planning/Prioritization**: The ability to create a roadmap to reach a goal or to complete a task. It also involves being able to make decisions about what’s important to focus on and what’s not important. A young child, with coaching, can think of options to settle a peer conflict. A teenager can formulate a plan to get a job.

• **Organization**: The ability to create and maintain systems to keep track of information or materials. A young child can, with a reminder, put toys in a designated place. An adolescent can organize and locate sports equipment.

• **Time Management**: The capacity to estimate how much time one has, how to allocate it, and how to stay within time limits and deadlines. It also involves a sense that time is important. A young child can complete a short job within a time limit set by an adult. A high school student can establish a schedule to meet task deadlines.

• **Goal-directed persistence**: The capacity to have a goal, follow through to the completion of the goal, and not be put off by or distracted by competing interests. A first grader can complete a job in order to get to recess. A teenager can earn and save money over time to buy something of importance.

• **Flexibility**: The ability to revise plans in the face of obstacles, setbacks, new information or mistakes. It relates to an adaptability to changing conditions. A young child can adjust to a change in plans without major distress. A high school student can accept an alternative such as a different job when the first choice is not available.

• **Metacognition**: The ability to stand back and take a birds-eye view of oneself in a situation. It is an ability to observe how you problem solve. It also includes self-monitoring and self-evaluative skills (e.g., asking yourself, “How am I doing? or How did I do?”). A young child can change behavior in response to feedback from an adult. A teenager can monitor and critique her performance and improve it by observing others who are more skilled.

• **Stress Tolerance**: the ability to thrive in stressful situations and to cope with uncertainty, change, and performance demands.
Executive Skills Questionnaire - Child
Parent and Teacher Version

Read each item below and then rate that item based on the extent to which the behavior occurs for the child. Use the rating scale below to choose the appropriate score. Then add the three scores in each section. Use the Key on page 2 to determine executive skill strengths (3 highest scores) and weaknesses (3 lowest scores).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Doesn't interrupt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Thinks before he/she speaks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Shows self-restraint when provoked</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Section 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Remembers to bring materials to and from school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Remembers things he/she has committed to do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Completes tasks without reminders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Section 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Emotions don't get in the way when doing assigned tasks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Little things don't affect him/her emotionally or distract him/her from work</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Recovers quickly from disappointment or change in plans</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Section 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Gets started on tasks independently</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Procrastination is not a problem</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Never 1  Rarely 2  Sometimes 3  Frequently 4  Almost always 5
12. Tasks are not left to the last minute


Total Section 4

13. Stays focused on work

14. Sustains attention until tasks are completed

15. If interrupted, returns to work without reminders


Total Section 5

16. Identifies priorities for a task or time period and sticks to them

17. Stays focused on the most important tasks

18. Can make and follow plans for multi-step tasks with developmentally-appropriate support


Total Section 6

19. Keeps notebooks/backpacks organized

20. Desk/work area is neat and organized

21. Keeps track of homework, permission slips, lunch money, etc.


Total Section 7

22. Finishes tasks within allotted time

23. Good at estimating how long it takes to do something

24. Does not dawdle over work or daily routines


Total Section 8

25. Doesn’t “get stuck” on things

26. “Shifts gears” easily when plans have to change


27. Handles "open-ended" tasks easily
28. Can monitor and evaluate performance when engaged in challenging tasks

29. Can think of more than one solution to a problem

30. Reads situations well and adjusts behavior based on the reactions of others

Total Section 10

31. Sets a goal and sticks with it until it is achieved

32. Gives up immediate pleasures to work on longer-term goals

33. Able to persist with effortful work when the outcome is one the child desires

Total Section 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strengths**

**Weaknesses**
Child’s E S Profile

Section 1
Age: ___________ Grade: ___________
Gender: M F
Identified Educational Handicaps: ________________________

Level of Cognitive Functioning:
Well Below  Below  Average  Above  Well Above
Average  Average  Average  Average  Average

Communication Ability:

Method of Communication:
Oral Language, Pictures, Speech Generation Device, Sign
(circle all that apply)

Identified Physical Impairment:
Hearing, Speech, Vision, Orthopedic
Current Placement (type of classroom), class size, and level of support, (eg. 1 to 1 para-educator, etc.)

What are the expectations for the tasks or situation that the child is currently having difficulty meeting?

Section 2

List 2 strengths and 2 weaknesses from Rating Scale.

Strengths ____________, ____________

Weaknesses ____________, ____________

How do weaknesses manifest themselves?

__________________________________________________

__________________________________________________

What do the behaviors look like? (to a naïve observer)

__________________________________________________

__________________________________________________

In what situations or tasks are they most likely to occur?

__________________________________________________
Do some situational variables make behavior more likely?

Presence of certain peers? Y  N

Presence of certain staff?  Y  N

Fatigue, Hunger, Time of Day, Other ________________

What’s the best way to elicit the behavior?

Section 2 contin’d

How do strengths manifest themselves?

__________________________________________________

__________________________________________________

What do the behaviors look like? (to a naïve observer)

__________________________________________________

__________________________________________________

In what situations or tasks are they most likely to occur?

__________________________________________________

__________________________________________________

Do some situational variables make behavior more likely?

Presence of certain peers?  Y  N
Presence of certain staff? Y N
Fatigue, Hunger, Time of Day, Other_____________

Section 3

What environmental modifications will you make? How will you change the situation or the task to create a better fit between the child and the situational or task expectations?

Will the change involve:
- The physical environment
- The social environment
- Staff (different staff, increased support)
- Task/situational demand
- Increase support
- Technology/apps

Section 4

What executive skill will you work with the child to develop first?
For what task or in what situation will you work on the skill?

____________________________________________________________________________________

What is the specific behavioral goal that you want the child to achieve? That is, how will you know if the child has acquired the skill? (examples: behavior in: circle or on the playground; response to schedule change; storing materials; completing task on time)

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

How will you introduce the skill to the child (E.G., verbal explanation; pictures/video or live model; verbal gesture, physical prompt)

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

How will you record the behavior? (Fade to self-assessment and self-reward)

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

Section 5

What incentives will be used to encourage the child to learn, practice, use the skill?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
Need to decide:
- What specific behavior(s) will be rewarded/reinforced?
- What is the schedule of reinforcement?
- What specific incentives will be used or are permitted? (Rule of thumb is the least amount needed, the least intrusive, and the easiest to fade, that is effective in helping the child to acquire and independently use the skill)
- Usually needs to be confined with task modification.

Checklist for Designing Interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Establish behavioral goal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem behavior: ____________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal behavior: ____________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **2. What environmental supports will be provided (check all that apply)**  |
| ___ Change physical or social environment (e.g., add physical barriers, reduce distractions, provide organizational structures, reduce social complexity, etc.)  |
| ___ Change the nature of the task (e.g., make shorter, build in breaks, give something to look forward to, create a schedule, build in choice, make the task more fun, etc.)  |
| ___ Change the way adults interact with the child (e.g., rehearsal, prompts, reminders, coaching, praise, debriefing, feedback)  |

<p>| <strong>3. What procedure will be followed to teach the skill?</strong>  |
| Who will teach the skill/supervise the procedure?  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps the child will follow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. What incentives will be used to encourage the child to learn, practice, or use the skill (check all that apply)
   
   - [ ] Specific praise
   - [ ] Something to look forward to when the task (or a piece of the task) is done
   - [ ] A menu of rewards and penalties
         - Daily reward possibilities:
         - Weekly reward possibilities:
         - Long-term reward possibilities:
### Sample Questions/Statements to Promote Executive Skill Development

*Adapted from: Executive Skills in Children and Adolescence: A Practical Guide to Assessment and Intervention (2011)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Executive Skill</th>
<th>Question/Statement/Prompt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Response inhibition   | • What can you do to keep from losing your cool on the playground?  
                        • What can you tell yourself while you’re in line to keep from touching the child in front of you?  
                        • Is there something we can give you to hold to help you remember to raise your hand before speaking?  
                        • Good job keeping your hands to yourself during circle time today!  |
| Working memory        | • What are some ways you could remember everything you have to bring home at the end of the day?  
                        • Some of you seem to have trouble remembering to put your homework in your backpack after you’ve finished it. What’s something you could do to help you remember to do that? |
| Emotional control     | • We’ve had some problems with fights and arguments on the playground. What are some ways you can handle this that solve the problem and keep kids out of trouble?  
                        • Sometimes kids get nervous when they take tests and it makes it hard for them to focus and remember what they studied. What are some things kids could do when that happens?  
                        • You did a nice job of controlling your temper at lunch today. What helped you do that? |
| Flexibility           | • Tell me three things you can do if you start your math homework and realize you can’t remember exactly how to do the assignment.  
                        • Let’s talk about what you can do if you get stuck on part of this assignment and start feeling frustrated or angry. |
| Sustained attention   | • Sometimes it’s hard to keep working on your homework until it’s done. What are some ways you could motivate yourself to keep working?  
                        • A lot of you talk about how hard it is to stay focused on your classwork because of distractions. Let’s make a list of distractions and then brainstorm ways to manage them better. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Executive Skill</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Task Initiation                 | • It’s hard to get started on homework because there are so many other fun things to do at home. Let’s think about ways to get ourselves to get the homework out of the way first.  
  • I like the way you jumped right into your writing assignment. That’s been hard for you to do.  
  • Take out your assignment books. Next to each homework assignment, I want you to write down what time you plan on starting each one. |
| Planning/prioritization         | • One reason we assign kids projects is because we want them to learn how to plan. Let’s talk about the steps you need to do in order to complete this project. What do you have to do first?  
  • Let’s make a homework plan. Make a list of the work you have to do and the order in which you plan to do it.                                                                                  |
| Time management                 | • How long do you think it will take you to finish your spelling homework tonight? Write down your guess and then see if you’re right.  
  • Let’s talk about how you manage your time at home to fit in all your homework. Let’s make lists of “have-tos” and “want-tos” and then decide how much time we can spend on each group. |
| Organization                    | • We’re going to spend the last 20 minutes of the day cleaning out our desks. Let’s make a list of the steps we have to go through to do this.  
  • We need a system for organizing our science notebooks. What are some sections we need to include?                                                                              |
| Goal-directed persistence       | • I like the way you stuck with that math problem even though it frustrated you.  
  • Successful people are those who make goals and go for them, even if there are obstacles along the way. What’s a goal you might want to work for? Maybe something you want to build or create, or something you want to learn, or something you want to save up money to buy? Let’s set a goal for the month and see if we can help you reach your goal. |
| Metacognition                   | • Good question. How you could find the answer?  
  • Nice job on that math problem. Tell me how you figured out the answer.  
  • Class, we have a problem. Too many kids are...[losing things, forgetting their homework, not asking for help when they don’t understand, saying hurtful things, etc.] What are some things we could do to solve this problem? |
References

Research articles


Books on Executive Skills


**Resources for Educators**


**Resources for Therapists**


**Autism Spectrum Disorder Materials**


**Children who are deaf/hard of hearing**

Miscellaneous

Resources for Developing Teen Seminars on Executive Skills

Helpful Websites:
http://smartbutscatteredkids.com
http://www.efintheclassroom.net
http://learningworksforkids.com
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/teenbrain/view/
http://www.brainfacts.org