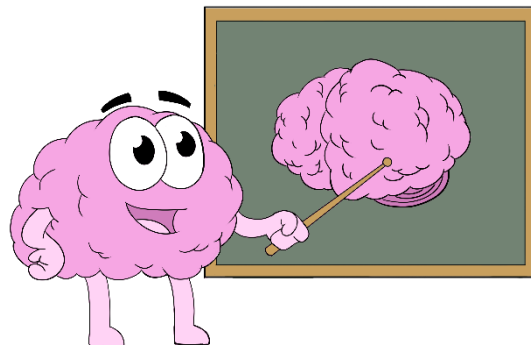


What is executive function?

Executive function is like the conductor of the brain orchestra, managing what we say and do. EF processes include the following:

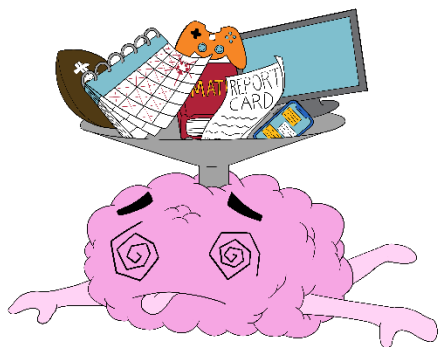
- Organizing and Prioritizing
- Goal setting
- Shifting flexibly (cognitive flexibility)
- Accessing working memory
- Self-monitoring



When do children use executive function?

Every task we do involves executive function processes, but some tasks place greater demands on executive function than others. At home, we must be aware of the demands we place on children: how we make requests, the types of tasks required, and the settings where those tasks are completed.

What does it look like when children struggle with executive function?



When children have difficulties with executive function, we see behaviors like losing track of belongings, incomplete tasks and assignments, procrastination, inability to change methods or see another's perspective, giving up, and making poor choices. When children struggle with executive function, they do not have the strategies they need to accomplish the task at hand. There is too much information entering their brains at the same time, and their mental "funnels" get clogged.

How can we help children who struggle with executive function?

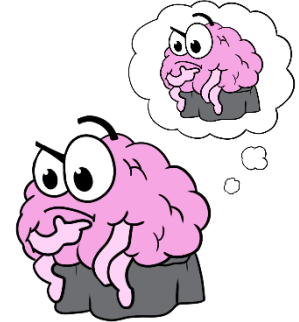
Our job is to make sure that children have the strategies they need to unclog their funnels. We can't assume that children will figure out the strategies they need on their own. Instead, we need to explicitly teach executive function strategies to our children. We can do this by modeling strategy use for our children and showing them what success looks like; letting them practice independently; and then helping them to reflect on what worked, what didn't work, and what they should do next time.



What is metacognition?

There are three key parts of metacognition:

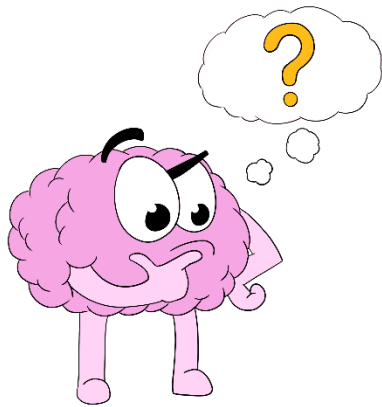
- Self-understanding— understanding our unique strengths and challenges
- Reflection—thinking about what we know about ourselves and what strategies can help us to learn
- Self-regulation—monitoring and adjusting our behaviors (including learning)



Together, these important processes help children engage in activities that build on their strengths, choose appropriate challenges, and identify strategies that are likely to work for them.

When do children use metacognition?

We may ask children to demonstrate metacognition directly through reflective activities (i.e., making an About Me poster) or discussions about why a behavior occurred. More often, however, metacognition is a behind-the-scenes process that is the basis for our choices, our inner self-talk, and our abilities to be successful and productive.



What does it look like when children struggle with metacognition?

Children who struggle with metacognition often find themselves stuck doing a task in an ineffective way, unable to recognize both the lack of success and a better method. For example, a child who struggles with reading may choose to read notes over and over to study for a test. The child may not be aware that such a strategy is less than ideal, may not know of different ways to study, and may simply continue with that method because that's what the child always did or that's what the child's peers are doing.

How can we help children who struggle with metacognition?

We can help children develop the habit of “thinking about thinking” by teaching them to pay attention to aspects of themselves like their strengths and challenges, their behaviors, and their use of strategies (and whether they work or not!). As children develop metacognition, they no longer need to rely on adults to suggest strategies. Children begin to reflect and make connections regarding what works and what doesn't. They are better able to monitor their own behaviors, including academics, and they can make more effective and efficient choices regarding strategy use—all leading to more independence and self-confidence!





What is **SMARTS @ Home**?

"We love SMARTS @ Home! My son is so much better at setting goals and learned that the easy answer isn't always the best answer." –Parent of a 4th grade student

Does your child lose papers or pencils, have trouble getting started or finishing an assignment, or get "stuck" doing a problem when one method doesn't work? When faced with one of these challenges, does your child simply give up, waiting for you to swoop in and "do it for them?"

THE SMARTS APPROACH

Children need to be explicitly taught strategies, and the home presents unique opportunities to help their children develop the strategies they need. By following our research based instructional model, SMARTS @ Home provides explicit instruction in strategy use, opportunities to develop greater self-understanding, and boosts students' self-esteem and ability to persevere when challenged.



WHAT IS SMARTS @ HOME?

SMARTS @ HOME is an organized collection of activities designed to help families support students in their development of executive function strategies outside of school. Working directly with an adult, children build self-awareness and come to understand the purpose and benefits of using strategies to overcome challenges. They will begin to set goals, develop a method for organizing materials, and build a foundation for time management and self-regulation of behaviors. SMARTS @ Home contains six units that are specifically designed for homeschool or afterschool use by families.

- Unit 1 – How do I think about my thinking?
- Unit 2 – How can I use strategies to help me?
- Unit 3 – How can I think flexibly?
- Unit 4 – I CAN DO my goals
- Unit 5 – Organizing your materials (The 4C's Strategy)
- Unit 6 – Developing an understanding of time

I CAN DO MY GOALS

Name: _____ Date: _____

WHAT IS A GOAL?

MY THREE GOALS

It's time to think about your own goals for this school year! Your goals do not have to be things you do for school. They can be goals for things you do for fun at home or anywhere. (Parent: Check one option and set the timer for 10 minutes.)

- Talk: Tell me your goals, and I will write them below.
- Draw: Draw your goals below.
- Act: Act out your goals, and I will write my guesses below.
- Write: Write out your goals below.
- Other: _____

(Support: If your child struggles with coming up with goals, provide some ideas: learning math facts, reading a book, learning or moving in sports, earning a scout badge, etc.)

GOAL 1: This year I want to improve my...

GOAL 2: Something new I would like to learn this year is...

GOAL 3: I would like to practice...

HOW ARE THE LESSONS STRUCTURED?

Everything you need for each lesson is included, complete with a script, interactive activities, printable handouts, and more! The lessons can be adapted, allowing you to adjust the level of challenge and providing students with choices on how to complete the activities. In addition, each unit comes with a Bridge Letter that can be shared with the any other adults providing support as well as extension ideas to help connect the strategies to other areas of life.

LEARN MORE

[Learn more about SMARTS@Home](#) and try a free lesson!