

Planning & Organization Skill Builder

Age-graded activities for building planning, time management, and organizational skills

Planning skills aren't taught -- they're scaffolded. Start with heavy support and gradually remove it as your child internalizes the process.

AGE	SKILL TO BUILD	ACTIVITY	HOW TO SUPPORT
3-4	Task initiation	Give 1-step chores with a visual reminder (put shoes in bin)	Place the visual cue right where the action happens. Praise starting, not finishing.
4-5	Sequencing	Cook a simple recipe together (3-4 steps with picture cards)	Let them tell you 'what comes next.' Resist correcting order unless safety issue.
5-6	Time awareness	Use a visual timer for transitions and routines	Time Timer or hourglass makes abstract time concrete. 'When the red is gone, we switch.'
5-7	Organization	Sort toys into labeled bins (with pictures on each bin)	Co-create the categories. Limit to 5-8 bins. Routine cleanup time daily.
6-8	Task planning	Plan a family outing together: where, when, what to bring	Ask them to make a list. Don't correct every detail -- let natural consequences teach.
7-8	Time management	Estimate how long homework will take, then time it	Compare estimate vs. actual. Over time, their estimates improve. No judgment on accuracy.
7-9	Goal setting	Set a weekly goal (read 3 books, learn 5 spelling words) and track it	Use a visible tracker. Celebrate process, not just achievement.
8-10	Project planning	Break a school project into steps with due dates on a calendar	Help them work backward from the deadline. 'When does each part need to be done?'
9-10	Prioritization	List all tasks for the week. Rank by importance and urgency.	Introduce the idea that not everything is equally important. Practice choosing.

AGE	SKILL TO BUILD	ACTIVITY	HOW TO SUPPORT
9-11	Self-monitoring	End-of-day checklist: Did I finish my tasks? What's left? What slowed me down?	Model this yourself. Share your own daily review. Make it a family habit.
10-12	Long-term planning	Plan a multi-week savings goal or project with milestones	Check in weekly. Adjust the plan when things change. Flexibility is part of planning.
12+	Systems thinking	Use a planner or digital calendar for all commitments independently	Step back. Let them fail small before they fail big. Offer coaching, not control.

Classroom Accommodations for EF Challenges

- Written instructions alongside verbal ones — Working memory overload is the #1 reason kids 'don't listen.'
- Checklists for multi-step assignments — Externalizes the planning so the child can focus on the work.
- Preferential seating away from distractions — Near the teacher, away from windows and doors.
- Extra time for transitions between activities — EF challenges make switching gears genuinely harder, not a behavior problem.
- Graphic organizers for writing assignments — Structures the planning phase that EF-challenged kids skip.
- Break long assignments into smaller checkpoints — A 20-page packet due Friday becomes 4 pages per night.
- Allow movement breaks during sustained work — Physical movement resets attention. 5 minutes of movement > 5 more minutes of grinding.
- Visual timer on desk for time awareness — Many children with EF challenges have poor time perception.
- Color-coded folders/binders by subject — Reduces the organizational load. Everything for math is blue. Simple and consistent.