

JUST FOR TEACHERS

The Write Stuff

Simple tips will improve your students' composition skills.

Do some of your students struggle with writing? One study found writing to be a problem for 65 percent of students with ADHD. They often have creative ideas, but find it hard to get them out of their heads and onto paper. They have trouble starting—and following through—on assignments. Holding ideas in mind and organizing information are also challenging. But there are strategies to make the process easier for all your students.

■ **Allow enough time.** Students with ADHD, especially those with the inattentive subtype, may take longer to process information. Be sure to give them extended time to complete their assignments.

■ **Guide topic selection.** Students who “get stuck” trying to pick an essay topic may use up most of their time and energy before they even start writing. Help them make a decision by writing four possible topics on index cards and asking them to eliminate one. Continue until only one topic is left. If they can't decide, flip a coin.

■ **Teach brainstorming skills.** Since students with ADD often cannot hold their ideas in mind for very long, you might serve as a “scribe” and record all the student's thoughts on the assigned topic. Avoid making judgments or grammatical corrections, since that would interrupt the flow of ideas. The trick is to capture all the ideas first and correct or edit them later.

■ **Teach organizational strategies.** Have your students record each idea they want to use in their essays on an individual Post-it note. This way, they can easily group related ideas. Alternately, Post-its might be used to keep track of the who, what, when, where, and why they need to cover in a report.

■ **Guide the writing.** If a student is struggling, sit down with him to talk about the assignment. Review his



notes from the brainstorming session and ask, “What are some ways you could write the first sentence in the second paragraph?” If he doesn't have an answer, say, “Here's an idea for the first sentence. How would you write that in your own words?” To prevent writer's block, type his thoughts as he expresses them. Through this process, his skills will improve over time and require less involvement on your part.

■ **Explain the editing process.** Students with ADHD have a hard time writing to length and often produce essays that are too short and lacking in details. Explain how the use of adjectives and adverbs can enhance their composition. Show them how to use a thesaurus, too. Once your students have a rough draft, remind them to proofread it before turning it in. ▲

By CHRIS ZEIGLER DENDY, of Cedar Bluff, Alabama, author of *Teaching Teens with ADD & ADHD* (Woodbine House) and *A Bird's-Eye View of Life with ADD & ADHD* (Cherish the Children).

Helping Kids with Memory Problems

Since students with ADHD often have problems with short-term memory, it is important to reduce the amount of routine information they must remember. Keep their memory free for the key part of the task—writing the essay.

One way to reduce memory demands is to provide your class with a checklist of the steps required to complete an essay. For a visual reminder, have each student trace her hand on a piece of paper and then write the name of one part of the essay in each finger: thesis statement, topic sentences for the first, second, and third paragraph, and conclusion.

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