

# THE STUDYPRO

## THE QUICK GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING EXECUTIVE FUNCTION AND STUDY SKILLS

Executive Function (EF) and study skills are the “how” of learning. A deficit in these skills is often the “why” of certain challenges, such as lack of organization, difficulty getting started, or rushing through work. The good news is that **skills are built, not born** and with the right strategies, EF skills can be built too.

### EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

### STUDY SKILLS

**EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS ARE THE “SELF-MANAGEMENT” SYSTEM OF THE BRAIN.**

**STUDY SKILLS ARE STRATEGIES THAT IMPROVE RETENTION AND RECALL OF INFORMATION**

Executive Functions control our ability to accomplish tasks, e.g. to get started, plan, or complete an assignment. EF's are developmental and if they aren't fully-developed, we can employ strategies to fill the gaps.

Most often, students require explicit instruction to acquire and appropriately use study skills. These discrete techniques can be learned, and when put into practice, will reduce stress and improve performance.

## WHAT ARE THE 8 EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS?\*

### INHIBITION

The ability to ignore distractions and resist temptations

### INITIATION

The ability to take action and get started

### SHIFTING

Having the mental flexibility to easily switch from one task or thought process to another

### EMOTIONAL CONTROL

The ability to manage your feelings to achieve a goal

### WORKING MEMORY

The ability to hold on to information and use it effectively

### PLANNING & ORGANIZING

The ability to set goals and use a strategic approach to achieve them

### MATERIALS ORGANIZATION

The ability to create and maintain systems to keep belongings and plans in order

### SELF-MONITORING

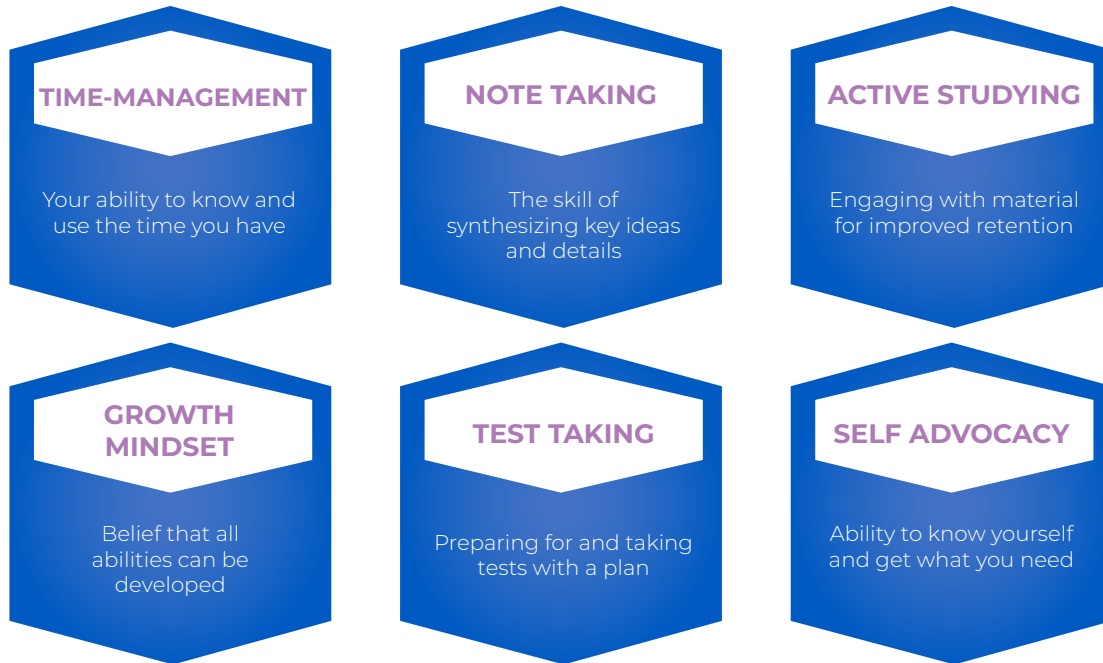
The ability to monitor and evaluate performance and keep track of actions that impact goals

*\*Source: EF-BRIEF's clinical scales (Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Function)*

## EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS PROVIDE THE FOUNDATION TO BUILD STUDY SKILLS

Without a strong EF base, you can't effectively use study skills to take the actions required that lead to success in school.

### WHAT ARE THE 6 STUDY SKILLS?



### LEARN TO RECOGNIZE EF AND STUDY SKILLS DEFICITS AND TO INTRODUCE THE RIGHT STRATEGIES

Students with EF challenges are often labeled as "lazy" or "unmotivated," when in fact they want to do nothing more than succeed. By recognizing that their behaviors are a result of underdeveloped EF skills, we can teach solutions to these challenges vs. simply pushing them harder to do something that they do not have the skills to do (yet!).

You can be your child's EF cheerleader by:

- Probing with sincere curiosity to help them **identify the "barrier" behind their behavior.**
- Bringing a **solutions-orientation** (vs. problem-seeking) by suggesting strategies to help overcome barriers.
- **"Watering the seeds"** of small wins vs. the weeds of continuing struggle...and watch these successes grow!



#### **SYMPTOM: MISSING WORK** **POSSIBLE MISSING SKILLS:**

- **Planning:** Challenges with chunking, knowing what to do.
- **Emotional Control:** Avoidance due to anxiety, giving up.
- **Initiation:** Not having the skills to get started.



#### **SYMPTOM: LOW TEST SCORES** **POSSIBLE MISSING SKILLS:**

- **Emotional Control:** Test anxiety, rushing to get it done.
- **Self-Monitoring:** Missing directions, not reviewing answers.
- **Study Skills:** Note-taking, active study skills.



#### **SYMPTOM: ATTENTION ISSUES** **POSSIBLE MISSING SKILLS:**

- **Inhibition:** Hard to ignore distractions, e.g., chat, YouTube.
- **Shifting:** Ability to move to non-preferred activity.
- **Working Memory:** Tracking multiple directions given simultaneously.