

# EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS



*'Our amazing ability to consciously  
control thoughts, emotions and actions  
in order to achieve goals'*

*Sabine Doebel*


**There is no one agreed definition of executive function,  
but there is agreement about the 3 core areas:-**

**Working  
memory**

**Cognitive  
flexibility**

**Self-regulation**

We use these skills every day to learn, work, and manage daily life.

<b>Planning</b> 	<b>Organization</b> 	<b>Self-Control</b> 
<b>Task Initiation</b> 	<b>Executive Functioning Skills</b> <small>www.thepathway2success.com</small>	
<b>Time Management</b> 		
<b>Attention</b> 	<b>Metacognition</b> 	<b>Working Memory</b> 
	<b>Flexibility</b> 	<b>Perseverance</b> 



# EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

Useful video for children

# Executive Dysfunction

**Trouble with executive function can make it hard to focus, follow directions, and handle emotions, among other things.**

**Do you recognise any of these behaviours?**



**Focusing too much on just one thing.**



**Being easily distractible.**



**Daydreaming or “spacing out” when you shouldn’t be.**



**Struggling to switch between tasks.**



**Problems with impulse control.**



**Trouble starting difficult or boring tasks.**



## KEY POINTS:

- Context is important – think about how you can make the goals really matter to you (or your pupils)
- We can teach strategies to children so they are motivated to use EF e.g. working with people they like, giving a reward when finished etc

TED TALKS: *How your brain's executive function works and how to improve it*

# Add baseline assessment document

# Strategies



Task Boards



Focus



Movement Breaks



Memory



Mind Maps



Pomodoro



Start the day in a calm way



Practice problem-solving



Build a strong relationship



Use planners and calendars



Teach EF skills explicitly



Teach study skills and habits



Give clear and concise instructions



Give think time for processing



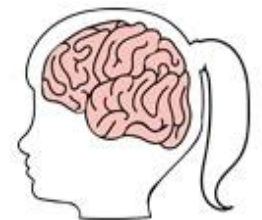
Use checklists



Establish routines



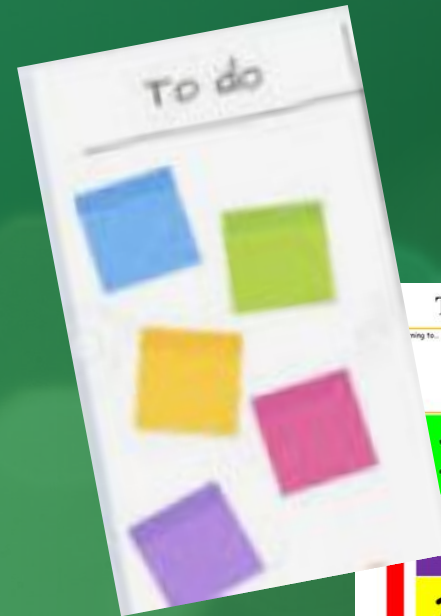
Incorporate movement



Model "think alouds"

# WHAT ARE TASK BOARDS?

- Share example task boards – discuss
- Explain rewards for good contributions
- Game e.g. Dobble or learning activity
- Model creating a task board
- Play game or do activity
- Short learning break
- Reflection – share experiences – rewards for contributors
- Challenge Sheet



**Task Management Board**

ing to:  → What equipment do I need?

1	<input type="text"/>
2	<input type="text"/>
3	<input type="text"/>
4	<input type="text"/>
5	<input type="text"/>

I will be finished when:  ○

# Task Board Progression

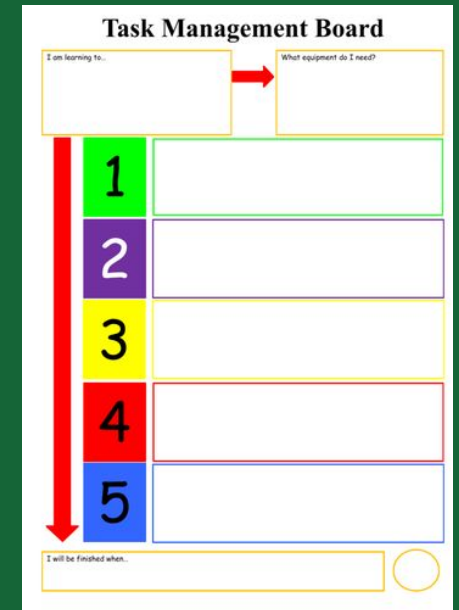
1. Create task boards for children
2. Model how to create a task board – class
3. Class contribute how to create a task board
4. Children practise creating their own – share with class
5. Children are independent in creating their own task board

**Task Management Board**

I am learning to... → What equipment do I need?

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

I will be finished when... ○




# WHAT IS



- Feedback from last session – task boards – rewards should be given to contributors
- Focus sorting sheet with TPs
- Feedback – create mind map and ask children to identify 1 area they would like to improve on
- Shopping game – add to mind map – discuss skills needed to focus/refocus
- Where's Wally (3 minutes) - then discuss skills/strategies and add to mind map
- Why is focus important? When can you focus e.g. gaming? Football? Gymnastics? Watching tv?
- Share strategies that children can use to help them refocus
- Challenge Sheet

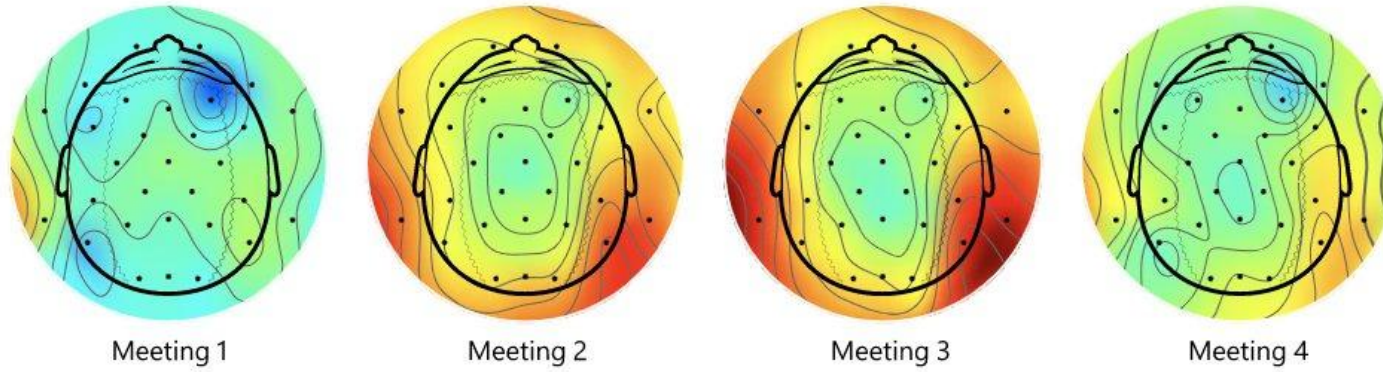


# Movement Breaks

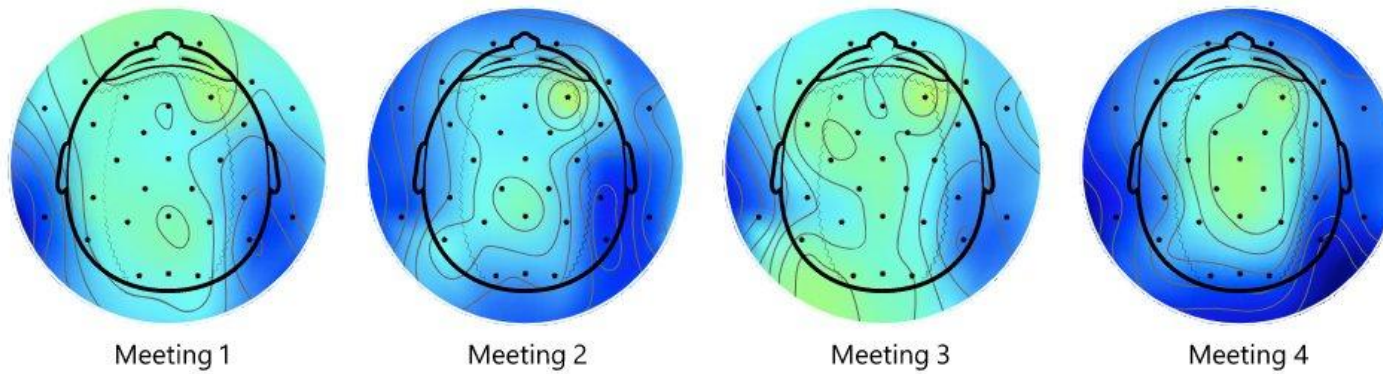
- Feedback from last session – focus – rewards should be given to contributors
- Share ‘learning requires attention and focus, this can be difficult to sustain for long periods. If our alertness is too low, or too high we will lose focus. Movement breaks can help us to change our levels.
- Show ‘Why we need breaks’
- Share activity sheet and recording sheet – set times 
- Pupils try out different alerting activities and choose 1, before repeating with organising and calming
- They will now have their own movement break sheet them to use this week during learning stops
- If time, set an activity that requires focus and then add in a learning break
- Challenge Sheet



No Break



Break



An EEG cap to monitor electrical activity in the brain



Average beta activity across research subjects during four meetings



# HOW TO REMEMBER

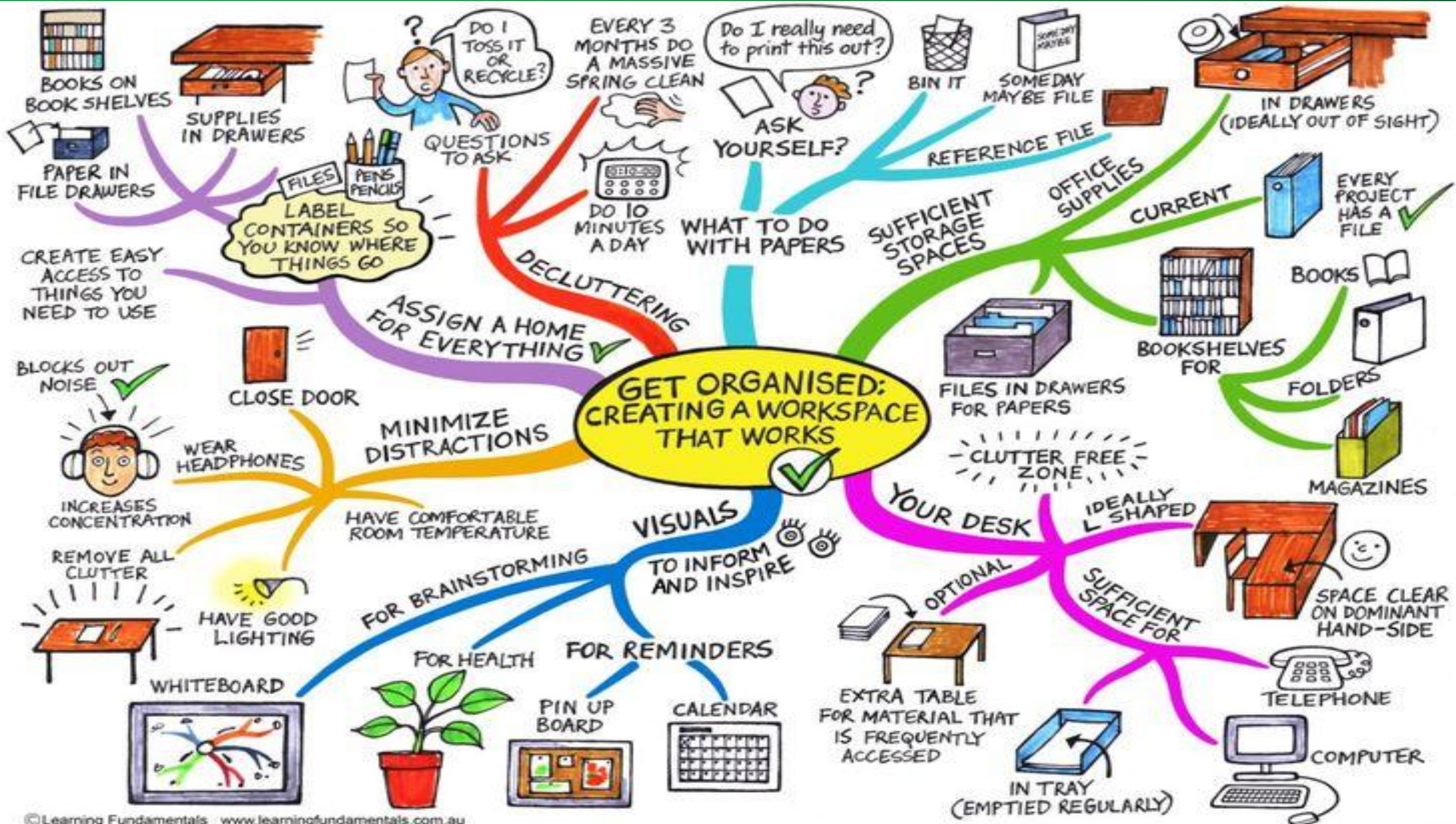
- Feedback from last session – movement breaks – rewards
- Create a visual timetable for the week for your class and share might like to look at a secondary timetable e.g. Fulston
- Mini timetable challenge – ask pupils to complete questions
- Discuss how we can use the timetable to be ready to learn e.g. what equipment will you need for maths, PE, home time?
- Recalling conversations activity
- Create a mind map with strategies to help you remember when our memory isn't good enough e.g. post it notes, alarms, task boards etc
- Challenge sheet
- 



# WHAT IS A MIND MAP?



- Feedback from last session – movement breaks– rewards
- Give How to mind-map! Sheet – ask children to focus for 5 minutes
- Model how to create a mind map – children to contribute ideas, include sub-ideas, explain that drawings, abbreviations are fine, as long as they can understand it
- Movement break
- Give children a selection of information sheets and give them 10-15 minutes to create a mind map - differentiate/support where necessary
- Ask for a volunteer to use their mind map to tell the class what they have learnt from their info. Sheet.
- Allow children to practise creating mind maps in lessons during input
- Challenge Sheet



# WHAT IS POMODORO?



- Feedback from last session – mind maps– rewards
- Share Using Pomodoro sheets – focus 5 minutes reading
- Give children a longer task e.g. books to create mind map, or another task related to their learning
- Display or give a visual – Pomodoro task board. Explain that they will be focusing on their task for e.g. 3 x 10 minutes, with a short 2 minute break in between (you could add a movement break or a chance to chat here) and then a longer break at the end.
- Group discussion – Did the breaks help? What additional support do you need? What issues did you experience?
- Challenge Sheet

# Pomodoro Technique

**1** Decide what task you need to complete

**2** Set the timer for **25 minutes**

**3** Work on your task until the timer rings

**4** Take a short, **5 minute break**

Repeat 4 times



Take a longer, **15-30 minute break**

# Remember, context is key, so...

- ☆ Reduce pressure on children – speak slowly, create a sense of calm, allow time (no rushing), reinforce with visual clues
- ☆ Create a collaborative and positive environment
- ☆ Encourage pupils to monitor their own performance and share feedback
- ☆ Acknowledge all efforts (mistakes are okay)
- ☆ Add a motivator – what is going to make them want to succeed?



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## Reasons to Teach Executive Functioning Skills Explicitly



[www.thepathway2success.com](http://www.thepathway2success.com)



EF skills are shaped (not innate)



They are life skills



They build independence



EF skills impact social skills



Strong EF skills support academics



EF skills enhance problem-solving abilities



They are a component of SEL (self-management)



Interventions support struggling kids



Research supports teaching EF skills



Proactively teaching EF skills supports all learners



Learning tough skills requires practice



EF skills teach positive study habits