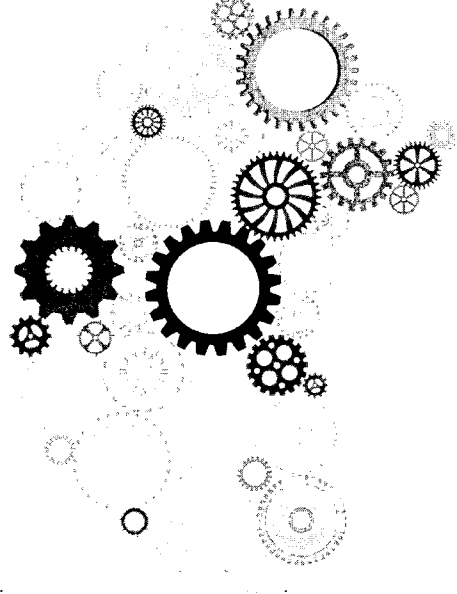
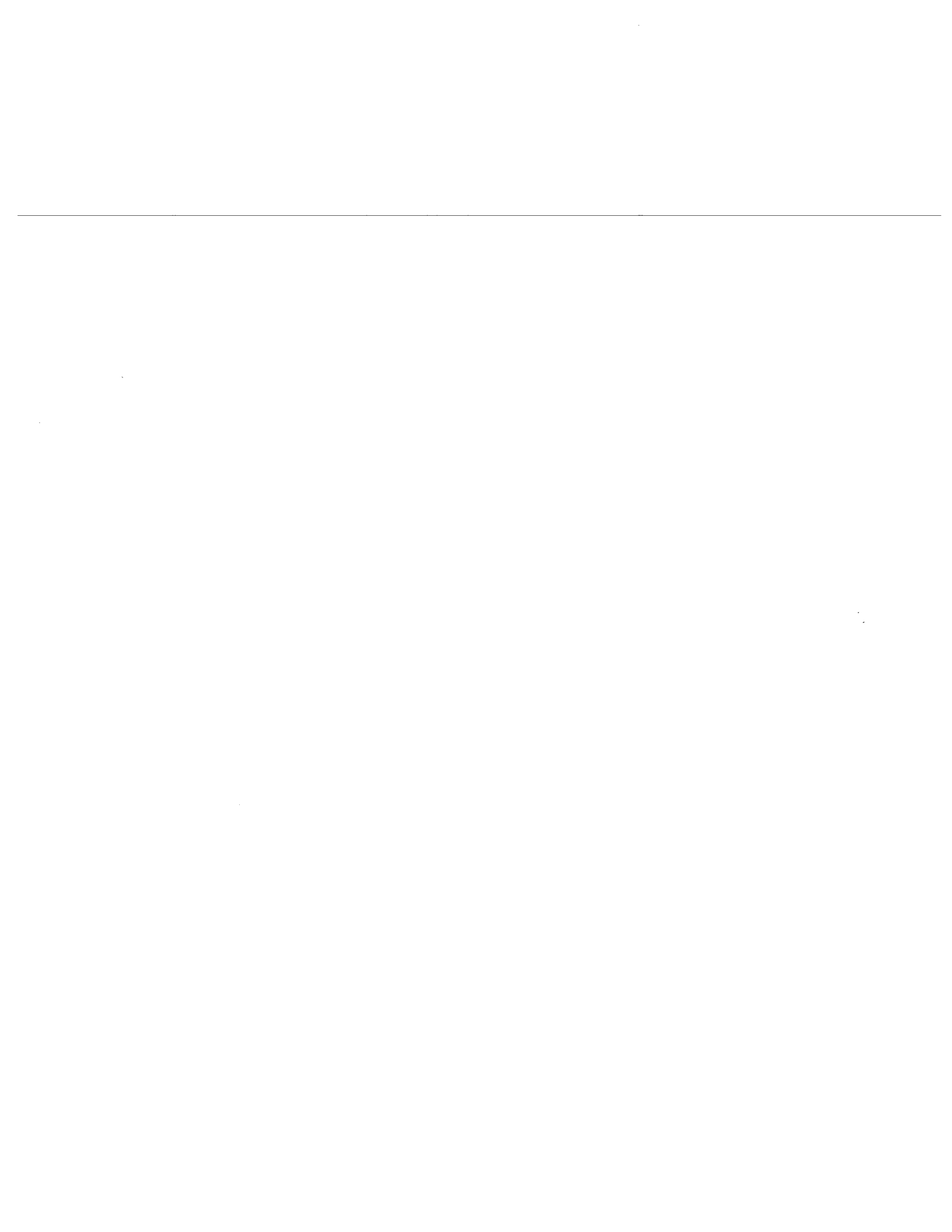


Improving

# **EXECUTIVE FUNCTION**



A guide for simple, easy to do activities at home to improve your child's executive function skills!



# WHAT IS EXECUTIVE FUNCTION?

“Executive Function” is an umbrella term for a set of cognitive processes that are required for mental and behavioral self-control.



Executive function is like the air traffic controller of the brain. Executive Functioning allows for learning to take place.

Executive Function skills are housed in the Prefrontal Cortex of the brain. This particular area isn't fully developed until as late as 25 years old! Therefore, it's important that we continue modeling and teaching executive function throughout childhood.

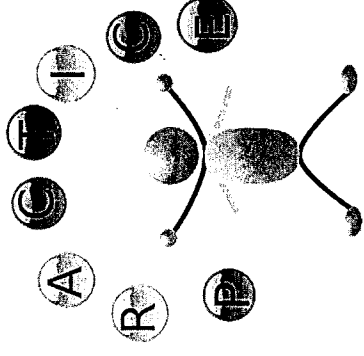
# EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SUBSKILLS

When discussing executive function, we are often referring to 7 subskills.

- ❑ **COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY** – to revise plans despite setbacks or obstacles or to adapt to changing situations
- ❑ **ORGANIZATION** – to be able to keep track of information or materials
- ❑ **WORKING MEMORY** – to hold information in memory while completing a complex task or draw on past learning and apply it to the current situation
- ❑ **SUSTAINED ATTENTION** – to pay attention to something despite fatigue or boredom
- ❑ **PLANNING** – to create a plan to reach a goal and make decisions about what is essential and delete the irrelevant information

- **IMPULSE CONTROL** – to think before you act
- **TASK INITIATION** – to begin a project without procrastination and in a timely fashion

These skills are used to complete many daily tasks. The more we can model our thinking when utilizing these skills to students, the better they can learn from us.



There are a variety of games and activities that can do done to improve executive function over time.

# CREATE A SCHEDULE

Materials – paper and pencil

## What To Do

- Create a consistent schedule for students to follow each day after school.
- Consider important tasks a student does daily – eat a snack, do homework, eat dinner, brush teeth, get ready for bed, read a book, etc.
- Use visual cues to make the schedule accessible to students.
- Stay consistent to demonstrate how planning helps us be more organized.

**Skills Developed:** organization and planning

# 20 QUESTIONS

Materials – none

## What To Do

- Players decide on a topic, such as animals, careers; foods, etc.
- One player thinks of something specific within the category.
- All remaining players ask yes or no questions to try and guess the answer.
- Players have 20 yes or no questions to guess the correct answer.

**Skills Developed:** cognitive flexibility, working memory, & sustained attention

# MEMORY

Materials – paired sets of cards

## What To Do

-Create a deck of memory cards.

-Memory cards can be created on the back on index cards.

-Every card should have a matching pair.

-Pairs may include pictures, letters, words, math facts/answers, etc.

-Lay out the cards in rows.

-Players take turns flipping over two cards at a time trying to find the matching pair.

-If a player makes a match, they get those cards and go again. If a match is not made, flip the cards back over.

-The player with the most matches at the end of the game wins.

**Skills Developed:** working memory & sustained attention

# GOAL SETTING

Materials – paper and pencil

## What To Do

-Work as a family or individuals to set a goal.

-Create a goal that is S.M.A.R.T.

-S – specific

-M – measurable

-A – achievable

-R – relevant

-T – timely

-Goal ideas – read before bed every night, complete homework on time, brush teeth without being told, eat at least 3 serving of fruit, etc.

-Create a visual display (picture, list, etc.) of the goal and post it in the house.

-Check in regularly to see how progress is going.

**Skills Developed:** organization, planning, and task initiation

# GO FISH

Materials – deck of regular playing cards

## What To Do

Number of Players: 2-6 players

- The goal of this game is to get rid of all of your cards by making pairs of the same number.
- Deal each player 7 cards. The remaining cards go face down in a draw pile.
- If a player has any pairs of numbers, put them face up in front of them.
- Player 1 may ask any other player, "Do you have any \_\_\_\_?" and say a number for which they are trying to make a pair.
- If that person has the number, they must give it to player 1. If not, they say "Go Fish!" and player 1 draws a deck from the draw pile.
- For each pair the player creates, they get to take another turn.
- Play continues rotating asking one another for cards until one player has made pairs with all of their cards.
- The player with the most pairs at the end of the game wins!

**Skills Developed:** cognitive flexibility, sustained attention, planning

# SLAP JACK

Materials – deck of regular playing cards

## What To Do

- Deal out an equal number of cards to each player (2-4 players recommended).
- The objective is to gain the most cards.
- Players take turns flipping over one card at a time.
- Any time a jack is flipped over, players race to be the first person to slap the card. The first person collects the pile of cards.
- If a player slaps at the wrong time, they must add the top card on their deck to the bottom of the pile.
- Continue play until one person has all cards.

**Skills Developed:** sustained attention & impulse control