



Executive Functioning Skills

A reference guide to the 12 skill areas assessed in the EF Evaluation Tool

1. Self-initiation

The ability to begin projects and tasks without undue procrastination, in an efficient or timely fashion. Students with strong self-initiation can move from intention to action on their own, without needing external prompting or reminders.

2. Motivation

The ability to sustain effort and engagement toward a goal, especially during challenging, boring, or frustrating tasks. It includes both intrinsic drive and the ability to self-encourage by pushing through difficulties.

3. Problem Solving

The ability to identify problems, generate possible solutions, evaluate options, choose the best course of action, and reflect on whether the approach worked. It involves thinking flexibly and systematically when challenges arise, including the ability to observe how one problem solves.

4. Time Management

The capacity to estimate how much time one has, how to allocate it, and how to stay within time limits and deadlines. It also involves a sense that time is important, and the use of tools like planners, timers, and schedules to stay on track.

5. Planning

The ability to create a roadmap to reach a goal or to complete a task. It also involves being able to make decisions about what is important to focus on and what is not important by sequencing steps in logical order, anticipating what is needed, and sticking to a routine.

6. Organization

The ability to create and maintain systems to keep track of information or materials. Organized students know where things are, what needs to be done, and when it is due by maintaining orderly spaces, notebooks, and materials so nothing important is lost or misplaced.

7. Flexibility

The ability to revise plans in the face of obstacles, setbacks, new information, or mistakes. It relates to an adaptability to changing conditions.

8. Working Memory

The ability to hold information in memory while performing complex tasks. It incorporates the ability to draw on past learning or experience to apply to the situation at hand or to project into the future by being able to follow multi-step directions, stay on track, and recall learning without missing a step.

9. Emotional Control

The ability to manage emotions to achieve goals, complete tasks, or control and direct behavior. This includes recovering quickly from setbacks, maintaining a low tolerance for frustration, and avoiding reactions that could interfere with relationships or learning.

10. Impulse Control

The capacity to think before you act. This is the ability to allow time to evaluate a situation and consider how behavior might impact it. Impulse control helps students pause before reacting, especially when an immediate response could lead to a poor outcome.

11. Attention Control

The capacity to maintain attention to a situation or task despite distractibility, fatigue, or boredom. This includes staying focused throughout long or tedious work, picking back up after an interruption, and avoiding the tendency to rush carelessly through tasks.

12. Self-monitoring

The ability to stand back and take a bird's-eye view of oneself in a situation. It is the ability to ask, "How am I doing?" or "How did I do?" and make adjustments based on honest reflection.

Reference

Dawson, P., & Guare, R. (2014). Interventions to promote executive development in children and adolescents. In S. Goldstein & J. A. Naglieri (Eds.), *Handbook of Executive Functioning* (pp. 427–443). Springer Science+Business Media. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-8106-5_24
