

Some Pointers and Strategies for Short Term and Working Memory Difficulties in Children

To provide effective remedial support for children with poor working memory skills it is necessary to **anticipate, alleviate** and **compensate**.

Firstly we need to minimize the chances of task failure by reducing excessive memory loads. If working memory capacity is exceeded the information will be lost, and once lost it cannot be retrieved.

Examples include:

- Restructuring multi-step tasks into separate steps.
- Simplify linguistic structures of verbal material.
- Increase meaningfulness and familiarity of material
- Be clear in what we do and do not want
- Frequently repeat information
- Reduce the amount of written material, enlarge important sections, highlight key points
- Use Visual cues, pictorial/coloured timetables diary
- Provide extra time for copying, alternate coloured lines for place finding
- Provide practical aids to clarify concepts
- Allow time for things to “sink in” and for good quality interactive conversations with open ended questions
- Be prepared to explain things many times, many ways
- Provide regular short breaks
- Homework should be to practise a learned skill Reassure, remind and re-focus
- Be accepting - don't make assumptions
- Reassure, remind, re-focus

Secondly we can minimise task failure by teaching strategies to compensate for difficulties. Many children with WM deficits are aware of when they have forgotten crucial information, but often don't know what to do. We need to encourage them to develop strategies.

Examples include:

- Teach rehearsal as a strategy to maintain information
- Encourage the child to repeat crucial points in instructions and request information when they know it is lost.
- Key information can be taped and then listened to repeatedly to help memorise.
- Teach to simplify and condense written materials into a shorthand, even a pictorial form.
- Help them to develop own shorthand – symbols abbreviations.
- Encourage them to make up their own mnemonics, rhymes.
- Teach appropriate use of memory aids – multiplication square, personalised

dictionaries, word cards, wall charts.

- Notebook for important information, things to remember
- Use of computer software, e.g word processing programs, spell check facilities, mind mapping programs
- Hand held spell checker
- Computer games such as Wordshark, Numbershark
- Work to develop organisational strategies – breaking down tasks into components wherever possible
- Make use of strengths e.g. visualisation, imagination, associations
- Chunking – auditory and visual