

EXECUTIVE SKILLS and the Teen Brain
Make your brain work for you

Executive Skill	Definition	Example
<p>Response inhibition</p> 	<p>The capacity to think before you act—this ability to resist an urge to say or do something allows you the time to evaluate the situation and how your behavior might impact it.</p>	<p>Some teens think about the consequences before they do something. Other teens just act—they don't think about consequences.</p>
<p>Working memory</p> 	<p>The ability to hold information in memory while performing complex tasks.</p>	<p>Some teens keep track of belongings, like coats, keys, or sports equipment, or are really good at remembering what they have to do. Others forget where they have left stuff and misplace things a lot.</p>
<p>Emotional control</p> 	<p>The ability to manage emotions to achieve goals, complete tasks, or control and direct behavior.</p>	<p>Some teens have a short fuse and get easily frustrated by little things or get stressed out if something doesn't go right. Others can stay cool despite irritation and take unexpected events in stride.</p>
<p>Flexibility</p> 	<p>The ability to revise plans in the face of obstacles, setbacks, new information, or mistakes.</p>	<p>Some teens can “go with the flow” and adjust fairly easily to a change in plans. Others plan out in their head in advance how something will go and get upset if it doesn't happen as planned.</p>
<p>Sustained attention</p> 	<p>The capacity to keep paying attention to a situation or task in spite of distractibility, fatigue, or boredom.</p>	<p>Some teens complete homework or chores without having to be hassled by parents, while other teens start but don't finish unless someone is on their case.</p>
<p>Task initiation</p> 	<p>The ability to begin projects without procrastination, in an efficient or timely manner.</p>	<p>Some teens are good at setting aside fun stuff to start on their homework right away. Other teens have a hard time pulling themselves away from fun things (texting, FB) to do work and put off homework as long as possible.</p>
<p>Planning/prioritizing</p> 	<p>The ability to create a road map 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.</p>	<p>Some teens are good at figuring out the steps needed to do a project or figuring ways to save money for something they want. Others don't know where to start or how to make a plan, or want expensive things but don't know how to go about saving money for them.</p>

Executive skill	Definition	Example
<p>Organization</p> 	<p>The ability to create and maintain systems to keep track of information or materials.</p>	<p>Some teens keep notebooks and backpacks organized to find things easily or put things back in a specific place as soon as they have finished using them. Others can't find things because they are a mess, or they leave their belongings around the house.</p>
<p>Time management</p> 	<p>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.</p>	<p>Some teens are reliably on time for school or can finish their homework in the time that they have available. Other teens are chronically late or routinely scrambling to make a deadline, or always seem to run out of time for the homework they have to do.</p>
<p>Goal-directed persistence</p> 	<p>The capacity to have a goal, follow through to the completion of that goal, and not be put off or distracted by competing interests.</p>	<p>Some teens are willing to set aside fun stuff to achieve a long-term goal or find ways around the obstacles that might stand in the way of getting what they want. Other teens live by the precept "You're only young once" or give up working toward a goal if something blocks them.</p>
<p>Metacognition</p> 	<p>The ability to stand back and take a bird's-eye view of yourself in a situation, to observe how you problem-solve. It also includes self-monitoring and self-evaluative skills (for example, asking yourself, "How am I doing?" or "How did I do?")</p>	<p>Some teens are good at sensing how others are reacting to their behavior or ideas. Other teens focus more on getting their point across and may not pick up on feedback from others.</p>