



## **Ear Protectors**

### **Sensory Organizing Tool**

#### **What Are They?**

Ear protectors are any ear covering that protects your child's ears from sound. They help to lessen auditory stimuli that may be overwhelming or distracting for your child.

#### **How Will Ear Protectors Benefit Your Child?**

Children with FASD may have difficulty filtering out environmental noise. It's easy for us to ignore non-essential sounds but some of our kids with FASD may not be able to determine what is important and what is not. They may lose focus and become overloaded with sensory stimulation in a loud setting. They may experience anxiety when they hear unexpected noises such as a fire truck passing by. Reducing auditory stimuli with ear protectors can be useful in these situations.

#### **Why Use Ear Protectors?**

Ear protectors can be calming for children. If they can deal with most environmental information, their ability to focus, react appropriately and organize themselves may be improved as well. Ear protectors can also reduce auditory self-stimulation including actions such as humming or self-talk.

### **TIPS FOR USE**

- Use earmuffs or headphones that completely cover the child's ears.
- Use ear protectors in noisy environments to lower the noise levels.
- Use ear protectors during quiet times to increase your child's concentration and to shut out ambient sounds.
- Try different ear protectors before deciding on which one to choose. Your child's reactions will show you the ones they prefer.

**For More Questions,  
Ask Your Occupational Therapist!**

#### **Where Can My Child Use His/Her Ear Protectors?**

- At school**
- Recess
  - Lunchtime
  - Quiet time
- Outings:**
- At restaurants
  - The mall
- At home:**
- When your child needs to do homework
  - At meal times

#### **Where Can I Purchase Ear Protectors? (2012)**

Ear protectors are available at local automotive and hardware stores – specialized child sized protectors are also available online.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**  
633 Wellington Crescent  
Winnipeg, MB R3M 0A8  
**PHONE:** (204) 235-8874  
**EMAIL:** info@rccinc.ca



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## Visual Schedules

### What Are They?

Children with FASD often have strengths in understanding visual information.

Visual schedules are a series of images that represent a series of activities or steps of an activity. They are used to help children with FASD anticipate events in their day and learn about and understand their environment. Visual schedules use pictorial cues and minimal words to provide structure to an activity, routine or the entire day. Photographs, symbols or physical objects may be used.

Visual schedules outline expectations for children in a way that is easy to understand. Children should begin using the schedules with adult assistance, and slowly, with guidance, they learn to interpret the schedules independently.



### Visual Schedules Can Help Your Child with the Following

- Transitioning into another activity or new situation (e.g. summer to school)
- Remembering the steps to an activity or a series of tasks
- Anticipating the next activity or next step
- Lessening behavioral outbursts
- Planning within their environment
- Paying attention to tasks
- Attending to and understanding verbal instructions

### Why Use It?

- Visual schedules allow children to gain independence and focus on tasks in the home and at school.
- In younger children, this means that play skills may improve and behavior outbursts lessen.
- Older children may become more independent in carrying out everyday skills for living.

### Useful Websites:

[www.connectability.ca/visuals-engine/](http://www.connectability.ca/visuals-engine/)  
[www.boardmakershare.com/You/Home](http://www.boardmakershare.com/You/Home)  
[www.visualaidsforlearning.com](http://www.visualaidsforlearning.com)  
[www.do2learn.com/sitemap/index](http://www.do2learn.com/sitemap/index)

### TIPS FOR USE

- To be effective, parents must first assist and reinforce the use of visual schedules with their child. Over time, less supervision will be needed.
- Use initially with a few favorite activities and slowly expand use of visual schedules to other less-favoured activities.
- Visual schedules can be inexpensive, simple to do, and easily transportable. Just be creative!
- Parents can create visual schedules by drawing images, taking computer images from clip art or the Internet or cutting them out from magazines.
- The best way to ensure visual schedules can help your child is to keep them consistent and easy to understand.



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# Deep Pressure

## What Is It?

Deep pressure is a type of touch used to provide calming information to the body and help children with FASD relax when they feel "over-excited" due to too much stimulation from their environment. It is often seen as providing consistent, firm touch to the body or by using stretchy materials or moldable materials to imitate deep pressure sensations. Many researchers on children with FASD indicate that sensory input, such as deep pressure and firm but gentle touch, are beneficial towards calming the sensory system. The sensations provide an overall calming sensation to the body and the brain, which positively affects the way children interact with themselves and others. Ask your occupational therapist if this is a good fit for your child.

## When Would Your Child Benefit from Deep Pressure?

- When your child is anxious (e.g. new situations, new experiences)
- When your child is overstimulated or over-excited (e.g. when your child is running around and unable to focus at school or at the mall)
- When your child seems disorganized or less grounded.

## Warnings and Precautions

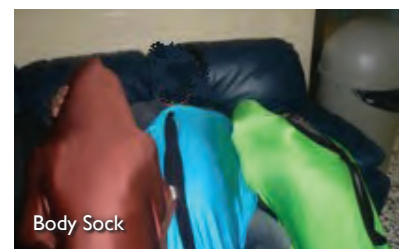
- Providing deep pressure should always be monitored by a responsible adult.
- There is a risk of airway constriction when using deep pressure materials. Ensure the nose and mouth are free and clear for breathing and pressure to the body does not restrict respiration.
- Deep pressure tools MUST NOT be used to restrict movements.



Firm Hugs



Deep Pressure Vest



Body Sock

**Ask Your Occupational Therapist About Deep Pressure. It Works!**

## TIPS FOR USE

*Special equipment may be purchased to help your child with deep pressure. Ask your occupational therapist about equipment that would be best suited for your child. Examples of deep pressure equipment are illustrated on the side panel of this sheet.*

Here are some simple, fun and safe activities you can do with your child at home that involve deep pressure!

1. Give your child lots of big bear hugs!
  2. You can play squishing games with your child that use constant firm pressure (make sure to avoid restricting airflow!).
- *The Hot Dog Game:* Get your child to lie down on the floor and place a body pillow on top of them,

pretending it's the bun. Use your arms to smother and squish on the ketchup and other condiments. Make sure you apply pressure on your child from shoulder to toe! Do not cover the nose and mouth at any time.

- For older children, an exercise ball may work better. While the child lies on the soft ground on their stomach, slowly and firmly roll the ball up and down the body from shoulder to toe. You can also count slowly "1... 2... 3..." or use the word "Steeeam... Rolleeerrr..."
- Use a bean bag chair or an overfilled armchair to provide a space where they can receive all-over deep pressure.



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# Visual Timers

## What Are They?

Visual timers let you **see** how much time is left.

## Who Would Benefit From Using a Visual Timer?

Children with FASD often have difficulty with understanding the concept of time and being aware of time passing. They are often concrete thinkers who are focused on what they can see, taste, touch, smell, or hear. Visual timers help make time easier to understand by allowing them to use their sense of sight.

## Children Who Have Difficulty Understanding Time May Also Have Difficulty With...

- Transitions between activities
- Sharing or taking turns
- Waiting patiently.

## Why Use a Visual Timer?

Helping children see time helps them understand how much time is left for a given activity. This provides a visual clue to finish an activity and start transitioning to a new activity. A visual timer also helps the child wait patiently and take turns by giving a visual picture of how much longer is left.

## TIPS FOR USE

1. Use verbal and/or visual cues to warn the child that a transition is coming.
2. Show your child the timer and set it while he or she is watching.
3. Leave the timer in a place where your child can see it.
4. If the child...
  - Asks for more time OR
  - Is impatient (how much longer?)  
→ ...Remind them to look at the timer.



**Time Timer** (timetimer.com)

- Apps and software available



**Sand Timer**



Free app available for iPads and iPhones

**For More Suggestions, Ask Your Occupational Therapist!**



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**PHONE:** (204) 235-8874  
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# Movement Breaks

## What Are They?

They are short breaks to let the child move around before going back to a previous task or activity.

## Who Would Benefit from a Movement Break?

Everyone! Movement breaks give us a chance to move so we can focus during activities that require:

- Maintaining focus/attention
- Sitting still
- Maintaining appropriate energy levels.



## Why are Movement Breaks Effective?

It is hard work to focus on one task for a long time. Our bodies are made to move, interact and feel the environment around them. Think about how tired you feel after sitting all day at your desk, studying a lengthy book, or listening to a long talk. Our bodies need a break! By moving around, the body gets a chance to re-energize and refocus attention. This helps us improve our concentration to get the job done.

## TIPS FOR USE

- Movement breaks are a great tool to use:
  - After school
  - Before periods of concentration (dinner; while watching TV, car rides)
  - When your child is having difficulty focusing.
- At the beginning, you can help your child by acting as their 'external brain'. You can help them know when to take a movement break and teach them over time how to ask for one.
- Movement breaks do not need to be a structured sport or exercise program. Simple chores or errands around the house work to give children the breaks they need. Teach your child how to ask for a movement break so that over time they can become more independent.

## Movement Break Suggestions

- Push or pull furniture
- Shovel snow
- Put away the dishes
- Carry things around the house (e.g. laundry)
- Get a forgotten item from another room
- Push the shopping cart or carry the groceries
- Put groceries away into the cupboards
- Use a rocking chair
- Do wall or chair push-ups
- Play an active game together like 'Simon Says'
- Go for a walk
- Play outside

**For More Suggestions, Ask Your Occupational Therapist!**



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## **Reviewing Expectations**

### **Shaping Positive Behaviour**

#### **What Are They?**

Expectation reviews are reminders of what specific behaviors are appropriate and acceptable and may include a list of rules, steps to do or even a description of what success looks like.

#### **Who Would Benefit from Expectation Reviews?**

Children who have difficulty with:

- Applying one rule to different situations
- Remembering rules and how to act
- Engaging in a new activity, event, or situation.

#### **Why Remind the Child of Expectations for a Situation?**

Some children with FASD may have difficulties with memory and generalization. Reviewing expectations can jog their memories and let them know what appropriate behaviors look like to help the child focus on being successful.

#### **Some Strategies for Reviewing Expectations**

- Review expectations BEFORE going into the activity; coach DURING the activity; and praise your child AFTER the activity.
- Break your expectations into smaller steps. For example, instead of saying "Eat your dinner properly," talk about how you want to see him/her sit still, wait at the table until everyone is finished, OR clear their plate. This gives the child an understanding of their job. Focus on one step at a time!
- Example jobs include: eating dinner at the table, going for a car ride, doing homework, going to bed.
- Use visual reminders. Visual aids may be created to refresh the child's memory. This also provides a quick reference and allows for quicker recognition.
- Use fewer words and more visuals!
- Reinforce good behaviors by praising peers who are modelling good behavior.

**Example:** When visiting friends, you may use the following:



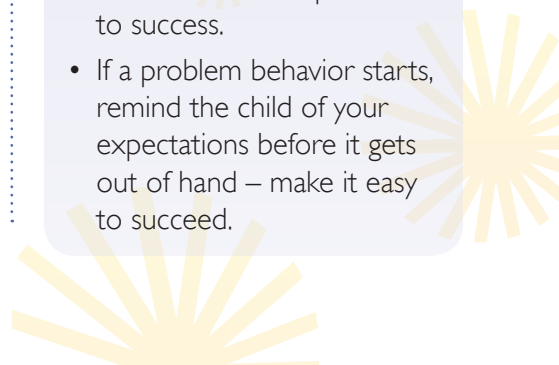
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#### **TIPS FOR USE**

- Remember that your expectations should match your child's capabilities during that time. What you expect and what your child can successfully do may be different things!
- Be consistent – make it true for everyone in the family.
- Be specific – make it easy to apply to situations by talking about what actions you mean and when.
- Be concise – use short, simple reminders.
- Be timely – try to review before, coach during and praise after.
- Do not use too much language. Visuals and gestures are also effective as reminders.
- Remind the child of past experiences with the activity to refresh their memory.
- Review expectations with the child before starting a new activity, and help them remember the steps to success.
- If a problem behavior starts, remind the child of your expectations before it gets out of hand – make it easy to succeed.





# Social Stories

## What Are They?

Social stories are unique stories created for children to prepare them for new or difficult situations or events. These stories may be in the form of picture books or in text only and are useful in helping children better understand events and expectations, which may lead to more success. This approach has been successful with children, adolescents, and adults with social and communications challenges. (Gray, 2010)

## When Should You Use Social Stories?

- For new situations
- For transitions and changes in daily routines
- For any situation that may cause anxiety (fears, etc)
- For social interactions that need to be processed in a concrete way.

## Why Use Them?

These stories address social difficulties by giving children a perspective on the thoughts, emotions, and behaviours of others. They also help children to better predict the actions and beliefs of others. Social stories give children direct contact with social information through text and pictures rather than through speech and observation. These stories provide some separation between teaching and experiencing the social situation, which gives children chances to practice the skills on their own terms.

## TIPS FOR USE

- Social stories can be used daily with your child. Practicing the social story before the actual event occurs will help to better prepare your child.
- Pairing play activities along with social stories will help with real-life situations. For example, if your child is going to the movie theatre, create a “theatre-like” scenario at home by putting on a DVD and making them popcorn and snacks.
- If the story is not working, it may have to be changed. It is better to consult an occupational therapist or speech-language pathologist for help to develop social stories to suit your child.

For more information about social stories, visit The Gray Center website at: <http://www.thegraycenter.org/social-stories>



## Here's a Brief Example of a Social Story about Sharing

My name is Jeremy.  
I like to play video games.  
Thomas likes to play video games too.  
If Thomas asks to play video games with me, I can say, “Yes, you can play with me”.  
Thomas will be happy if I share with him. We can play more often.  
Sharing my video games with Thomas makes me happy.  
I can share my video games with Thomas again when I see him next time.  
Sharing makes me happy.

**For More Questions,  
Ask Your Occupational  
Therapist or Speech  
Language Pathologist!**



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Winnipeg, MB R3M 0A8  
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**EMAIL:** [info@rccinc.ca](mailto:info@rccinc.ca)



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## **Body Socks**

### **Sensory Organizing Tool**

#### **What Are They?**

Body socks are stretchy, breathable fabric bags made of a lycra/spandex material. They can fit over a child's body or be worn with the child's head outside. The stretchy material provides movement resistance as well as firm, gentle pressure during play.

#### **When Would Your Child Benefit from a Body Sock?**

Children with FASD are often easily overwhelmed by environmental sensory input. They may become overly alert and appear anxious, overly-excited, confused, disorganized, hyperactive or out of control. Use a body sock when your child is showing signs of restlessness and overexcitement. It is also a good time to use a body sock when you want your child to calm down for a task.

#### **Why Are They Useful?**

- They provide calming and reorganizing information through resistance and deep pressure input.
- They provide increased feedback and awareness of movements.
- They may provide a visual break when used to cover the head as well.
- They help children learn how to coordinate their bodies and feel them moving.

### **TIPS FOR USE**

- Your child can either climb completely into a sock or leave their head outside.
- Have your child stand in front of a mirror and stretch to make as many different shapes as possible, using different parts of their body.
- Hold each pose for 10-15 seconds to increase body awareness, balance, and awareness of the relationship of one body part to another.
- Have your child pretend to be different animals, such as a:
  - Caterpillar – crawling along the ground
  - Butterfly – flapping it's wings
  - Fish – swimming through an ocean
  - Monkey – swinging through trees



#### **Warning and Precautions**

- Ensure adult supervision when using body socks.
- Body socks should not be used as a restriction in any way.
- Body socks also pose falling and tripping hazards. Be careful when using on smooth surfaces to avoid injury.

#### **Purchasing Information**

School Specialty

Phone: 1-866-519-2816

[www.schoolspecialty.ca](http://www.schoolspecialty.ca)

TFH Special Needs Toys Canada Inc

Phone: 1-877-509-7524

[www.specialneedstoys.com/can](http://www.specialneedstoys.com/can)

Southpaw Enterprises Inc.

Phone: 1-800-228-1698

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

FDMT

Phone: 1-866-465-0559

<http://www.fdm.ca>

**Ask Your Occupational Therapist if This is a Good Match For Your Child or if You Have Any Questions!**



#### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

633 Wellington Crescent

Winnipeg, MB R3M 0A8

**PHONE:** (204) 235-8874

**EMAIL:** [info@rccinc.ca](mailto:info@rccinc.ca)



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## **Verbal Reinforcements**

### **Shaping Positive Behaviour**

#### **What Are They?**

Verbal reinforcements are positive cues given verbally to affect children's responses to specific tasks or activities. Words rather than rewards emphasize good work. For example, if your child does a good job on their chores, you may say "Good job on doing the dishes! They are really clean!" This encourages them to do just as well next time. Verbal reinforcements can also be paired with rewards such as free-play time or a favourite snack. Compliments, encouragements and rewards are likely to increase the chances desirable behavior will happen again.



#### **Why Use Verbal Reinforcements?**

Verbal reinforcements are useful in motivating children and shaping behavior. Using verbal praise can help maintain or strengthen existing behaviours and help develop new behaviours.

#### **When Do You Use Verbal Reinforcements?**

Verbal reinforcements can be used immediately after the child has performed positive behaviors or when they need more encouragement to perform better. When the child is aware they are doing well, they will be motivated to continue practicing. Verbal reinforcements can also be used to correct negative behaviors. For example, instead of saying "Stop running in the hallway!" you can say, "Try walking in the hallway". Positively phrasing what you actually want the child to do will cue them to perform the behavior rather than using negative phrasing.

### **TIPS FOR USE**

- Try to find out what words or activities work best to reinforce the positive behavior. "Awesome, you hung up your coat all by yourself!"
- Timing and frequency of reinforcement should be consistent. Initially, reinforcement should occur after every incident of positive behavior. As the behavior becomes well learned, start to decrease the amount of reinforcement so the child does not come to expect reinforcement every time the behavior is performed correctly.
- Make sure non-verbal reinforcements match the verbal. In other words, when you are telling the child how great they did during soccer practice, make sure to say this with a smile and a pat on the back.
- Be cautious not to use the same words or phrases too often or the child may lose interest with this type of praise.
- Knowing the difference between bribery and reinforcement is important. Bribery is often used as a strategy to reward the child BEFORE the positive behaviour when the parent experiences resistance. Reinforcement is used AFTER they have already performed the positive behaviour.



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# Hand Fidgets

## What Are They?

Fidgets use the sense of touch for the hands and are often small objects children hold and fidget with using their hands. Examples are stress balls, koosh balls or hair elastics. Fidgets for children with FASD are often referred to as “Listening Helpers”.

## Who Would Benefit from Using Hand Fidgets?

- Children with attention and focus difficulties. Using fidgets may help during activities requiring a lot of concentration such as waiting in line, watching a movie, listening to a lecture or sitting during a visit.
- Children with a strong need to touch everything.

## Why Use Hand Fidgets?

Hand fidgets help keep your child's hands busy and out of trouble. They provide a small, quiet object to meet your child's need for touching without harming or distracting others. Giving your child something to hold in their hands allows them to focus on the activity while meeting their need to touch.

## TIPS FOR USE

- Use small, quiet, safe objects as fidgets.
- Fidgets come in different textures, shapes, and sizes. **Ask your occupational therapist for suggestions on fidgets that may work for your child.**
- At the beginning, keep fidgets with you to give your child when they are having trouble focusing or keeping their hands to themselves. Teach them how to use them correctly. Over time, children will become more independent with their use and learn to ask for one or find one themselves.
- Remind your child that fidgets are tools to help them listen and focus, and not toys to be used for throwing and bouncing.
- Make sure fidgets you and your child choose are not distracting to others.
- Keep fidgets in an easily accessible area.



## Tip

**Fidgets are not expensive!**

Many can be purchased at dollar stores or made at home.

**Make fidgets at home:** Try filling a balloon with sand or flour to make a stress ball.



Elastics



Koosh Ball

**For More Suggestions and to Ask if it Matches Your Child's Needs, Ask Your Occupational Therapist!**



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## **FASD and Sleep**

Sleep issues among children with FASD are common. Many children experience “disturbed sleep”, which can look like:

- Trouble falling asleep at bedtime (taking more than 20 minutes to fall asleep)
- Frequently waking up at night (for minutes or hours)
- Early morning awakenings
- Difficulty getting out of bed in the morning
- Tired, hyperactive or irritable during the day
- Sleep-walking or sleep-talking
- Restless sleep (tossing and turning)

### **Why is Sleep Important?**

- Poor sleep at night can lead to problems with learning, memory, attention, mood, and behaviours including hyperactivity, aggression, and impulsivity.
- Sleep is also important for development, and if sleep issues are long lasting, they may prevent children from reaching their potentials in cognitive and motor development.
- Poor sleep for a child means poor sleep for their parents/caregivers! This can lead to stress and frustration for the whole family.
- Without addressing and treating sleep issues, the effect of all other treatments might be reduced.

### **What Might Be Causing Poor Sleep?**

- Children with FASD might have difficulty sleeping through the night due to various factors, with perhaps more than one factor acting at the same time. These factors include: brain differences, health problems, poor sleep routines, and emotional or social issues.
- Children with FASD often have differences in the processing of sensory information from their bodies that are in charge of seeing, listening, tasting, touching, smelling, along with senses in charge of knowing where their bodies are in space, how fast their bodies are moving, and giving feedback from joint and muscles.
- These differences can affect how sensory information from the environment and the body is organized in the brain. For example, soft noises can seem loud and irritating, small amounts of light can seem overwhelming or the feeling of pajamas or blankets can be uncomfortable.
- Each child with FASD has individual sensory processing needs that are unique to them and may affect sleep in a different way.
- Children with FASD may have abnormal secretions of the hormone melatonin. Melatonin is released by the brain and responsible for *when* we sleep, *how long* we sleep, and *how well* we sleep. When children don't secrete enough melatonin at night, they have trouble falling asleep, staying asleep and waking up early in the morning.

**Children with FASD are up to 5 times more likely than typically developing children to have sleep issues.**



### **What Can I Do? Strategies and Solutions**

*One of the first steps for helping children with sleep issues involves promoting good sleep habits through sleep hygiene.*

**Sleep Hygiene** is the promotion of good sleep routines by improving the sleep environment, using sleep promoting activities and scheduling sleep. It is the first strategy to try, and these need to be trialed consistently for 2-4 weeks to see if they are helping. Keeping a sleep record during this period helps determine success.

**According to medical literature, the first step in the treatment of sleep disorders is sleep hygiene.**

**Without treatment, sleep problems can continue into adulthood.**



## Sleep Environment

Following are solutions and strategies for the bedroom to help with sleep:

### SIGHT

- Use dimmer lights to decrease brightness.
- Use simple sheets (no pattern) and neutral room colours to reduce visual stimuli.
- Use light-blocking window shades.
- If possible, a bedroom should be totally dark (even low light levels can inhibit melatonin secretion).

### TOUCH

- Cut tags off pyjamas or bedding since it may irritate the skin.
- Use plain or soft-textured bedding to decrease stimulation and/or irritation to skin.
- Be aware of child's material preferences for pajamas and bedding, e.g. flannel vs. lycra or loose-fitting vs. snug.

### SOUND

- Use ear plugs, sleep machines or white noise machines to block out noise.
- Listen to soothing music (meditation songs or songs with 60-80 beats per minute).
- Carpeting on floors can absorb noise.

### JOINT SENSE AND MOVEMENT

- Use deep pressure/massage at bedtime to help kids settle down (can be done with hands or items such as a sleeping bag). Try this only as much as child will tolerate.
- Use slow back-and-forth, rhythmical rocking to help with settling (e.g. rocking chair).
- Use oversized quilts or heavy blankets – the weight can provide added deep pressure and can be comforting.

### SMELL

- Do not use laundry detergents, soaps/shampoos or toothpastes with strong scents.
- Try calming scents (e.g. vanilla, lavender, banana).
- Bedtime snack ideas such as warm foods, sucking liquids through a straw, and foods that need to be chewed are helpful.

### OTHER

- Do not use the bedroom for punishment. This room should be a place that is comfortable, familiar and not exciting.
- Keep the bedroom layout consistent and uncluttered.
- Avoid co-sleeping as this increases the risk of sleep issues.
- Avoid TV in the bedroom.

## Sleep-promoting Activities

Following are activities to help with sleep success:

- Use regularly scheduled movement breaks and “heavy work” (pushing/lifting activities) during the day to help the child become more settled at bedtime. It is better for the caregiver to structure and organize this activity.
- Avoid screentime (e.g. TV, video games, computer games) 1 to 2 hours before bedtime. Studies say pre-bed screentime is related to delayed onset of sleep.
- No roughhousing before bed.
- Pre-warn the child at least 30-60 minutes before bedtime.
- Avoid foods with sugar or caffeine close to bedtime.
- Use calming activities before bedtime to reduce the time it takes to settle for sleep (e.g. rocking, warm bath, massage).
- Use a soft voice and simple instructions at bedtime.
- Use visual schedules as a prompt for bedtime routine. This may include pictures of having a bath, then brushing teeth, then putting on pyjamas, etc.
- Read age-appropriate stories, avoid books that stimulate the mind or senses (e.g. scary books, touch books or books with sound).
- Provide opportunities for exposure to natural lighting during the day (e.g. outdoor play in sunshine). Daylight aids in the production of nocturnal melatonin which helps improve sleep.

## Sleep Schedule

Schedules, routines and structure are important not just at bedtime but all day long.

- Enforce routines, rules and consistency.
- Maintain the same schedule on weekends and holidays.
- Include a scheduled “wind down” time (30-60 minutes) before bedtime.

## Medication

- If sleep strategies are not working, you may want to discuss a trial of medication with your child's doctor.
- Melatonin may be helpful to establish a sleep schedule. Talk to your doctor about whether this is a good option for you and your child.
- Discuss the effects of your child's current medications on sleep.

## Consult With Your Occupational Therapist For More Information.



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# Homework Tips

## Why Is Doing Homework Difficult for a Child with FASD?

The brains of children with FASD are developed atypically, which may result in various behavioral symptoms including:

- Hyperactivity
- Distractibility
- Lack of inhibition
- Learning difficulties
- Difficulties with routines
- Poor motor skills
- Social and language delays
- Impaired information processing abilities
- Difficulty self-regulating

These symptoms can make sitting down to do homework hard to do.

## Here Are Some Tips to Help Your Child with Homework:

- Keep in touch with your child's school: A home-school communications book may be the best way to do this. This way, you will know the teacher's expectations; you can communicate with the teacher about what is realistic for your child; and the teacher or staff can log your child's behavior at school. Also, the teachers may be using a different instructional style or process than what you are familiar with. If you know how the school is teaching a skill, you can be more consistent and accurate with reinforcing it at home!
  - Remind school staff to keep comments positive.
  - If the communications book frequently does not make it home, find an alternate way to communicate. A phone call at the end of the day or even email may be the way to go.
- Create a homework environment that is free of distractions and one that limits your child's need to get up:
  - Set up a desk or table in a room that is relatively empty and free of clutter.
  - If the room has a window, face the desk towards the wall so your child is not distracted by what is going on outside.
  - Try to have all potentially needed supplies in close proximity (i.e. pencils, pens, sharpeners, erasers, etc., and maybe a glass of juice with a straw or water bottle for sucking, in case they need a drink).
  - Strategies that help keep your child calm and focused should also be readily available in the



environment (such as fidget toys, wobble cushions, wobble stools, rocking chairs, pressure wraps or vests and/or calming music).

- Try to establish a "homework routine" with your child. Here are tips to help you create this routine:
  - Use visual supports, such as visual timers and/or visual schedules. Using a visual timer may enable your child to 'see' how much time is left for a certain activity. Then, if your child gets off track, you can point to the visual schedule and remind them "first homework, then..."
  - It also helps to break down the task into smaller, more manageable parts (i.e. 15 minutes spent on homework followed by 10 minute break). Continue to do the task in short intervals until all homework is complete. This way, over time your child will learn what to expect.
  - Also keep in mind when setting up a schedule that your child may need time to unwind when they get home from school. For example: Once home from school, give them 20 minutes to unwind; followed by time spent on homework. As a general rule, children with FASD will handle 10-20 minutes of homework per night. If your child has had a rough day, reduce your expectations for homework. You might want to just read the homework to your child rather than pushing to complete it. Be sure to include breaks in between homework periods. You can use strategies such as incorporating movement breaks and heavy work into this routine to help your child focus.

### Homework Tips (Continued)

- Be their “external brain”:
  - Even after you have set up the environment and built strong routines, don’t forget you will still need to be around to help organize and monitor them while they are working.
  - Teach them to ask for help and provide assistance as needed. Because children with FASD tend to think in “black and white” terms, you will need to be there to help them understand “grey areas”.
- Discuss problem-solving strategies out loud, and make sure they understand them.
- Be there regularly to provide encouragement and immediate feedback for positive behaviors.
- Give your child cues to check-in with their emotions, provide support and redirect them when needed.
- Many children keep it together for a long school day. Unwinding at home will be very important. Sometimes, play time or engaging in heavy work or movement activities like biking, swimming or running is just what they need to relax. After all, your child’s biggest learning tool right now is play!

Children with FASD are all different since their brains develop individually. Some tips may work for your child; some may not. Try different combinations and keep looking for new strategies.

### Summary

Help your child develop a positive state for thinking and focusing on what they need to do.

#### TOUCH

- Ensure they are not wearing any clothing that distracts them.
- Fidgets or listening helpers are a great way to extend focus. They can be any small objects that can be held in the hand. Some like mouth tools like chewy tubes or stir sticks, while others use gum.

#### SIGHT

- Keep the area as bare as possible, to decrease distractions. You can use a small desk area or a voter’s booth to create an office to set the mood.
- Limit the amount of hangings on ceilings, walls and even fridges.
- Natural light is better than artificial, but make sure you have enough, not too much.
- Visual timers can give a more concrete idea of how much time you have left to work, eliminate frequent questions and increase cooperation.
- Visual schedules clearly show what tasks are left to be done, and allow for better transitioning since your child will know what is coming next.

#### SMELL & TASTE

- Citrus scents are stimulating while vanilla and lavender are calming scents. Be mindful of how your child is affected by any scent, and use it to your advantage.
- Have a glass of water with a straw handy for a quick break.
- Crunchy and chewy snacks like celery sticks, pretzels, or gummy candy may help with extending focus on task.

#### SOUND

- Work in a quieter area. Avoid TVs, radios, phones, or other people in the room to avoid distractions.
- Your voice is a great tool when teaching. Use its volume, speed and pitch to give information.
- White noise (such as soft music with no lyrics) is sometimes helpful to block out other noises in the home.

#### JOINT SENSE AND MOVEMENT

- Use a comfortable chair for homework – experiment to find the best one in the house. Some students like to be on a high stool, while others like to be squished between pillows on an armchair.
- Use short and structured movement breaks when you notice their attention failing. Going to the washroom to wash their face, holding a yoga pose for a few seconds, or even doing 10 jumping jacks are examples of movement breaks. All these must have a definite ending so it is easy to go back to work.
- Use a pair of old socks sewn together and filled with beans to make a weighted snake. You can drape it around your child’s shoulders or on their lap to provide deep pressure and increase focus.

#### OTHER

- It is always helpful to have open communication with the school about the amount of homework given and your child’s capabilities to complete it.
- Break up the task into smaller more manageable chunks. Only give your child what you know they can do!
- Set a goal and talk about solutions when you get to a difficult part.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**  
633 Wellington Crescent  
Winnipeg, MB R3M 0A8  
**PHONE:** (204) 235-8874  
**EMAIL:** info@rccinc.ca



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