

Break Down Assignment

Why should I do it:

- Some students get overwhelmed by too much information on a page
- Students who are dealing with ADD/ADHD tend to have difficulties with breaking up assignments
- Provides student with small, frequent, attainable goals
- Makes larger tasks look more manageable and feasible
- Prevents students from becoming discouraged at the quantity of work before they begin
- Helps students focus on the item or problem at hand
- Improves students' perceptions of the work and assignments
- Increases student willingness and participation
- Increases engagement, effort, and focus
- Teaches students to pace themselves and take assignments one part at a time
- Helps disorganized students maintain better organization and order

When should I do it:

- When a student shows signs of being overwhelmed, anxious, unfocused, disorganized, lost, unmotivated, etc
- When you are aware a student has ADHD/ADD or when they have symptoms of such
- When a student is reluctant to begin, sustain, or complete work
- When an assignment is longer, larger, more complex, or has many parts or sections
- When an assignment will span across days, weeks, or any other prolonged period
- When a student doesn't know where to start
- When a student tends to be "scattered"
- When students have trouble organizing their thoughts
- When students have learning or other disabilities or challenges

How do I do it:

- Take a blank sheet of paper and cover up every item other than what you want the student to complete. After they complete that, teach them to move the sheet down
- Determine what might be hardest/easiest for student. Have them do the easy items or the hard items first, which ever they prefer
- Allow a break after student completes a portion of the work
- Place one or a couple of items or problems per page. When the student completes a page, they walk up to place it in a tray or folder and retrieve the next page. They continue in this manner until the assignment is complete
- Have students lump items, for example writing down questions 5 at a time and completing them, then moving on to the next 5, etc
- For items with multiple part questions, have the student separate each part or question of the item into individual lines, having them focus on them one at a time
- Have students verbally repeat back the parts of an assignment or task
- Create a song or rap to go along with how to break down certain tasks or how to approach certain problems

Resources & Support for technique: *(Items with footnotes link to external websites)*

- Break Down The Assignment Into Steps¹

Footnotes:

1. Teach 2 Write, A Guide For Teaching Writing, Office of Instructional Development, UCLA. *Break Down the Assignment Into Steps.* [<http://write.oid.ucla.edu/3-prepare/break-down-assignment>].