

Examples of different executive functions and how they “look” in real life:

Executive Functions **cue** the use of other cognitive capacities including reasoning, language, visual and spatial, and memory capacities. Executive Functions are involved with cueing and directing of all of the following:

- Inhibiting reflexive, impulsive responding; (thinking before you speak or do)
- Stopping, or interrupting, and returning to, an ongoing activity; (turning off video and beginning homework)
- Directing and focusing attentional processes, screening out interference and distractions, and sustaining attention (ignoring distracting noises or your own thoughts while doing anything that requires attention such as conversations, homework, driving)
- Cueing the initiation of effort and judgments about the amount of effort required to complete a task, and the sustaining of a sufficient amount of effort to effectively complete the task (figuring out how hard you have to work or focus on an assignment or problem and if you might need help)
- Demonstrating flexibility in the shifting of cognitive resources to focus on new demands or to respond to new conditions or new information (changing your approach to a problem if you encounter a road block or discover a better strategy; not freaking out if things don't go exactly the way you expected)
- Directing the efficient use of, and alternation between, pattern and detail processing (Knowing when to focus on the “big picture” and when to concentrate on the details, and when to switch between the two).
- Monitoring and regulating speed of information processing; finding the right combination of speed and accuracy for optimal performance of an activity
- Monitoring and correcting task performance for accuracy and efficiency
- Directing motor output, altering performance based on feedback
- Directing the use of working memory resources – that is, directing the ability to mentally manipulate information
- Directing the integration of multiple abilities to produce oral or written responses or products that reflect the level of capacity of the component abilities involved
- Directing the efficient placement of information in long-term storage
- Directing the retrieval of information from long-term storage
- Regulating social behavior
- Regulating emotional control
- Enabling self-observation and self-analysis
- Making use of hindsight and foresight in the direction of current processing
- Enabling the capacity to “take the perspective of the other” in order to infer how someone is perceiving, thinking, or feeling at a given point in time
- accurate awareness of the passage of time and the ability to estimate how long tasks will take to complete
- the ability to plan ahead and organize behavior across time and space in order to fulfill goals and intentions
- the ability to shift strategies and adapt to changing circumstances
- planning, decision-making, directed goal selection and monitoring of on-going behavior