

# Self-Monitoring

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*Is your child losing track of his or her progress on tasks?*

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Is your child:

- Answering a math problem wrong without realizing the answer makes no sense?
- Reading a passage wrong without pausing to notice?
- Struggling with reading comprehension?
- Speeding through a test and making silly mistakes?
- Getting assignments in late and forgetting important due dates?
- Missing appointments and showing up late for class?

## LET'S TALK ABOUT IT

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Some children struggle to track their own progress. Children with these challenges may rush through tasks and may make lots of mistakes. They may also struggle with planning and completing long-term projects. You may find that your child will read a

passage wrong without stopping to notice that it makes no sense or that mistakes are being made.

Children with these issues tend to have poor reading comprehension because they do not think about the reasonableness of the words they are reading. For example, they may read “snow” for “show,” not realizing that this story takes place in the summertime.

Your child may also have trouble with math problems. For example, he or she may add  $23 + 45$  and get an answer like 12. Answering an addition question with a smaller number is a sign that the child is not pausing to think if the answer makes sense.

## CLINICAL DESCRIPTION

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Children who have trouble assessing their own progress on a goal or a task are having difficulty with a skill known clinically as *self-monitoring*.

***Self-Monitoring is the ability to recognize when you are on track in your efforts.***

If your child is struggling, he or she may have poor executive functioning in the area of self-monitoring. The executive functions are like the central executive of the brain, which is the part that does the thinking, planning, judging, and organizing.

*Sequencing skills* are also required for self-monitoring, as children have to know how to put steps and priorities in order.

Self-monitoring is required for what psychologists call *goal-directed behavior*. This term describes the ability to set a goal, to lay out a plan to accomplish it, and then to see it through to completion.

Children with these challenges may not use strategies effectively or may not *think about their own thinking*. Psychologists call this skill *metacognition*. Children with poor self-monitoring and metacognition have a hard time with long-term projects, due-dates, and general task completion.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD STRUGGLES WITH SELF-MONITORING

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If you suspect your child may have trouble with self-monitoring, a school psychologist or clinical psychologist can conduct a test of executive functions (see list below). These tests can provide information about your child’s higher order problem-solving skills, including planning, sequencing, and self-monitoring.

On many executive functioning assessments, “self-monitoring skills” are identified by the shortened title, “Monitor.” If your child indeed has poor self-monitoring, it will be helpful to teach your child how to monitor his or her own progress.

Teachers may say, “he needs to slow down. He just rushes through and runs out for recess.”

***Some children who fail to self-monitor are actually processing information very quickly, and in a sense they get ahead of themselves. It will help your child to have a check-list of areas to consider upon completion of an assignment.***

For example, a teacher might provide a rubric or a list of questions. The questions might be like, “Did I put my name on my paper? Do I have a title? Do I have a topic sentence?” These techniques can go a long way in helping your child learn how to self-monitor his own progress on assignments.

## **SIMILAR SYMPTOMS**

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*If your child is struggling with a similar problem, not directly addressed in this section, see the list below for links to information about other related symptom areas.*

- [Verbal comprehension](#): challenges with understanding information and knowing about one’s own learning processes can lead to poor self-monitoring
- [Auditory processing](#): challenges with processing what is heard can impact the ability to plan, organize, and self-monitor
- [Working memory](#): challenges with making a plan and ‘thinking about thinking’ are associated with issues in working memory
- [Metacognition](#): the ability to think about one’s own thinking processes and to use strategies to solve problems
- [Processing Speed](#): many children who have trouble self-monitoring are actually processing information very quickly. They may have a hard time slowing down long enough to check the quality of their work
- [Planning](#): challenges with planning is often related to poor self-monitoring

## **POTENTIAL DISABILITIES**

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*Children who have significant problems in this area **may** have any of the following potential disabilities. \*Note, this information does **not** serve as a diagnosis in any way. See the ‘Where to Go for Help’ section for professionals who can diagnose or provide a referral.*

- [Autism Spectrum Disorder](#): deficits in social communication and restricted interests or behaviors. Often, problems with problem-solving, planning, self-monitoring and other executive functions are present
- [Dyslexia or Specific Learning Disability in Reading \(Educationally Identified Disabilities\)](#): challenges with reading comprehension are very commonly related to poor self-monitoring
- [Dysgraphia or Specific Learning Disability in Writing \(Educationally Identified Disabilities\)](#): challenges with writing can relate to a child’s unwillingness or difficulties reading through and checking his or her own work

- [Dyscalculia or Specific Learning Disability in Math \(Educationally Identified Disabilities\)](#): challenges with mathematics may be related to self-monitoring in that a child does not stop to think if his or her answers make sense
- [ADHD](#): children with ADHD often struggle with many executive functions, including attention and self-monitoring

## WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

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*If your child is struggling with this symptom to the point that it is getting in the way of his learning, relationships, or happiness, the following professionals could help; they may offer diagnosis, treatment, or both.*

- [CLEAR Child Psychology](#): to obtain a *customized profile* of concerns for your child or to *consult 'live'* with a psychologist
- [Psychologist or Neuropsychologist](#): to consider your child's symptoms in a mental health context
- [School Psychologist](#): to test IQ and to consider for a 504 plan or IEP
- [Occupational Therapist](#): to assess your child for visual spatial problems with sequencing



*These professionals may recommend the following tests for this symptom:*

- [KABC-II](#): test that allows examiners to understand a child's thinking and reasoning skills as well as areas of processing
- [WISC-V](#): another test of cognition; examines thinking and reasoning skills
- [WIAT-III](#): academic test for assessment of learning strengths and weaknesses; a way to confirm learning strengths or identify challenges
- [Beery VMI sequence](#): test of visual motor integration, visual perception, and motor coordination; used to identify learning style and strengths/weaknesses
- [TOVA-II](#): continuous performance test of sustained attention
- [CTMT](#): test of visual planning and speed of processing visual information

## LEARN MORE

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[1] Dawson, Peg & Guare, Richard (2009). *Smart but scattered: The revolutionary "executive skills" approach to helping kids reach their potential*. Amazon: <http://www.amazon.com/Smart-but-Scattered-Revolutionary-Executive/dp/1593854455/>

[2] Reid, Robert, & Leinemann, Torri Ortiz & Hagaman, Jessica L. (2006). *Strategy instruction for students with learning disabilities, second edition*. Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Instruction-Disabilities-Special-Needs-Lienemann-Paperback/dp/B010WI4TBA/>

[3] Siegel, Daniel J. & Bryson, Tina Payne (2012). *The whole brain child: 12 revolutionary strategies to nurture your child's developing mind.*

Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Whole-Brain-Child-Revolutionary-Strategies-Developing/dp/0553386697/>

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Child goal setting

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