Classroom Layout Checklist*

Use this reproducible checklist to help you start designing your classroom, materials, and presentations. Then consult chapters on your students' specific disorders to see what other elements you will need to add. Remember: The more you set up in advance that works for the majority of students, the fewer individual accommodations you will have to make. So, go through each chapter in this book to see what you can add classroom-wide to improve academic, behavioral, and social-emotional functioning. Of particular note: You will find many additional helpful tips on routines that will benefit all students in the chapters on Executive Dysfunction and Written Expression.

Classroom Layout and Furnishings	
	Post the daily schedule in a spot clearly visible to all students. Review it at the beginning of each day. ■ Include all parts of the daily routine rather than just topics or assignments. ■ Color-highlight and call attention to important reminders or changes in routine. ■ Post color-highlighted reminders of intermediate deadlines. ■ Check off each item on the schedule as it is completed.
	Set up different spots in the room where students can go to work if they need to avoid too much visual or auditory stimulation, e.g., set up a study carrel or "office."
	Create areas in the room that are shielded and cozy, e.g., a piece of carpeting with bookcases around it and a comfortable beanbag chair for students who need downtime or a place to calm themselves.
	Try to have extra desks in the classroom so that students who need to get up and move around can simply take their work to another desk when needed.
	Have larger tables or extra desks available to students with memory problems who need to spread out their papers to keep information in front of them.
	Have a rocking chair in the classroom for students who need to move while they read and for students who need to rock to calm themselves.
	Place cut tennis balls on the feet of the chairs to muffle noise for students who are likely to keep moving their chairs.
	Allow sufficient pathways and clear areas in the room so that students can get from their desk to the teacher's desk without coming into close contact with other students.
	Set up a computer or word-processing center and a music or multimedia center to facilitate transitions and organization.
	Create a desk/table configuration that is easily modified for different types of activities: ■ Use traditional rows of desks for direct instruction of new skills. ■ Seat students with visual-motor integration problems directly facing the board if they are copying from it.
	Have a stash of nonrolling, nonnoisy "fidgets" for students to hold.
	Make the classroom visually and intellectually stimulating. If their attention wanders, let it wander to something relevant and interesting. Change displays frequently.

* This is an abbreviated version of Packer, LE: *Checklist for Teachers: Creating a Student-Friendly Environment*, which was published electronically at www.tourettesyndrome.net.

Environmental Supports for Organizational Skills	
	Use color-coded bins for notebooks, texts, homework submissions, and student work of the same content.
	Designate places for all materials to be kept and use them consistently.
	Provide individual mailboxes that students check before packing up each day.
	Provide each student with a copy of their own schedule on their desk.
	Use task cards, to do lists, and checklists on desks. Teach students to check off each element of an activity as it is completed.
	Provide planners that allow sufficient space for large, sloppy handwriting.
	Provide planners or organizers that foster the student looking ahead.
	Provide alternate (back-up) methods for students to find out the nightly homework assignments if they fail to record them or lose their agenda in a "black hole" on the bus, e.g., homework buddies, websites.
	Provide students with alternate (back-up) methods for returning their homework to school, such as allowing them to email their assignments as attachments or fax them.
	Have students bring in an extra supply of pens, pencils, tissues, or whatever they tend to lose or use up most frequently. Schedule a date on which they all check their "stash" and write notes to replenish. Follow up to see that they have.
Modify Materials, Presentations, and Projects	
	Use materials that allow sufficient space for large, sloppy handwriting.
	Color-highlight important directions.
	For multi-step projects, introduce one step at a time, and check for comprehension.
	For multi-step oral directions, give one direction, use a few filler words or pause for a few seconds before giving the next step, etc.
	Provide study guides, outlines, and copies of any overheads.
	Provide a visual organizer (concept map or "mindmap") and a template to help students organize their materials and thoughts for writing tasks. (See Chapters 9 and 19.)
	Use as many modalities as possible in presentations.
	Provide editing strips on the student's desk for sequential tasks (such as math editing strips or proof-editing strips) as illustrated in Chapters 19 and 20 of this book.
	Allocate sufficient time to review and rehearse earlier skills and concepts before introducing new ones.
	Periodically check to ensure students have mastered previously taught skills.
	Explicitly identify goals and subgoals.
	Break presentations into smaller units, e.g., treat a thirty-minute unit as two fifteen-minute units to allow opportunities for movement and student questions.
	Build in numerous intermediate deadlines for large projects. Ensure they are entered into homework planners and reviewed as part of the daily schedule.
	Frequently monitor the students' work pace and work product.
	Hold a prop when presenting new material to foster attention and orientation towards the instructional area.

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