

Tips to help your students focus:

Help students focus with a [mouth fidget](#). Gum, [chewy tubes](#) or [chewelry](#), work well to help students calm or refocus.

Provide students with a [Fidget](#). Fidgets are small toys a student can hold in their hand that can help students increase focus and attention. (Rotz, Wright, 2005) Good fidgets should have a combination of an interesting tactile composition, pliability, and some movement opportunities for the hands and fingers.

Let students stand while they work or sit on a [Seating Disc](#). Children who have problems focusing in the classroom may "under register" movement and without that ability they can't focus. Although they look strong in quick actions, the body can't endure long periods of sitting or standing. Sit discs are ideal for providing kids with movement and tactile stimulation while sitting in their seats.

Literature indicates positive effects of dynamic seating for children with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and pervasive developmental disorders (PDD) for attention and classroom behaviors (Schilling & Swartz, 2004; Schilling, Washington, Billingsley, & Deitz, 2003). As a group, students with IEPs and those considered At-Risk demonstrated overall improvements and/or consistencies in rate, accuracy, fluency, and comprehension while seated on an air-filled cushion. Students with IEPs showed the greatest increase in reading rate and comprehension with a full or almost full grade level of improvement noted. Best of all, both the teacher and the students in this study noted that the air-filled cushion was not disruptive and easily fit into the classroom routine.

Use a visual timer to help students focus. Visual timers help students understand the passage of time and they can monitor their own activities. Better time awareness can help with focus and attention and also relieve stress and anxiety.

Help students focus by creating a simple card with the word "wait" written on it. For some students this extra reminder can help to keep them seated. It's important when using a wait card to make sure there is ample time for breaks.

Help fidgety students focus and burn off some energy with an [exercise band](#). Place the band around the bottom of your student's two front chair legs. Students can sit and fidget with their feet without disturbing the class.

Use a [Weighted Vest](#), [Lap Pad](#), or [Shoulder Weights](#). According to a study by the Challenge Infant Developmental Center, Brooklyn, New York (Fertel-Daly, Hinojosa, 2001) children with autism, who used a weighted vest, displayed an increase in attention to task and decrease in self-stimulatory behaviors. The most consistent improvement observed was the decreased number of distractions.

Roland Rotz, Sarah Wright (2005) *Fidget to Focus*, New York, iUniverse, Inc.

Schilling, D. L. & Schwartz, I. S. (2004). Alternative Seating for Young Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Effects on Classroom Behavior. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. 34, 423-432.

Schilling, D.L., Washington, K., Billingsley, F.F., Deitz, J. (2003). Classroom seating for children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: Therapy balls versus chairs. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 57(5), 534-41.

Fertel-Daly D, Bedell G, Hinojosa J., (2001). Effects of a weighted vest on attention to task and self-stimulatory behaviors in preschoolers with pervasive developmental disorders. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, Nov-Dec;55(6):629-40.