

Types of attention and activities to improve

There are various types of attention that kids can struggle with, each impacting function and independence in occupations of daily life for children in different ways. Mastering these types of attention are necessary for learning, safety, social skills, and function.

Type of Attention	Activities to work on this skill
<p>Sustained attention: Holding attention over a period of time. This is necessary for the focus and concentration needed in learning, listening during lectures, paying attention during conversations or instructions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word search- cross out all letter a's, etc. • Write out a list of words that start with a certain letter. Identify a certain number of words. • Ordering information into alphabetical or numerical order • Set a timer and complete a task or reading passage for a certain number of minutes.
<p>Selective attention: Paying attention to specific input by the brain's ability to select the input we pay attention to. Consciously and unconsciously, we can select the input which is most important.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use visual cues • Work on auditory skills • Limit visual distractions • Reduce background noise • Position kids away from windows or hallways in the classroom
<p>Alternating attention: This type of attention refers to the ability to switch or immediately transfer focus from one activity to another. Switching points of concentration is needed to make sudden switches in alternating attention in tasks which require different cognitive skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooking with kids activities • Musical chairs • Flip cards in a deck and perform actions based on the suit, color, or number • Sort coins or colored items • Practice performing a task that can easily become distractible such as going online to send an email...or shopping in Target.
<p>Divided attention: Divided attention refers to one's ability to focus on two or more things at the same time. Simultaneously concentrating on various factors is evidenced by driving and holding a conversation simultaneously. This ability to multi-task isn't always an easy thing to manage. The ability to hold attention to various simultaneous point of concentration can require practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice games such as Connect Four with background distractions or verbal instructions • Increasingly complex verbal memory games • Simon Says with music playing in background

For more ideas: [Types of Attention and Activities for Each Type - The OT Toolbox](#)

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