



# Fidget to Focus

## Tips for people with ADHD

We're taught that we need to sit still and focus on one thing when we're studying, writing, working or engaging in other activities. But for people with ADHD the suggestions of sitting still and focusing on one thing often don't work. People with ADHD often work best when they're doing more than one task. If something we are engaged in is not interesting enough to sustain our focus, an additional **sensory-motor input** that is mildly stimulating, interesting, or entertaining allows our brains to become fully engaged and allows us to sustain focus on the primary activity in which we are participating. Fidgeting for some improves rather than distracts.

### Movement strategies

These tips involve moving your body while you're trying to focus on tasks such as studying or listening.

- Exercising, such as walking, jogging or bike riding
- Swiveling in a chair
- Balancing on back two legs of a chair
- Rocking or fidgeting
- Standing up
- Pacing
- Wiggling your toes

### Touch Strategies

These strategies involve holding, feeling or handling something while you're talking or listening.

- Using fidget toys, such as balls or a Slinky
- Playing with your hair or clothing
- Fiddling with keys
- Taking notes or doodling
- Tapping or drumming fingers
- Knitting or sewing
- petting an animal

## Sight Strategies

Visual fidgets are all about noticing details in your surroundings or watching something while performing the task.

- Using colorful tools, such as bright folders, highlighters or pens
- Watching a fish tank or water
- Glancing out the window
- Looking at the flame in a fireplace
- Playing video games

## Sound Strategies

Sound fidgets include listening to something while you're performing tasks such as reading or talking.

- Listening to music, such as classical music or jazz, or rhythmic beats
- Whistling, humming or singing
- Listening to a ticking clock, traffic or white noise
- Talking to yourself

## Taste Strategies

These tips use textures, flavors and temperatures of foods and beverages to help you better focus on reading, listening and working.

- Eating or licking different flavors, such as salty, sour or spicy foods
- Drinking hot beverages, such as tea, or cold ones, such as ice water
- Eating chewy snacks
- Drinking bubbly seltzer

## Mouth Strategies

Putting something in your mouth can help while reading and working.

- Chewing on pens, gum or ice
- Sipping coffee or water
- Sucking on hard candy
- Biting your cheek or lips
- Chewing on hood strings

The same fidgets won't work for everyone all the time, or in all situations. Some of us use our visual sense to assist auditory signals. For example, playing a game on a cell phone during a lecture to maintain focus on the speaker. Others use auditory to assist visual input. For example, listening to music while reading textbooks. You'll have to do some experimenting to find out what works best for you.

To be an effective fidget it must not only work for you, it must also be appropriate for the situation and respectful of those around you. It is not a good fidget if it helps you focus, but distracts everyone else!

Source: Rotz, Roland & Wright, Sarah D. (2005). *Fidget to Focus: Outwit Your Boredom: Sensory Strategies for Living with ADD*. iUniverse. <http://www.fidgettofocus.com>. Here you can find a short summary of their book.

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