

Tip Sheet

Low Processing Speed in Primary School Students

Students with low processing speed have difficulties completing work within the expected time frames, organising tasks with multiple components, and managing their time effectively. They are prone to careless mistakes and their handwriting speed may be slow. Some strategies to assist students with low processing speed are outlined below:

- Break tasks down into small, achievable steps (“chunking”).
- Have clear but realistic expectations of the student to complete a manageable amount of work within a short, specific time period.
- Try a variety of timers (e.g. egg timers, Kagan’s Timer Tools) to help the student keep track of time.
- Give fewer pieces of work to get through.
- Reduce the amount of work that the student needs to copy from the board or provide notes with the information already printed on it.
- In test situations allow the student additional time to complete work.
- Ensure the student is able to enjoy recess and lunch time and is not regularly compelled to finish work during this time.
- Short bursts of intense activity with breaks in between might work better than having one long continuous period.
- Provide scaffolding/templates (e.g., outlines for writing tasks) to guide students during composition work.
- Using clear guidelines and scaffolding, the student should not need to copy and recopy work as this is time consuming and exhaustive for the student.
- Some students with severe handwriting difficulties may benefit from the use of a scribe or the provision of prewritten notes.
- Be patient! Often students with low processing speed are highly competent in other areas, so give them a chance to show their abilities.