

Tip Sheet

Low Processing Speed in High School Students and Adults

Individuals 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 individuals with low processing speed are outlined below:

- Allow more time to complete work – especially in tests and exams.
- Give fewer pieces of work to get through.
- Provide scaffolding (e.g., outlines/templates for writing tasks).
- Be aware that individuals with low processing speed have difficulties with re-writing multiple copies of edited and re-edited work. The use of clear guidelines and scaffolding should shorten this process.
- Students may benefit from the use of a scribe or assistive technology when handwriting speed is very impaired. Individuals are likely to need an occupational therapy assessment to justify this if they are applying for specific accommodations at high school or in their tertiary studies.
- Recess or lunch should not be used continually to compel the student to finish work.
- One-on-one mentoring focusing on study skills is beneficial in order for individuals to be confident with topic specific information before they enter test or exam situations.
- Provide examples of “good answers”. If individuals know what they are aiming for, they will have to devote less time and mental energy to shaping and structuring materials in the actual test or exam.
- Provide study skills training in a range of strategies to maximise efficiency in exam preparation and performance (e.g. memory training).
- Focus on the particular time-saving strategies useful in different subject areas.
- Have practice sessions with learned materials under timed conditions.
- Familiarise ATAR/tertiary students with past exam papers so that they can prepare information better and practise answering within the time allocated.
- Explicitly discuss ways to speed up jobs, and experiment and practice with these techniques.