

EF Development by Grade

What does typical development for Executive Functioning (EF) skills look like over time?

Kindergarten - 2nd Grade	Executive Functioning Skill	Developmentally Appropriate Progression
	Impulse Control	May test limits because they are seeking guidance and boundaries
	Emotional Control	Will express strong emotions, and with support, can return to a calm and focused emotional state
	Flexible Thinking	May come across as an "expert" on everything
	Working Memory	Can sustain focus for at least 2-3 steps
	Self-Monitoring	Might be afraid of criticism and failure
	Planning & Prioritizing	With support, maps out multi-step tasks
	Task Initiation	With encouragement, can start a non-preferred task
	Organization	Can keep track of several of their personal items

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3rd Grade – 5th Grade	Executive Functioning Skill	Developmentally Appropriate Progression
	Impulse Control	May still argue about rules and seek out loopholes
	Emotional Control	More likely to be able to calm themselves after experiencing a big emotion
	Flexible Thinking	May have little tolerance for differences of opinion, yet flexible thinking is more possible with coaching – <i>"How might you try it another way?"</i>
	Working Memory	Able to read chapter books because of more developed working memory
	Self-Monitoring	May begin looking to peers as a measure for their own progress and understanding
	Planning & Prioritizing	Can map out multiple-step projects and will likely need support to estimate timing
	Task Initiation	Can start a non-preferred task and may need encouragement to sustain momentum
	Organization	Can begin to plan for longer-term tasks or projects with multiple steps

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6th Grade – 8th Grade	Executive Functioning Skill	Developmentally Appropriate Progression
	Impulse Control	Able to limit impulsive behaviors in environments with established rules yet may still struggle to avoid distractions
	Emotional Control	Able to manage strong emotions more of the time yet may still need support to recover from frustration
	Flexible Thinking	May enjoy flexible thinking and may come across as argumentative
	Working Memory	Increased even when working on more complex tasks
	Self-Monitoring	Will judge their progress and abilities against their peers, which can result in a misperception of their true level of understanding
	Planning & Prioritizing	Most of the time, can allocate an appropriate amount of time for a familiar task; Can determine which tasks should be tackled first based on importance
	Task Initiation	Can start a non-preferred task
	Organization	Can organize ideas and information for essays; will likely continue to misplace items

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9th Grade – 12th Grade	Executive Functioning Skill	Developmentally Appropriate Progression
	Impulse Control	Able to limit impulsive behaviors in environments with established rules yet may still struggle to avoid distractions
	Emotional Control	Able to manage strong emotions more of the time
	Flexible Thinking	More likely to consider other's perspective and find different solutions to problems
	Working Memory	Can sustain focus for longer periods of time, including with challenging topics
	Self-Monitoring	Likely to be able to reflect on their own learning and self-awareness
	Planning & Prioritizing	With support, can craft timelines for more than one task, including academic and personal commitments
	Task Initiation	Can start a non-preferred task and overcome the desire to procrastinate; can persist toward important goals
	Organization	Can keep track of many personal items, organize ideas for essays and projects, and maintain digital files

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Post High School – Mid 20s	Executive Functioning Skill	Developmentally Appropriate Progression
	Impulse Control	Marked reduction in risky behaviors
	Emotional Control	Stronger emotional regulation
	Flexible Thinking	More likely to seek out multiple perspectives
	Working Memory	Can sustain focus for longer periods of time, including with challenging topics
	Self-Monitoring	Stronger self-awareness, including the tools that they specifically need to be successful
	Planning & Prioritizing	Able to maintain multiple schedules and meet school and work deadlines
	Task Initiation	Can start a non-preferred task and will proactively eliminate distractions that may limit productivity
	Organization	Able to synthesize information from calendars, planners, and to-do lists