

Pay Attention!

Attention involves the ability to sustain attention over time (vigilance), the ability to attend to stimuli selectively, the ability to alternate or switch attention between two things, and the ability to divide attention so as to maintain more than one ongoing process. Pay Attention! is designed to remediate difficulties with focused sustained, selective, alternating, and divided auditory and visual attention skills, as defined below.

Focused Attention Focused attention refers to the ability to direct one's attention to a specific stimulus. This construct generally applies to those with disrupted levels of consciousness; e.g., patients emerging from coma who are only beginning to gain the capacity to acknowledge external stimuli. The Pay Attention! materials are not utilized for the remediation of focused attention.

Sustained Attention Sustained attention refers to the ability to maintain attention during continuous and repetitive activity. This construct includes the concepts of vigilance and persistence. At its highest level, sustained attention includes the ability to utilize "working memory" or "mental control," as in one's ability to hold information in mind and manipulate it in order to solve a problem. Sustained attention is necessary for most classroom seatwork, for example completing worksheets or reading silently.

Selective Attention Selective attention refers to the ability to attend to target stimuli and to inhibit responses to non-target stimuli. This construct incorporates the notion of "freedom from distractibility." Selective attention skills are necessary, for example, for a student who must listen to a teacher while there are children playing outside.

Alternating Attention The ability to switch the focus of attention from one stimulus to another is the hallmark of alternating attention. This skill is necessary when one is required to stop one task and begin another, or to switch rapidly between one or more tasks. For example, alternating attention skills are needed for children changing from one task to another within a lesson.

Divided Attention One's ability to utilize divided attention is demonstrated through performance of two or more tasks simultaneously. Thus, divided attention skills are needed for a student note-taker, who must listen and write at the same time.

