



Context

Sustaining attention is indeed essential for the learning process but involvement in the lesson topics can be made difficult by the many issues linked to SEN.

Attentional skills are in fact often weak in this particular type of students. The difficulties that SEN students face during lesson can represent an obstacle in focusing and maintaining attention on the lecture, with consequences on their involvement and apprenticeship success.

ADHD, LSD, Low I.Q. and many other conditions can influence the ability of maintaining attention. Some strategies and precautions can be taken to ease this task.



General Principles

Average students' attention span can vary between 10-30 minutes during lessons in presence, this can diminish further while paying attention to a computer screen during distance learning.

This short attention span can be further reduced for students with SEN: in the most severe cases conscious attention can last just seconds. This time span is increaseable for most students through training and experiencing but, to foster this process, it is suggestable to accommodate and adapt to the specific necessities showed by the students.

This can be accomplished by:

- making didactic materials accessible, adapting content and form.
- establishing **break times** to lighten the cognitive load requested to the students.
- ensure a **positive and remunerative ambient**.



Adaptation of didactic material

Materials proposed must be adapted to the students' particular necessities in relation to the tasks that represent a challenge for them, in order to create didactic materials that can interest them and not lose attention (ch. 3 of the Guide).

The aspects that should be adapted:

Content

- vocabulary used must be simple
(to the student's level of understanding)
- use easy and active present tense verbs
- avoid abbreviations





Form

- use visual references (images, photos and multimedia)
- use an high readability font
- font size 14 and line spacing 1,5
- avoid italic and underlined typographic emphasis

Establish a positive and remunerative ambient

- use positive reinforce to underline achievements of the students
- organize group work and moments of social exchange
- plan break times



Exploiting teaching strategies that involve breaktimes, social and group tasks permits mental break to the students, reducing the cognitive load requested while keeping them on the task and exploring the lesson topics with their pairs.

Didactic materials with varied adapted content and explanations with the support of multimedia can make a great difference in the learning experience and interiorization of concepts, while gamification and social groups approach can reinforce apprenticeship.

Positive reinforce of accomplishments of the students can increase their self-esteem and sense of accomplishment of the students having a positive impact on their general success in their career, much more than underlining their errors (negative reinforce).



How to help students keep attention

Ease material's content:

- vocabulary
- verbs
- images

Ease material's form:

- visual references
- readable font
- use bold only

Positive ambient:

- establish breaktimes
- organize group works
- ease social exchange



Remunerative ambient:

- use positive reinforce
- gamify the lesson



Resources

If you wish to deepen your knowledge in this topic, you can search the web: many blogs and online resources can suggest ideas for lesson and activity planning for teachers during distance learning. You can also consult **The teacher's guide to SEN** by N. Packer; the book provides suggestions and tips for understanding students' needs and planning activities and lesson consecutively.