

Practical strategies/solutions for supporting children with Developmental Coordination Difficulties (DCD) at home



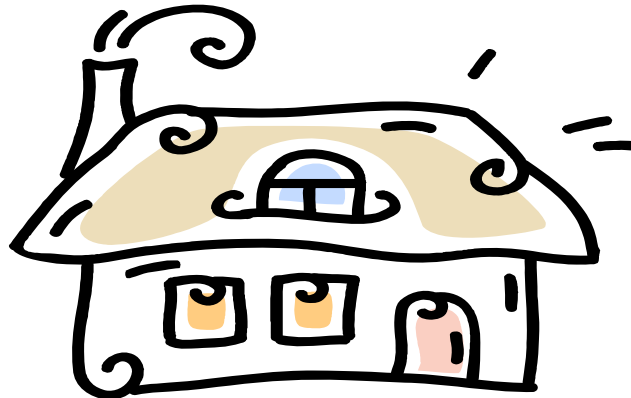
**Highland Council ECS, NHS Highland, and HDCD Working Group
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Strategies/possible solutions for DCD children at home

Remember:

Structure vital in day/routines
Praise, encouragement, reward!



Organisation at home

Keep to the same routine daily as this means there is less for your child to think about.

- A wipe clean tick-list of things to be done with an incentive at the end can work much better than constant nagging. e.g.

have breakfast ✓
clean teeth ✓
get dressed ✓

play with favourite toy / I will read to you / listen to story tape.

- Keep home organised – not cluttered, a place for things to ‘live’.
- Keep distractions such as the TV or computer out of bounds e.g. not in morning or not till you’ve finished your homework etc. They may protest at first but once they are used to that routine it is less stressful than having a constant battle to get them to do things.
- ‘Use backwards chaining’. This is a technique used by psychologists to teach new skills. The task is broken down into stages and the last stage is taught first so that the child has the motivation of being successful e.g. putting last item into school bag working back to going to find them and putting them in.



Washing

- Teach the child a routine for washing.
- Use checklists to remind them of washing routine.
- Use egg timer in bathroom to help the child stay on task.



Dressing

- Practice or spend more time on refining skills such as tying shoelaces, at weekends or holidays when there's more time and less stress.
- Have loose-fitting clothing that's easier to put on and take off.
- Have a minimum of fastenings, use Velcro instead of buttons.
- Add a ring to a zip fastener to make it easier to grab hold of.
- Use a larger button size as this is easier to operate.
- Lay clothes out on the bed, left to right, in the order to be put on, and encourage the child to learn this way of organising themselves.
- A 'logo' on the front of a top gives a visual clue for getting it on the right way round.
- Trainers and shoes that have a label on the outside make it easier to work out which foot they should go on (logo always on the outside).
- A picture or logo on the front of pants gives a visual clue for getting them on the right way round.



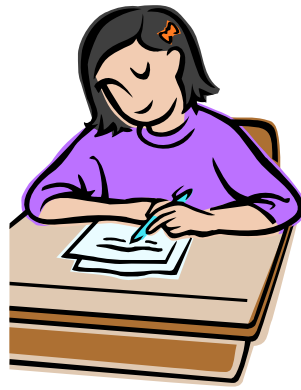
Brushing teeth

- An electric toothbrush is quicker in the mornings.
- Put up a checklist to take the child through the routine.
- Use a timer to keep the child on task.



Chores

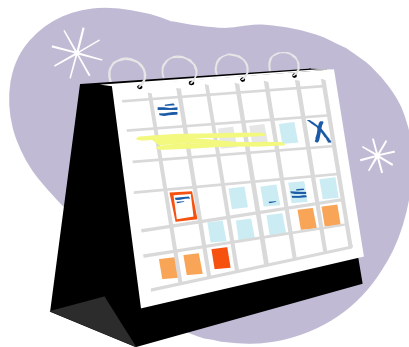
- Give the child responsibility for household chores. They will learn independence and sequencing skills and also improve their self-esteem. For instance, help with cooking can be motivating especially when they can choose what is on the menu! Initially, they may need a lot of prompts to stay on task. Sometimes putting a peeler and carrot in their hands works better than verbal instructions!
- Help wash dishes etc. in the evenings, at weekends or in the holidays – don't expect this in the morning.
- Be aware that your child is likely to be more tired than children without DCD as they have to concentrate hard on skills that for other children are automatic. Make sure they have enough sleep and chill out time.



Homework

See Homework section in 'Practical solutions for schools'.

- Have chill out time straight after school – don't go immediately into homework.
- Structure time and place in the home and have an identified 'work area'.
- Ensure that there is a solid table and upright chair to work at, using a sloped board if appropriate, and that the feet are well supported on books, directories, or stool if needed.
- Eliminate or try to limit distractions (sound, visual).
- Have a reward at the end.
- If you are an adult 'assisting' homework, only scribe what the child verbalises, and prompt their thought organisation, i.e. ask questions that cue the child "what is the main point of the text/information?"



Visual timetables

- These can help your child with the sequence of steps at different times of the day, e.g. morning routine, afternoon routine and evening.
- They keep your child on task.
- They can encourage independence. Your child doesn't have to keep asking what to do and what is next. This can lead to an increase in confidence in their skills.
- Go through the programme for the next day the day before and make sure your child has taken in anything they need to do. For instance "This is the day you go to the after-school club/your friend's house/swimming." Ask them next morning if they remember what they are going to do and, if necessary, go over this again.

- Stick a timetable up on or by the front door of things to be remembered on each day e.g.

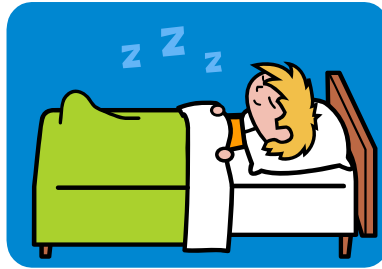
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Bag PE kit	Bag Trumpet	Bag Remember after school club	Bag Library books	Bag Go to Jim's after school

- If the child has difficulties with reading, use pictures, drawings, or symbols instead.
- Keep instructions really short. If child does not respond to an instruction, reduce the complexity possibly just to the one word level, e.g. 'teeth'. Wait for them to process this before repeating it as it may be that they are planning their action. If you repeat it again they have to start again with processing it before planning their action especially if you re-phrase it.
- For older child use a filofax as a life file to keep all important information together.
- Use a mobile phone to remind the child of events or as a prompt to remember something.



School bag

- Choose a bag with padded, supportive straps.
- Clear name label.
- Easy opening, for instance put a large ring or key fob on the zip.
- Pockets for pens etc. which can be labelled.
- Include a list of contents for checking.
- PE kit with name labels.



Bedroom

- Group similar items together. This saves time and effort and should make life easier for your child to find their possessions.
- Label drawers and cupboards with words or pictures to show where the items are to be placed.
- Create order that makes sense to your child, e.g. top drawer for underwear, middle drawer for tee shirts, and bottom drawer for jumpers. Keep school clothes separate from the rest.
- Have a box in your child's bedroom where they can place their schoolbag or PE kit or indeed any other items required to be taken to school each day.
- Break down the tidying up into sections in the bedroom. Explain one at a time where these items are to be placed and once finished go onto another section. Again this takes away the stress of trying to think where the items are to go.
- Separate the PE kit from other school items.
- Encourage your child to help layout their clothes in the order that they will be worn. This should help towards independence.
- Use a laundry basket in the room so that the dirty washing can easily be thrown in.



Weekly tidy up sessions

- Keeps tidying at a manageable level.
- File missing items of information from school, books, computer games, and homework.
- Prepare for the following week.
- Have a white board in your room to keep a check on tidying or for important reminders or messages.
- Always give praise and encouragement.
- Think out aloud while tidying. Your child can learn from you, how to make a decision, and how we have reached the different steps.

Example of checklist:

CHECK LIST	DONE
Put clean clothes away	✓
Sort out DVDs	
Schoolbag ready for next day	✓
Clean P.E. Kit	
Dirty Washing to basket	

Useful resources

See also Transitions and Information booklets in this pack.

www.giftedhomeschoolers.org/articles/organisation.html

Useful organisational tips on this site.

www.bluesuitmon.com/family/education/organisational.html

This site contains useful tips on how to teach organisational skills to children.