

Inclusive Education

From

Guide: [ADHD and learning](#)

Understand: [Understanding ADHD](#)

Date

19 February 2025

Link

[inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/adhd-and-learning/understanding-adhd](http://inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/adhd-and-learning/understanding-adhd)

---

# Understanding ADHD

Students with ADHD are often energetic, creative, and innovative problem solvers. They commonly need support managing hyperactivity, impulsivity, and concentration.

## Definition

ADHD is a lifelong neurological condition. It affects the way the brain receives, processes, and responds to information.



Video hosted on Youtube [http://youtu.be/jhcn1\\_qsYmg](http://youtu.be/jhcn1_qsYmg)

Jessica McCabe of *How to ADHD* attempts to explain what it feels like to have ADHD, with the help of her online community.

Closed Captions

Source:

[How to ADHD](#)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhcn1\\_qsYmg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhcn1_qsYmg)

---

Attention refers to the management system of the brain, it's **executive function** – the ability to:

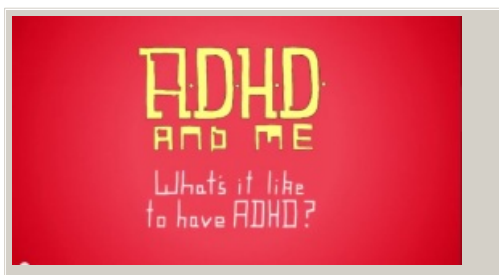
- pay attention
- organise and plan
- initiate tasks and stay focused on them
- regulate emotions
- self-monitor (keep track of what they are doing).

There are three main presentations of ADHD. Not everyone presents the same behaviours.

- **Inattentive** – students need support with organising and completing tasks, following instructions or conversations, and attending to detail.
- **Hyperactive-Impulsive** – students need support with speaking at appropriate times, waiting their turn, listening to directions, thinking before they act.
- **Combined** – a combination of the inattentive and hyperactive-impulsive behaviours.

## Indications of ADHD

The impact of ADHD can vary significantly from person to person, especially if the person also has dyslexia. Its effects also vary depending on the situation and the person's emotional state.



Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/Hl7Ro1PUjmE>

ADHD can influence learning, particularly the ability to focus, pay attention, engage with a task, and use working memory.

Closed Captions

**Source:**

[ADHDVoices \(UK\)](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8jqxZrjZII)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8jqxZrjZII>

When the signs outlined below are significantly more pronounced in one child compared to other children of the same age, and when their behaviour undermines school and social life, the child may have ADHD. A full medical/psychological assessment is required for diagnosis.

Inattentive	Hyperactive	Impulsive
Easily distracted	Restless and overactive	Acts without thinking
Difficulty sustaining attention in tasks and play	Talking constantly	Interrupts people
Appearing not to listen when spoken to directly	Interrupting others frequently	Difficulty waiting for their turn in play or conversations
Difficulty organising tasks and activities	Trouble switching off/sleeping	Blurts out responses before questions have been completed

## ADHD and other conditions

It can be difficult to identify ADHD specific indicators, as ADHD often co-occurs with common learning conditions such as dyslexia, dyscalculia, and dysgraphia.

ADHD and giftedness can also present together. However, it is also possible for a student to present ADHD behaviours but actually just be gifted and bored or misunderstood.

TKI's Gifted and Talented webpage, [Twice-multi exceptional learners](#) provides more information.

## How ADHD influences learning

Students with ADHD will often thrive as learners if offered opportunities to develop their creativity, leadership and problem solving skills. To be successful, students may need support managing themselves and their resources.



Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/EQ71vgRzCA4>

A short animated film that depicts a day in the life of a young student with ADHD.

No captions or transcript

**Source:**

[The Huffington Post \(US\)](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/gut-wrenching-video-shows-adhd-from-a-kids-perspective_us_56cb8c2fe4boec6725e3a42c)

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/gut-wrenching-video-shows-adhd-from-a-kids-perspective\\_us\\_56cb8c2fe4boec6725e3a42c](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/gut-wrenching-video-shows-adhd-from-a-kids-perspective_us_56cb8c2fe4boec6725e3a42c)

Areas for support could include:

- activation – organising, prioritising, and starting work
- focus – focusing, sustaining, and shifting attention
- effort – regulating alertness, sustaining effort, and processing information
- emotion – managing frustration and regulating emotions
- memory – utilising working memory and accessing recall
- action – monitoring and self-regulation.

## Specialist agencies in Aotearoa

If you want to explore further, these local and national agencies have a range of good information about ADHD.

- [ADHD Association](#)
  - [SPELD - ADHD](#)
  - [ADHD and gifted](#)
-

## Useful resources

### The relationship between ADHD and learning disabilities

Read time: 5 min

Learning disabilities (LD) and ADHD often co-exist. An explanation of the connection between the executive functions of the brain – particularly the ability to focus, pay attention, engage with a task and use working memory – ADHD, and LD.

Publisher: About, Inc.

[Visit website](#)

### What is ADHD?

An explanation of ADHD.

Publisher: ADHD Association

[Visit website](#)

### Understanding ADHD

An online guide which contains sections on: what ADHD is, signs and symptoms, other issues that can co-occur with ADHD, possible causes of ADHD, how ADHD is diagnosed, and how professionals can help.

Publisher: Understood

[Visit website](#)

### ADHD Signs and Symptoms

Read time: 16 min

A description of the predominant signs of ADHD you may see in children and young people at different age levels. A complete checklist of signs of ADHD at different ages can be downloaded.

Publisher: Understood

[Visit website](#)

### Groups that can support you

A list of national organisations that support students with additional needs and their families.

[Visit website](#)

---

This information was downloaded/printed from the Ministry of Education's website "Inclusive Education". Except where otherwise noted it is Crown Copyright 2018.

Information on the Inclusive Education website is regularly updated so we recommend you check the website version of this information to ensure it remains current.

---