



# Social & Emotional Learning Exercise: Getting Started

There are many reasons students have a hard time getting started on an assignment. In other videos I will address fear of failure and correction. In this one we will take on two big reasons: Motivation issues and Executive Functioning.

When the issue is one of motivation, our goal will be to give the student a launching point to get some momentum going. Sometimes the issue is an executive functioning issue, that is, the student is having a hard time figuring out *where* or *how* to start the assignment.

**Materials:** The student will need some kind of assignment. It can be a pretend assignment or a real assignment. The more the student has difficulty with motivation, the more you might want to start with a pretend one. When you are working on an executive functioning issue, it's best to give an assignment with clear steps and directions, as you will see. You will also need a timer.

## Lesson Plan 1: Motivation Based

1. Introduce the Skill: "Today we are going to practice getting started on an assignment. Possibly even one we really don't want to do."
2. Predict a Positive Outcome: Tell the student how this skill will help them.
3. Ask for Input: Ask the student to reflect on times they have difficulty getting started. Ask them to describe the situation including their thoughts (self-talk), feelings, and behaviors.
4. Tell the student we are going to practice getting started and working as hard as we can for 30 seconds. You can ask the student how they will keep themselves working and what they will say to themselves if they start to want to quit.
5. Have them work for 30 seconds and then stop.
6. Ask them to reflect on their experience. How was it? Was it as bad as they thought? What did they think about during the experience? How motivated are they to keep going?

## Homework

After the lesson, get the student to use this three times in the coming week. Ask them to see how long they can go by setting a timer and try to increase their time. Celebrate success in increasing their time!

## **Lesson Plan 2: Executive Functioning Based**

For this lesson you will have to choose a lesson and a plan in advance. Make sure the lesson fits your plan. This is just going to be an example. Your goal is to get the student to have some kind of getting started routine.

1. Introduce the Skill: “Today we are going to practice getting started on an assignment. Possibly even one we really don’t want to do.”
2. Predict a Positive Outcome: Tell the student how this skill will help them.
3. Ask for Input: Ask the student to reflect on times they have difficulty getting started. Ask them to describe the situation including their thoughts (self-talk), feelings and behaviors.
4. Help the student come up with a routine of three things (not much more) they can do to get started. Come up with a mnemonic if you can such as: PAD: Get a **P**encil, Set out the **A**ssignment, and read the **D**irections. You could also include some positive self-talk in there if you want.
5. Run through it a few times. Have them put their pencil in different places. Have them turn their paper upside down. See how fast they can do all three things.
6. Have them come up with a way to remember the routine. One way is to cue off whatever happens right before the assignment. For example, if they sit down at their desk, or they are handed the assignment, have them use that as the cue.

### **Homework**

Ask the student to do use the routine at least once per day during the week, and try to associate it with a behavioral cue. The more times they do it the better. You can incentivize them to practice with a reward.