

Executive Function IEP Goals — 3rd – 5th Grade

17 measurable goals written to IDEA standards. Replace [student] and [date]; adjust criteria to the student's baseline.

By 3rd grade, executive function goals should start requiring independence, not just accuracy — a student who plans a project only when an adult sits with them hasn't yet learned to plan on their own.

INDEPENDENT TASK INITIATION

1. [student] will independently begin an assigned task within [X] minutes without a verbal prompt, in 4 of 5 observed opportunities.
2. [student] will start a multi-step assignment by identifying the first step independently, with 80% accuracy across 4 of 5 trials.

PLANNING & ORGANIZATION

3. [student] will use a planner or assignment log to record and track homework and due dates, with adult support fading, across 4 of 5 school days.
4. [student] will break a multi-step assignment into smaller steps using a graphic organizer or checklist, with 80% accuracy across 4 of 5 trials.
5. [student] will maintain an organized binder or folder system, locating a needed item within [X] minutes, across 4 of 5 checks.

WORKING MEMORY

6. [student] will hold and complete a 3-4 step direction without needing it repeated, with 80% accuracy across 4 of 5 trials.
7. [student] will mentally hold a math problem's steps (regrouping, order of operations) while solving it, with 80% accuracy across 4 of 5 trials.

SELF-MONITORING & METACOGNITION

8. [student] will use a self-checking strategy (rereading, checking work against a rubric) before submitting an assignment, with 1 or fewer reminders, across 4 of 5 assignments.
9. [student] will identify whether they understood a lesson or need help, and ask for it, in 4 of 5 observed opportunities.
10. [student] will rate their own effort or focus during a task, with 80% agreement with a teacher's rating, across 4 of 5 sessions.

COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY & PROBLEM-SOLVING

11. [student] will try at least 2 different strategies before asking for help when stuck on a problem, in 4 of 5 observed opportunities.
12. [student] will adjust to an unexpected change in schedule or task without significant distress, in 4 of 5 observed opportunities.
13. [student] will shift between two different types of tasks or subjects without extended difficulty refocusing, across 4 of 5 observed transitions.

TIME MANAGEMENT & IMPULSE CONTROL

14. [student] will estimate how long a task will take and compare it to the actual time, with the estimate within [X] minutes of accuracy, across 4 of 5 trials.
15. [student] will complete an assignment within an allotted time period, pacing their work across the available time, in 4 of 5 observed opportunities.
16. [student] will pause before responding or acting to reduce careless errors, decreasing error rate from a documented baseline, across 4 of 5 assignments.
17. [student] will manage frustration when a task is difficult by using a taught strategy before giving up, in 4 of 5 observed opportunities.

Using These Executive Function Goals at 3rd – 5th Grade

Independence is the real target, not just accuracy

A student who plans a project only with an adult sitting next to them hasn't yet learned to plan — fade the support explicitly in the goal.

Working memory failures often look like carelessness

A student who loses track of a math problem's steps isn't being careless; they're hitting a working memory limit that needs a strategy, not a lecture.

Time estimation is a skill on its own

Comparing an estimate to the actual time spent teaches a concrete lesson that “just budget your time better” doesn't.

Frustration tolerance belongs in an executive function goal too

Giving up when a task gets hard is often a flexibility and self-regulation issue, not a motivation problem.

Every criterion here is a placeholder. Set the real number from this student's own baseline, and fade adult support explicitly as part of the goal, not as an afterthought.

Tired of rebuilding these forms every year?

IEP Goal Writer also drafts your PLAAFP and progress notes from the same student profile — free to try at iepgoalwriter.pro