

How to talk to **your child's teacher** about learning differences and ADHD

Teachers can be a big source of support for struggling students and their families. Use this discussion guide to help raise your concerns and talk about how you can work together.

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General tips

You may not be sure what to say about your child's challenges, and that's OK. Take a deep breath, and remember that the teacher is there to support your child. Here are some tips to help get ready for the conversation.

1. Make an appointment.

You don't have to wait until parent-teacher conferences to talk with your child's teacher. But remember that teachers' workdays are jam-packed. Ask to schedule a 15- to 20-minute appointment, either in person or by phone or videoconference. Be sure to thank the teacher for their time and support — gratitude can help build the relationship.

2. Prepare what you want to say.

When you meet with the teacher, be clear and specific. Spend some time before the meeting to plan what you want to say and ask. Try writing your ideas down, recording voice notes, or practicing with a friend. Focus on these key areas ahead of time:

- Challenges you want to talk about
- Strengths or interests that can help your child complete tasks
- Responses you can use if the teacher says something you weren't expecting or that heightens your emotions. For example, you can say, "Let me think about that and get back to you."

3. Be open to working together.

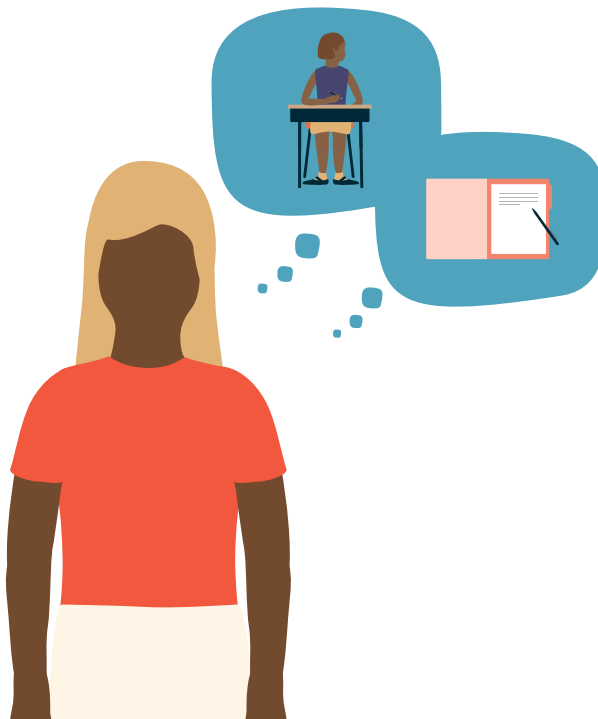
A [strong partnership with teachers](#) can have a positive impact on your child. Keep in mind that successful partnerships are built on mutual respect. If you've had bad experiences at school, you might have trouble trusting that things will go well. You can ask for the meeting to include a staff member you know well or a family member or friend who can help you go into this conversation with an open mind.

4. Prepare yourself emotionally.

Talking about your child's challenges can bring up strong emotions. It helps to practice what you want to say in advance. During the conversation, you can take a deep breath or refer to your notes if you need to pause and steady yourself.

5. Follow up after the meeting.

Send a thank-you email for taking the time to meet. Summarize what you talked about and any next steps you agreed on. Make a plan for checking in again by suggesting a date or timeframe. Talking regularly can help you build the relationship. You don't need to wait until there's something specific to talk about.



If you don't know why your child is struggling

Talking with your child's teacher is a great first step in getting answers and finding the right support. Planning ahead can help make the conversation go smoothly.

Before the meeting	
Tips	What you can say
Ask for a time to talk by phone, by email, or in person.	"Hi. I'm the [parent or caregiver of X]. I've noticed my child is having challenges with [reading, math, paying attention, etc.]. I'd like to set up a time to talk about it."
During the meeting	
Tips	What you can say
Start by explaining your purpose.	"Thanks for meeting with me. I'd like your help understanding some challenges my child is having with...."
Share some details about what you've noticed.	"This tends to happen [when, where, and how often]." "I started noticing this [how long ago]."
Share strategies you've tried at home.	"I've tried [which strategy], and that has helped [a little/a lot/not at all]."
Ask for input.	"Is this something you've noticed too?" "Any strategies you use at school that might help at home?" "Do you think I should talk to the school counselor about my child's challenges?"
Talk about next steps.	"Thanks for your time. Let's talk again after I've had a chance to try some of your suggestions. What timeframe feels reasonable for us to check in?"
After the meeting	
Tips	What you can say
Follow up with a thank-you email.	"Thanks so much for your help. Can we check in after I've had time to think about this and talk about what happens next? How about we check in two weeks from now?"

Get more tips on talking to teachers with these [conversation starters](#).

If your child has a diagnosis

If your child was recently diagnosed or if it's a new school year, you can use these tips to help the teacher understand and support your child's needs.

Before the meeting	
Tips	What you can say
Ask for a time to talk by phone, by email, or in person.	"Hi. I'm the [parent or caregiver of X]. I'd like to help you support my child's [ADHD, dyslexia, etc.] and want to set up a time to talk about it."
During the meeting	
Tips	What you can say
Start by explaining your purpose.	"Thanks for meeting with me. I'd like us to talk about my child's [ADHD, dyslexia, etc.] and what kinds of support may be helpful at school and at home."
Give specifics about your child.	"I've noticed [what] tends to happen [when, where, and how often]. I started noticing this [how long ago]."
Talk about current accommodations.	"Here's a copy of my child's [IEP/504 plan]." "Let's take a look at my child's current accommodations. This one in particular helps because...." "Do you have any questions about the accommodations?"
Share strategies you've tried at home.	"I've tried [which strategy], and that has helped [a little/a lot/not at all]. I think that's because...."
Ask for input.	"Are there ways you think we can improve some of the current strategies? Or are there new things we should try?"
Talk about next steps.	"Thanks for talking with me. Please let me know how I can support you and how you prefer to keep in touch."
After the meeting	
Tips	What you can say
Follow up with a thank-you email.	"Thanks so much for meeting with me. I'm grateful for your partnership. Let's be sure to stay in touch within two weeks."

Learn more about [how to talk with teachers about learning and thinking differences](#).

More resources

Ready to learn more about learning differences and ADHD? Explore these resources from [Understood.org](https://www.understood.org), a free, nonprofit resource vetted by experts and not associated with any pharmaceutical companies.

- [Signs and symptoms](#)
- [Classroom accommodation guides](#)
- [Through My Eyes](#)
 - Simulations that show what it feels like to have learning differences and ADHD
 - Discussion guides to help you talk with your child, partner or co-parent, and pediatrician
 - Interactive resources for kids