

# Parent Guide to Building Focus at Home

*A practical guide to help kids pay attention, follow through, and build focus using their eyes, ears, mind, and body.*

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Parent Resources Guide  
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## Why Focus Matters

Focus is not just sitting still.

Focus is a skill kids can practice by watching, listening, thinking, and controlling their body. At Horizon ATA Martial Arts, we teach students that focus means paying attention with more than one part of themselves. True focus uses the eyes, ears, mind, and body.

For parents, this matters because focus shows up everywhere:

- getting ready in the morning
- listening the first time
- starting homework
- finishing chores
- transitioning away from screens
- reading
- following directions at school
- staying calm when frustrated

When a child struggles with focus, it does not always mean they are being disrespectful or lazy. Many kids need focus broken down into smaller, clearer skills. Instead of only saying, 'Pay attention,' we can teach children what paying attention actually looks like.

At home, focus can be practiced the same way we practice a martial arts skill: clearly, consistently, and with encouragement.



### Horizon Life Skill Connection

**Primary Life Skills:** Focus, Discipline, Confidence

**Supporting Life Skills:** Listening, Responsibility, Self-Control

In our [kids martial arts classes](#), students practice focus through listening, movement, repetition, and self-control. They learn that focus is not about being perfect. It is about bringing their attention back when they get distracted and trying again.

For younger children, our [ATA Tigers classes](#) introduce focus through age-appropriate movement, games, listening practice, and body control.

### Focus Uses the Whole Student



#### EYES

Watch and notice what matters.



#### EARS

Listen carefully and take in information.



#### MIND

Think, remember, and make good choices.



#### BODY

Control movements and stay calm and ready.



# The Four Levels of Focus



At Horizon ATA, we talk about the four levels of focus: Eyes. Ears. Mind. Body. This gives kids a clear way to understand focus. Instead of focus being an invisible idea, it becomes something they can see, hear, feel, and practice.



**EYES**

## 1. Eyes: Watching

Eyes are the first level of focus. A child using focused eyes can: look at the person speaking, watch the demonstration, notice what is happening, look at the task in front of them, and follow visual directions.

**At home, this might sound like:**

“Use your focus eyes and look at the paper.”

“Watch me first, then you try.”

“Look at what needs to be cleaned up.”



**EARS**

## 2. Ears: Listening

Ears are the second level of focus. A child using focused ears can: hear the direction, listen the first time, notice important details, wait until the speaker is finished, and repeat back what they heard.

**At home, this might sound like:**

“Use your listening ears.”

“What did you hear me ask?”

“Repeat the first step back to me.”



**MIND**

## 3. Mind: Thinking

The mind is the third level of focus. A child using a focused mind can: understand what is being asked, remember the next step, stay with the task, make a plan, and notice when they are getting distracted.

**At home, this might sound like:**

“What is your first step?”

“What do you need to remember?”

“What can you do if you get stuck?”



**BODY**

## 4. Body: Control

The body is the fourth level of focus. A child using a focused body can: keep their body ready, stay safe and controlled, sit, stand, or move with purpose, keep hands and feet under control, and return to the task after a break.

**At home, this might sound like:**

“Show me a ready body.”

“Keep your body calm while I explain.”

“Take a movement break, then come back ready.”



### Parent Reminder

A child can struggle with one level of focus while doing well with another. That is why it helps to name the specific focus skill you want to see. Instead of saying “Focus!” try:

- “Use your eyes and ears.”
- “Show me a ready body.”
- “Tell me the first step.”
- “Bring your mind back to the task.”



**EYES**



**EARS**



**MIND**



**BODY**



# How to Build Focus at Home

Focus improves when kids know what is expected, have a clear routine, and receive encouragement for effort. Experts often recommend clear routines, smaller steps, and visual supports when kids struggle to stay on task.<sup>1</sup> The goal is not to make home feel like school or turn every moment into a lesson. The goal is to make focus easier to practice.

## 1 Strategy 1: Make the task clear

Many focus problems begin because the child does not fully understand what to do.

Instead of	Try
Clean your room.	Put your clothes in the hamper first. Then come back to me.
Do your homework.	Start with the first five math problems. When those are done, we will check in.



### Parent Script

Your first step is \_\_\_\_\_.  
When that is done, come show me.

## 2 Strategy 2: Use short focus windows

Kids often focus better in short, successful blocks. A child who cannot focus for 30 minutes may be able to focus for 5–10 minutes with a clear goal.

- 5 minutes of reading
- 10 minutes of homework
- one chore at a time
- one section of a worksheet
- one part of the morning routine

The CDC notes that breaks and movement can help children reset because paying attention takes effort and can be tiring.<sup>2</sup>



### Parent Script

Let's focus for 10 minutes.  
Then we will take a quick reset break.

## 3 Strategy 3: Build routines

Routines reduce the number of decisions a child has to make. When kids know what comes next, focus becomes easier.

- after-school routine
- homework routine
- bedtime routine
- morning routine
- screen-time transition routine

### A Simple Homework Routine



### Parent Script

We do this in the same order each time so your brain knows what to expect."

## 4 Strategy 4: Praise the focus skill

Do not only praise the finished product. Praise the focus skill you saw.

- ★ "I noticed you started the first time."
- ★ "You kept your body ready."
- ★ "You brought your mind back after getting distracted."
- ★ "You listened and followed through."
- ★ "You finished strong."



This helps kids understand that focus is something they can practice and improve.

### Focus Routine Flow



# Focus Problems and What to Say

Kids do not always lose focus for the same reason. A child may be tired, hungry, overwhelmed, bored, frustrated, distracted, or unsure where to start. Before correcting the behavior, try to identify the focus problem.



## 1 If your child is not starting

They may not know the first step, or the task may feel too big.

### Try saying:

- “Let’s choose the first step.”
- “You do the first one, then I’ll check in.”
- “Start small. What can you do first?”



## 2 If your child keeps getting up

They may need movement before they can focus again.

### Try saying:

- “Take a quick movement reset, then come back.”
- “Do 10 jumping jacks, then show me a ready body.”
- “Your body needs a break. Then we return to the task.”



## 3 If your child is rushing

They may want to be done more than they want to do it well.

### Try saying:

- “Slow focus is strong focus.”
- “Check your work before you finish.”
- “Finishing strong means doing the last step well.”



## 4 If your child is arguing

They may be avoiding the task or struggling with the transition.

### Try saying:

- “I hear that you do not want to do it. The first step is still \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “Use a respectful voice and tell me what feels hard.”
- “You can be frustrated and still make a good choice.”



## If your child melts down

They may need a reset before they can focus.

### Try saying:

- “Let’s calm your body first.”
- “Take a breath. We will try again in a minute.”
- “Your focus can come back after your body resets.”



For these moments, the [Self-Control Reset Sheet for Kids](#) can be a helpful companion resource.

## Common Mistakes to Avoid



**Avoid giving too many directions at once.**

It overwhelms your child and blocks focus.



**Avoid repeating the same direction louder and louder.**

It increases resistance and shuts down listening.



**Avoid turning every focus struggle into a lecture.**

It creates defensiveness instead of solutions.



**Avoid expecting perfect focus.**

Focus is a skill being built, not a switch.



**Avoid using the worksheet as punishment.**

It teaches fear, not growth or self-control.

# Using the Focus Chart and Related Resources

The Kids Focus Chart is designed to make focus visible. It helps parents and children notice the specific focus skills being practiced each day.



## Use this guide with:

### Kids Focus Chart

Simple worksheet to track focus skills.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Week of: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 1 MY FOCUS MISSION

This week, I will focus on:

Homework     Chores

Reading     Bedtime routine

Morning routine     Other: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 2 FOCUS MEANS I CAN...

1. Get my body ready: I take a deep breath, sit up tall, and get on.

2. Use listening eyes and ears: I look at the person talking and nodly listen.

3. Start the first time: I begin right away without needing.

4. Stay with the task: I keep working and don't give up.

5. Finish strong: I think my work and do my best all the way.

#### 3 MY FOCUS CHART — I CAN DO THIS!

Color a star each day you show focus!

Day	Body Ready	Listening Eyes & Ears	Started the First Time	Stayed With It	Finished Strong	Parent Praise
Monday	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	○
Tuesday	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	○
Wednesday	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	○
Thursday	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	○
Friday	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	○
Saturday	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	○
Sunday	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	○

#### 4 WHEN I EARN I CAN CHOOSE: STARS.

Pick a family game     Special time with Mom/Dad

Choose dinner     Park/backyard trip

Extra bedtime story     Other: \_\_\_\_\_

#### 5 PARENT TIP

- Keep the goal simple.
- Praise effort.
- Use the chart to build habits, not punish mistakes.

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## Kids Focus Chart

A simple worksheet to track focus skills.

- homework focus
- reading focus
- morning routine focus
- chore focus
- bedtime routine focus
- listening the first time
- finishing strong



## How to use it

- 1 Choose one focus mission for the week.
- 2 Examples: "This week, we are practicing homework focus." "This week, we are practicing morning routine focus." "This week, we are practicing listening the first time."
- 3 At the end of the activity, mark the focus skills your child practiced: Body Ready, Listening Eyes & Ears, Started the First Time, Stayed With It, Finished Strong.
- 4 Keep the tone positive. If your child does not earn every star, that is okay. The goal is to notice effort and build habits.

## Related Horizon Parent Resources



### Listening Chart for Kids

Use this when your child needs more practice with listening, following directions, and respectful communication.



### Self-Control Reset Sheet for Kids

Use this when big feelings, frustration, or body control are getting in the way of focus.



### Screen-Time Transition Guide for Kids

Use this when screen time makes it hard to move to homework, dinner, chores, bedtime, or another activity.



### Goal Setting Worksheet & Goal Progress Tracker

Use these when your child is working toward a bigger goal and needs help breaking it into smaller steps.



### Horizon Connection

Focus is one of the life skills students practice every week at Horizon ATA. Our [Horizon life skills](#) approach helps students connect what they learn on the mat to home, school, and everyday life.

For many children, focus becomes easier when they practice it through movement, structure, repetition, encouragement, and clear expectations. That is why martial arts can be such a helpful activity for kids who need support with attention, confidence, and follow-through. Families can learn more about focus and self-control in our blog on [how martial arts supports kids with ADHD](#).



### Want More Support?

Want your child to build confidence, discipline, and life skills in a positive environment?

Learn more about the [New Student Experience](#) at Horizon ATA Martial Arts.



### Helpful Sources

1. Dawson, P. (2026, February 6). Strategies to make homework go more smoothly. Child Mind Institute. <https://childmind.org/article/strategies-to-make-homework-go-more-smoothly/>
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2026, June 1). ADHD in the classroom. <https://www.cdc.gov/adhd/treatment/classroom.html>



### Educational Note

This guide is for educational support and general parent guidance. It is not a substitute for medical, mental health, educational, or school-specific advice. If your child has ongoing challenges with attention, learning, emotional regulation, or behavior, consider speaking with your child's teacher, pediatrician, or a qualified professional.

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