

The warm up exercises below are primarily "bi-lateral" movements, where one is using both sides of his body and activating both hemispheres of the brain at the same time. Crossing the mid-line of the body with hands or knees or feet can be a challenge to some people, especially younger children. But everyone can learn to do this with time and practice.

Begin by just marching in place for 60 seconds: lifting your left foot and right hand together, then right foot and left hand, and so on. If your child has trouble with this, help them by putting a yellow dot on their right hand and left foot, and perhaps a red dot on their left hand and right foot. Then just say "yellow" and "red" to get them going...

Next is an old sumo wrestler warm up exercise that also activates both hemispheres of the brain and may give one sensation of being more focused and energized. Simply lift the right knee up to where it can be "slapped" by the left hand, then the left knee up to where it can be slapped by the right hand, and keep repeating at a "walking" pace. Slap...slap...slap...slap... Continue for about 90 seconds, or 90 "slaps."

Your child can do these two exercises at school between classes or toward the end of recess before returning to class, and these two and a half minutes will be well invested.



At home before doing homework or going off to school in the morning, your ADHD child can also do these exercises using an exercise ball – the type that you might sit or roll on to exercise or stretch. In fact, your child can do his homework sitting on the exercise ball, and might be more focused and comfortable doing that. But here's a tip: don't put your child at the table to do his homework right away. Allow him to do these exercises below before he settles in to do the homework while seated on the exercise ball. Otherwise you will find him off the ball and under the table in seconds.

Begin by just having your child simply sit and balance on the ball for about 60 seconds.

The roll a bit to the left, and roll a bit to the right. Back to the left, over to the right, and so on for about 30 seconds. Once they master this, then also have them do this for about 30 seconds with their eyes closed.

Then have your ADHD child "march in place" while sitting on the ball. First, raise the "yellow" hand and "yellow" foot, then the "red" hand and foot, then repeat. They only have to raise their hands and feet a few inches. Large movements are not necessary.

After about 30 seconds of these movements, have your child cross over the mid-line of their body with their hands, simply reaching toward their opposite shoulder rather than lifting their hand upward. Do this for about 30 seconds.

At this point your ADHD child will be warmed up enough to begin with his homework, and as we mentioned before, he may benefit from sitting at the table on the exercise ball where he has to work a bit at staying balanced while he learns.

There are several other great brain exercises, but these will get you started. We hope to produce a quick video of Brian McFarland teaching a child to do a complete brain warm up routine, using both exercises that require the ball, and many that do not. Until then, these simple warm ups will help.