



Terminology of the Month:

Executive Function: “Cognitive processes that allow people to plan, organize, make decisions, pay attention, and regulate behavior.”

When assessing whether students have reached essential learning outcomes, Executive Function skill issues often are overlooked. Students see themselves struggling academically as well as social-emotionally and are often perceived by teachers as lazy or not trying. Many students can surmount the effects of social-emotional learning challenges by learning Executive Function skills.

–Rush Neurobehavioral Center

Research-based Strategy of the Month: Executive Function – Completing Tasks & Managing Attention

Following Written Directions for Assignments, Quizzes, and Tests

Strategy: Circle, Underline, Count, Complete

Sometimes students need an additional tool or strategy to help them find all the directives that are found in an assignment. This strategy comes from the RUSH Neurobehavioral Center and is recommended for the successful, thorough completion of a homework assignment, quiz, or test that has more than one step in the instructions. Students are guided to circle the action words, underline the directions attached to the action words, and count the number of total steps.

Example of Directions on a class assignment or quiz...

“Circle either True or False for each statement. Re-write false statements into true statements in the blank below.”

Explanation of Strategy

C	Circle the direction words <i>Circle either True or False for each statement. Re-write false statements into true statements in the blank below.</i>
U	Underline the key words <i>Circle either <u>True or False</u> for each statement. <u>Re-write false statements into true statements</u> in the blank below.</i>
C	Count the number of steps <i>1) Circle True or False 2) Re-write false statements</i>
C	Complete all necessary steps

Use C.U.C.C. as an instructional strategy if... your entire class could benefit from its use. Many class levels could improve learning outcomes if they plan their performance from the written directions. For example, AP classes often have test essays that ask students to perform a few separate actions for the essay. Anxious and focused on writing within a time limit, students may rush through the directions and fixate on the first direction task, missing the subsequent tasks that are required for the essay.

Use C.U.C.C. as an intervention if... you notice a few students not completing the directions as stated. As teachers, we sometimes assume that students are lazy and do not take the time to read directions, but explicit Executive Function skills instruction of completing C.U.C.C. can set up neural pathways for repeating the procedure on future assignments and in other classes without the prompt from us as teachers. This encourages self-directed, meta-cognitive learning.

Students with reading comprehension difficulties may also feel a decrease in anxiety, confusion, or worry as the meta-cognition that occurs with C.U.C.C. allows a student to know when they do not understand the steps of directions.

Additionally, the behavioral component of physically circling the action words in the directions and writing the number of steps can be an intervention for students with reading comprehension difficulties. Follow the progress of the student and monitor whether their in-class and homework assignment depth improve with this intervention.



RUSH NEUROBEHAVIORAL CENTER

*Building on the strengths of
children, teens, and young adults*

<http://www.rnbc.org/education/a-focus-on-executive-function/>

"Don't tell me you believe 'all students can learn.' Tell me what you're doing about the kids who aren't learning."

-Richard DuFour, author of Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn