

30-Minute Lesson Plan – Executive Function Strategies (Special Education, Year 1, UK) – Blend Approach

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Overview

A 30-minute, low-materials lesson that introduces and practises two simple executive function strategies: 1) Breaking tasks into small steps (Step Checklists) and 2) Using brief timers for focused work (Mini-Timers). Delivery follows the Blend approach: brief multimedia prompt, peer workshop, collaborative practice, and peer feedback. Lesson is accessible for Year 1 special education learners and designed to build self-regulation, working memory support, and task initiation.

Learning objectives (measurable)

By the end of the lesson, learners will:

- Identify two executive function strategies (Step Checklist, Mini-Timer) in classroom scenarios with 80% accuracy across 3 brief trials.
- Use a 2-step checklist and a 1-minute Mini-Timer to begin and complete the first step of a simple task with teacher or peer support in at least 3/4 attempts.
- Verbally explain, using supported sentence frames or picture cues, one real-world situation where each strategy can help, in 2/3 scenarios.

Standards alignment (general UK early years / KS1 outcomes)

- Personal, Social & Emotional Development / Self-Regulation: supports children to manage feelings and behaviour and to follow instructions.
- Communication & Language: supports verbalising plans and sequencing steps.
- Preparation for KS1 learning routines: following multi-step instructions and completing short tasks.

Materials (low)

- 1 simple laminated two-step checklist per pair (visual icons + 2 short words)
- 1 visible 1-minute timer (sand timer or phone timer) or an auditory cue (short chime)
- 3–4 picture scenario cards (printed or drawn) showing real-world moments (e.g., tidy table, put on coat, wash hands)
- 1 short audio clip (20–30 seconds) describing the two strategies (teacher-recorded or prepped script read aloud)

- Optional: simple stickers or tally sheet for evidence

Accessibility & differentiation

- Visual supports for all instructions (icons, pictures).
- Sentence frames and choice prompts for verbal responses (e.g., "I can use the checklist to ___").
- Paired work: mixed ability pairs so stronger communicators support peers.
- Alternative response modes: point to picture, gesture, single word, or use communication device.
- Short, clear language and frequent checks for understanding.

Lesson timeline (30 minutes)

1. Welcome & Set Up (2 minutes)

- Quick seating into pairs near materials.
- Ground rule reminder: kind feedback, one voice at a time.

2. Multimedia Prompt (3 minutes)

- Play a 30-second audio clip that: names the two strategies (Step Checklist, Mini-Timer), and gives one concrete classroom example each.
- After audio, pairs quickly point to a picture card representing one of the strategies.
- Pulse Check 1 (immediate): Identify the strategy
 - Task: From 3 picture scenarios shown sequentially, each learner points to the picture that best shows a Step Checklist or a Mini-Timer.
 - Success criteria: Student identifies the correct picture in at least 2 out of 3 trials.

3. Peer Workshop – Guided Collaborative Practice (15 minutes)

- Activity setup (1 minute):
 - Each pair receives a two-step checklist and a picture scenario card (e.g., "Tidy Table" showing two steps: 1. Put toys in box; 2. Push chair in).
- Round 1 – Plan & Practice (6 minutes):
 - Pair chooses roles: Reader/Timer (if one child cannot read, they point; assistant reads aloud).
 - Use the checklist to plan the first step. Set the 1-minute Mini-Timer. Try to complete the first step before the timer ends.

- Peer feedback: the partner gives one positive comment and one check (picture card) showing if the step was completed (yes/no).
- Pulse Check 2 (during Round 1):
 - Task: Complete Step 1 using the checklist and Mini-Timer.
 - Success criteria: Student completes Step 1 in 3/4 attempts or completes the first step with either verbal or picture confirmation from peer.
- Round 2 – Swap Roles & New Scenario (6 minutes):
 - Pairs swap roles and use a different scenario card.
 - Increase independence: encourage students to point to checklist steps and start the timer themselves where possible.
 - Peer feedback recorded with a sticker or tick.
 - Pulse Check 3 (end of workshop):
 - Task: Explain one place outside class where this strategy could help (use sentence frame or picture choices).
 - Success criteria: Student gives an answer matching 2/3 supported prompts (e.g., "At home to tidy toys" or pointing to house picture twice).

4. Whole-Group Reflection & Peer Feedback (7 minutes)

- Quick sharing circle: 3 pairs share one success and one place they will use the strategy outside class.
- Teacher/TA records evidence (ticks next to student names for each success criterion met).
- Final mini activity: two volunteers demonstrate using the checklist and timer while peers give two quick thumbs: thumbs up = ready, sideways = needs help, down = more support needed.
- Exit Metacognition Prompt (1 minute): Each student completes a short supported prompt on a sticky note or via thumbs (see Metacognition section).

Peer workshop structure and roles

- Roles (swap mid-activity):
 - Planner/Reader: points to or reads the checklist step, helps set the timer.
 - Doer/Timer: starts the timer and attempts to complete the step.
- Peer feedback routine:
 - "One Nice Thing" (short positive comment).
 - "One Check" (point to green/red card or place a tick/sticker if step was completed).

- Teacher facilitation: circulate, scaffold language, prompt next steps, record pulse check evidence.

Multimedia element (low materials)

- 20–30 second audio script example:
 - "Today we will use a Step Checklist and a Mini-Timer. A Step Checklist helps you do one thing at a time. A Mini-Timer helps you focus for a short time. For example: Step 1 – Put toys in box. Timer for 1 minute."
- Use phone to play audio; use sand timer or phone timer for Mini-Timer.

Pulse checks (embedded)

- Pulse Check 1 – After multimedia (Identify strategy)
 - Task: Choose the correct picture for the named strategy across 3 quick trials.
 - Success criteria: Correct in at least 2/3 trials.
- Pulse Check 2 – During peer workshop (Use strategy)
 - Task: Use checklist and Mini-Timer to complete Step 1 of task.
 - Success criteria: Complete Step 1 in 3/4 attempts or with peer support (verbal/picture confirmation).
- Pulse Check 3 – End of workshop (Transfer to real world)
 - Task: Give one example of where to use the strategy outside class.
 - Success criteria: Provide a supported answer matching 2/3 prompts or point to two appropriate pictures.

Quiz-style checkpoints (10 quick checks with success criteria)

Use visuals, single-word choices, thumbs, or pointing to make checks accessible.

1. Name the checklist picture when shown.
 - Format: Show picture of checklist.
 - Success: Student labels or points correctly in 3/4 trials.
2. Name the timer picture when shown.

- Success: Label or point correctly in 3/4 trials.
3. Match a one-step task to using a checklist (e.g., put on coat).
 - Format: 3 picture tasks; student points to ones that suit a checklist.
 - Success: Correct choices in 2/3 items.
 4. Match a short focus task to using a Mini-Timer (e.g., read one page).
 - Success: Correct in 2/3 items.
 5. Order two pictures for a simple sequence (Step 1 then Step 2).
 - Success: Correct order in 3/4 attempts.
 6. Start the Mini-Timer when asked.
 - Success: Student starts the timer independently or with a single prompt in 3/4 trials.
 7. Complete one step after the timer runs (task demonstration).
 - Success: Completes Step 1 within the minute or shows completion via picture in 3/4 attempts.
 8. Give one positive peer feedback phrase (Picture choice: "Good job", "Try again").
 - Success: Selects appropriate positive phrase in 3/4 trials.
 9. Choose the correct strategy for "tidy toys before playtime".
 - Success: Picks checklist or timer appropriately in 2/3 trials.
 10. Explain where to use a strategy outside class using a supported sentence frame or picture (e.g., "At home, I can use the checklist to ___").
 - Success: Completes frame or points to correct picture in 2/3 trials.

Assessment, evidence collection, and recording

- Use quick marks (tick/sticker) on a simple tracking sheet for each student for the three pulse checks and the 10 checkpoints.
- Collect one sticky note or symbol from each student answering the exit metacognition prompt as evidence.
- For learners using alternative communication, record responses via observation checklist (yes/no) and short anecdotal note.

Metacognition prompts (to use during reflection and exit)

- Supported sentence frames and picture prompts:
 - "I used the checklist to ____." (picture of task)
 - "I used the timer to help me ____." (picture: focus, tidy)
 - "Today I will use this at home when ____." (house picture)
- Exit prompt options (choose one method):
 - Verbal: "Today I used the checklist to ____."
 - Visual: Place a sticker on the picture of where you will use it (home, classroom, playground).
 - Gesture: Thumbs up if you can use it at home, sideways if maybe, down if you need more help.

Teacher notes and next steps

- Reinforce strategies across the week with short 1–2 minute practices before transitions (e.g., set a Mini-Timer to tidy).
- Use consistent visual checklists accessible on tables and in cloakrooms.
- For students not meeting success criteria, plan 5-minute 1:1 follow-up to scaffold step sequencing and supported timer use.
- Track progress weekly: target moving from supported completion of Step 1 to independent completion of both steps and self-starting timers.