

# A BRILLIANT ME IN ACTION ONE PAGE GUIDE TO...

## EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS

A set of mental skills that help with planning, focusing attention, remembering instructions, and managing multiple tasks. These are like the brain's management system, enabling us to organise, prioritise, and make effective decisions.

### Core functions:

#### WHAT?

**Working Memory:** The ability to hold and manipulate information in our minds over short periods

**Mental Flexibility:** The ability to adapt to changing situations, shift thinking, and see things from different perspectives

**Self-control:** The ability to regulate attention, behaviour, and emotions, allowing us to stay on task and avoid distractions

We are not born with EF skills but need to develop them. Through experiences, we develop EF **thinking skills** (e.g. planning, organisation) and **EF doing skills** (e.g., emotional control, sustained attention).

#### WHY?

Executive functioning is not just about organisation or learning skills — it is deeply connected to regulation, safety and relationships.

Executive functioning skills significantly impact pupils' academic performance and classroom behaviour.

#### SEL?

Strong EF skills contribute directly to self-regulation, problem-solving, and social competence, all core components of SEL including the **self-management** and **responsible decision-making** core competencies



#### FIND OUT MORE

- [Harvard Centre on the Developing Child - A guide to Executive Function](#)
- [Harvard Centre on the Developing Child Activities 7 - 12 year olds](#)
- [The Oxford Brain Story - for families](#) (short animations about how experiences shape our brains)
- [Start Now](#) Interactive Guide to EF
- **Book:**
  - Dawson, Peg, and Richard Guare. *Executive Skills in Children and Adolescents*, Third Edition: A Practical Guide to Assessment and Intervention. 3rd ed, Guilford Publications, 2018.
- **Pooky Knightsmith** has created some practical, accessible [EF guides](#).

#### SEE ALSO

- Collaborative Problem Solving
- Regulate, Relate, Reason
- Window of Tolerance