

# TYPICAL SPINA BIFIDA LEARNING PROFILES AND VIRTUAL LEARNING: Why virtual learning might be even more challenging for students with Spina Bífida

Everyone has different traits, but people with Spina Bifida share similar characteristics that may have adverse impact on learning; particularly online learning that is done independently. These characteristics include deficits in executive function skills

## Typical learning profiles in students with Spina Bifida include:

- Deficits in attention and focus-exacerbated by a more “passive” learning environment- despite best teaching practices, the 2-dimensional, less interactive online platform makes it harder for those with attention challenges to benefit from instruction
- Strengths in verbal and social learning- the more verbal and socially interactive/participatory the instruction is, the better for many students with SB

## Typical deficits in executive function skills:

- Planning Tasks
- Initiating Tasks
- Managing Time
- Organizing Space
- Evaluating Self-efficacy/Self-Monitoring
- Problem-solving and flexibility/flexible thinking
- Attention to task
- Impulse Control
- Working Memory



## Suggestions to manage executive function deficits

Typically, virtual or online learning environments involve less immediate supervision, guidance and feedback. This means that students are less likely to receive guidance, direction, and correction when it comes to managing their executive functions skills. To counter this, encourage students (without interrogating them) to examine and verbally describe how effective they consider their learning strategies to be.

The following questions can help students develop metacognitive skills (skills that help them to think critically about how they think and learn):

1. Did I correctly estimate how long that assignment would take to complete?
2. Did I follow the right steps to complete that assignment?
3. After I read, am I able recall and talk about what I read?
4. Did I attend all classes/complete all work on time today?
5. Did I make some mistakes because I went too fast?
6. Did I waste time looking for things I needed?
7. What did not go as planned?
8. Was I able to change my approach?
9. Was I able to solve the problem?
10. Why didn't it work?
11. How might I do it differently next time?