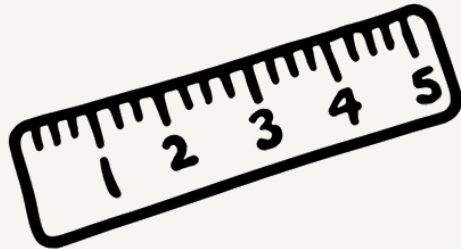
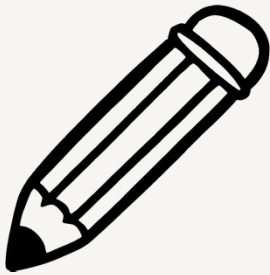


Helping Your Child at School: Understanding and Supporting Tics

For Parents to Share with Teachers



Purpose of this Handout:

- Educate teachers about tics, including motor and vocal tics.
- Offer practical strategies and accommodations for the classroom.
- Provide resources for teachers to learn more and support students effectively.

Who This Is For:

- Parents who want to share helpful guidance with their child's teachers.
- Teachers seeking practical, evidence-based strategies to support students with tics.

Tip: Share this handout at the start of the school year, during parent-teacher conferences, or whenever your child's tics change or increase.

What Are Tics?

- Tics are sudden, rapid, repetitive movements or sounds that a student makes.
- They can be motor tics (eye blinking, head jerking, shoulder shrugging) or vocal tics (throat clearing, sniffing, repeating words).
- Tics often wax and wane—sometimes they are frequent, sometimes barely noticeable.
- Tics are not intentional or disruptive on purpose; students usually cannot control them fully.

Why Understanding Tics Matters in the Classroom

- Tics can be involuntary and exhausting for the student.
- Stress, fatigue, excitement, or transitions can increase tic intensity.
- Negative responses (e.g., scolding, teasing, drawing attention) can make tics worse.
- Positive support helps children focus, participate, and feel safe at school.
- Students may hold in or suppress tics during school so they're not obvious to others. This can be mentally and physically exhausting for the student. Just because you can't see them doesn't mean they're not disrupting the student.

How Teachers Can Respond to Tics

Do:

- Stay calm and neutral when tics occur.
- Focus on the student's learning and participation, not the tic.
- Recognize triggers and help the child take breaks if needed.
- Model planned ignoring so others students may imitate the same response.

Don't:

- Draw attention to tics in front of peers.
- Ask a student to "stop ticcing"—this can increase stress and tic severity.

Tips for Parents to Share with Teachers

- Provide a list of known tics and triggers.
- Share strategies that work at home for calming or redirecting tics.
- Discuss any related conditions (anxiety, ADHD, sensory sensitivities).
- Keep open communication with teachers for updates and adjustments.

Classroom Accommodations & Strategies

Environmental & Routine Adjustments:

- Allow movement breaks or fidget tools for self-regulation.
- Seat the child away from high-traffic areas if certain tics are distracting.
- Offer a quiet space for moments of stress or increased tic activity.
- Use predictable routines to reduce stress-related tics.

Instructional Supports:

- Give instructions both verbally and in writing.
- Allow extra time for assignments and tests if tics interfere with focus or writing.
- Use flexible seating or options to stand/stretch.

Social & Emotional Support:

- Educate classmates about respecting differences (without singling out the child).
- Encourage peer support and cooperative learning activities.
- Check in with the child privately about stressors or triggers.
- Give the child a specific goal-directed task if tics are disruptive - focused tasks can help decrease tics

Resources for Teachers to Learn More About Tics

To support your child effectively, it can be helpful for teachers to learn more about tics and Tourette Syndrome. Here are some reputable, free resources designed for educators:

- Tourette Association of America – Educators Resources
- Website: <https://tourette.org/for-educators/>
 - Offers classroom guides, tip sheets, and strategies to support students with tics.
 - Provides information on understanding tics, reducing stigma, and fostering a supportive classroom.
- University of Florida – Center of Excellence for Tics: School-Based Tic Course
- Website: <https://ticscenter.ufhealth.org/resources/school-course>
 - Online course specifically for school staff to learn about tics and evidence-based classroom strategies.
 - Includes practical examples, intervention techniques, and guidance for collaborating with families and clinicians.