

Impulse control.



Control Centre Skill No.5: Impulse Control

What is Impulse Control?

Impulse Control (also called Inhibitory Control) is another one of the six important Control Centre Skills.



We can think of Impulse Control as the skill of **stopping and thinking before saying or doing.**

We describe people with good Impulse Control as 'Deliberate Owls'.



Impulse Control helps a person to:

- Think before saying, doing or writing something to prevent unnecessary mistakes
- Check how they are getting on with something (self- monitor) and make corrections
- Think through different options and decide on the best one
- Make careful decisions
- Avoid doing things that might be fun but wouldn't be helpful to others or you in the long term

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If you are good at Impulse Control you will be able to:

- Plan ahead.
- Stop and think things through rather than reacting in the moment to things you see and hear.
- Make 'deliberate' decisions by thinking through what will be good and not so good about doing or saying a particular thing.
- Check work carefully as you go along so you don't make little mistakes.
- Go through work carefully when finished to check it's as good as it can be.

Some people aren't so good at Deliberate Thinking, but they are good at being quick and impulsive.

We call them 'Impulsive Lemurs'.



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Impulsive Lemurs are great at:

- Reacting quickly
- Making quick decisions
- Protecting themselves and others in an emergency



Is 'Deliberate Owl' thinking always the best thinking?

No! Owl and Lemur thinking are both useful – just in different situations.

Sometimes it is good to react impulsively in the moment. There are lots of examples of times when impulsive thinking is best:

Lemur Impulsive Thinking is good to use when:

- Reacting to catch a ball in a sports game
- Jumping to action in an emergency
- Shouting 'snap!' in a card game
- Answering a question in a quick-fire quiz



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Deliberate Owl Thinking would be great to use when:

- Someone has said something horrid about you on a group messaging app: Deliberate Owls take time to decide the best way to react – they don't reply straight away.
- Someone has asked you to do something which you know isn't quite right but you want to be popular with them: Deliberate Owls take time to talk things through with someone they trust to decide the best way to handle it.
- You are deciding what options to study for your GCSEs or goals you want to work towards.



Impulsivity



Lemurs are great at:

- Reacting in an emergency
- Making quick decisions
- Trusting their 'gut' and reacting emotionally
- Answering quick fire questions in a quiz
- Getting something done quickly

Owls are great at:

- Thinking through whether something is a good idea – looking at all the pros and cons in detail
- Planning a project
- Problem-solving and trying out different ideas
- Thinking about the different ideas and the views of different people

How good is your Impulse Control?

It's really important to know your own Impulse Control for different tasks and situations. It means you can plan to be deliberate when you need to (we call this 'Prep4Best').



If you leave it until you are actually in a situation, it will be much more difficult to manage an impulse. If you have thought about it ahead of time and planned how you would like to react (Prepped4Best), it will be much easier to respond in the way you want to – in a way that will be good for you and good for everyone around you.

Think about your own Impulse Control:

- When do you stop and manage the impulse to say and do something?
- When do you deliberate and take your time to make decisions?
- Are these helpful or unhelpful decisions for you or others in your life?



How **adults** can help you with Impulse Control Skills:



How adults can help you

- **Help you notice times when you DO stop and think** – what helps you to do this? The more you do this, the easier it will get to repeat it (we know that just noticing something more will create more neural firing and strengthen the neural circuits).
- It will help you if someone talks through times when you find it easier and times when it is harder.

What's different when this is easier? What's different when it's harder? Are there any physical, sensory or emotional needs not being met which makes it harder? Are you hungry? Tired? Rushing? With people you want to feel important amongst? With people where you need to feel you are part of the group? (The blue and green Needs Cards can help explore this).

- In study and learning, it will help if an adult shows you the common mistakes before you start. This will make it more likely you will notice early before you make them.
- The adult should highlight common mistakes and show them to you visually (don't let them just talk them through as that may be harder for you to process and remember).

Helping **yourself** with Impulse Control Skills:



What you can do to help yourself

- **Prep4Best:** take a minute before you go somewhere or start something - take some breaths so you don't rush into a task. Get into a habit of this so it becomes your 'neural habit'.
- Whilst you are taking some breaths, think through how you would like the thing you are about to do turn out. Do you need anything to make sure it goes well?
- **Do a 'premortem' – what might go wrong?** How could you prevent that from happening? Is there anything that could help?



- When doing a piece of work or a task, chunk it into smaller parts and do 'stop and check' after each part.
- Always stop and check after 10 minutes – get into a habit of this.