

# ROLLING WITH ADHD: A STUDY RESOURCE FOR TEENS



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# ADHD BASICS

ADHD, or “Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder,” is a condition that looks different between teenagers.

While you might share some symptoms or behaviours with other teens that have ADHD, you won't be exactly the same.

And there are millions of other qualities about you that make you unique, beyond ADHD symptoms. ADHD is a part of you, it is not all of you.

regulation

## ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

sometimes

THE NAME (ADHD) CAUSES A LOT OF CONFUSION BECAUSE TEENS WITH ADHD CAN PAY ATTENTION (IT IS *NOT* A DEFICIT OR LACK OF ATTENTION SPAN.)

TEENS WITH ADHD STRUGGLE TO “*REGULATE*” (CONTROL) THEIR ATTENTION SPAN. AND NOT ALL TEENS WITH ADHD ARE HYPERACTIVE.

### There are 2 main types of ADHD:

#### ADHD - Inattentive Presentation (sometimes known as “ADD”):

Teens with this type of ADHD mostly have trouble controlling or “regulating” their attention. They are not especially restless or active.

#### ADHD - Combined Presentation:

Teens with this type of ADHD struggle with controlling their attention, plus they are restless or very active and impulsive.

# ATTENTION!

ALL TEENS WITH ADHD HAVE TROUBLE  
“REGULATING” (CONTROLLING) THEIR ATTENTION.

ADHD INATTENTIVE (ADD)

▼  
attention problems

ADHD COMBINED

▼  
attention problems +  
restless + impulsive

WHEN YOU HAVE ADHD, HOW WELL YOU PAY  
ATTENTION DEPENDS ON THE SITUATION:

When things are new, exciting,  
interesting to you, fast paced, or when  
there is a deadline approaching, it can  
be easy to pay attention.

What types of things are  
**easy** for you to focus on?

- TV & videos
- Phone
- Gaming
- Sports (e.g., hockey)
- Music (e.g., guitar)
- Arts/crafts (e.g., painting, drawing)

Add your own:

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When things are boring, repetitive,  
slow, when the deadline is far away  
or there is no deadline, it can be  
hard to pay attention.

What types of things are  
**hard** for you to focus on?

- Books
- Lectures, presentations,  
school assemblies
- Online school
- Movies
- Sports (e.g., golf, baseball)
- Meals with family

Add your own:

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# IMPULSIVITY & HYPERACTIVITY/RESTLESSNESS

SOME TEENS WITH ADHD ARE ALSO IMPULSIVE, ACTIVE, AND RESTLESS. THIS MEANS YOU HAVE ADHD – COMBINED PRESENTATION.



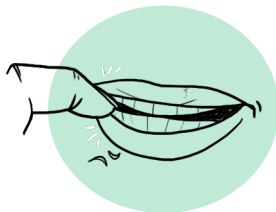
Being **impulsive** means that you think, feel, and react quickly, without thinking about what might happen.

“He’s mean”

“She did that on purpose”

You might be the “class clown,” have trouble keeping secrets, or have been told you have anger issues.

“I’m not supposed to tell you this but...”



Being **hyper or restless** means that you move a lot or feel that you need to move when you are sitting.

You might play a lot of sports. If you can’t move (e.g., sitting in class), you might be very talkative or daydream a lot.

You may move your feet, bite your nails, twirl your hair, doodle, or snack often.



# EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

Most teens with ADHD have trouble with something called “executive functions.”

These are brain functions that help you get things done, like school work.

Executive functions “live” in the front part of your brain.



EXECUTIVE FUNCTION	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE OF EF CHALLENGE
Response inhibition	Thinking before you do something: Should I say that? Should I do that?	Shouting out a funny comment in class.
Emotional Control	Coping with strong feelings.	Leaving class angrily when the teacher doesn't pick you when your hand's been up.
Sustained Attention	Paying attention even when there are things happening around you.	Reading the same sentence over and over in a noisy class.
Task Initiation	Starting tasks or assignments on your own, before the deadline is in front of you.	Your mother staying up to help you study the night before your science test.
Flexibility	Being able to change ideas and plans when new information comes up.	Getting mad when someone in your group wants to do the presentation a different way than you'd planned.

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# EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS

...CONTINUED

EXECUTIVE FUNCTION	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE OF EF CHALLENGE
<b>Persistence</b>	Pushing through hassles and frustration so you can reach your goal.	Giving up when trying to learn a new concept in math.
<b>Planning</b>	Making a plan to reach your goal: What do I need to do and when will I do it?	Realizing there is no way you will get your project done by the due date.
<b>Organization</b>	Keeping track of your ideas and belongings: How do I explain this so it makes sense? How do I keep track of the stuff I need?	Your dad reads your essay and is confused. You don't have your assignment in your bag to hand in (and it's done!)
<b>Time Management</b>	Being aware of time: How much time do I need? How much time do I have?	Going to the mall during lunch and realizing you'll be late for class.
<b>Working Memory</b>	Holding a couple of pieces of information in your head at the same time.	Struggling to listen and take notes at the same time.
<b>Metacognition</b>	Noticing how you're doing in the moment.	Joking around and your friends are annoyed with you. You don't know why.

# SLEEP

Did you know that **people with ADHD tend to be “night owls”**? You may have trouble falling asleep and be wide awake in the evenings and then tired in the mornings.

Getting enough sleep is really important for your brain because **sleep is the building block for attention and executive functions.**

## HERE ARE SOME TIPS:

**1** Aim for 8 to 10 hours of sleep per night. This is just a guide - everyone is a bit different.

**2** If you take medicine for ADHD, take it as early in the morning as you can.

**3** Try not to nap, even if you are tired. Napping will make it hard to fall asleep at night. If you really need to nap, set an alarm and keep your nap under 20 minutes.

**4** If it's too quiet in your room, you may need to put on a fan, a white noise machine, or soft music.

**5** Have a regular bedtime. Be realistic about this goal (not too early) and try and stick to it. There's nothing worse than going to bed too early and tossing and turning.

**6** Best sleeping conditions: A cold, dark room.

**7** Set an alarm to remind you to start winding down each night at the same time.



### Fun Fact:

Teenagers' circadian rhythm (“body clock”) shifts so they are naturally more alert later in the evenings and more sleepy in the mornings.

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# SLEEP ...CONTINUED



## 4 hours before bed:

- Try to set a regular exercise routine at this time. This will help you sleep.
- Avoid caffeine (e.g., chocolate, coffee, tea, energy drinks, and soft drinks). Even decaffeinated coffee has some caffeine. Herbal teas (chamomille, peppermint) do not have caffeine and may help you fall asleep.



## 2 hours before bed:

- Have a snack. Eat something light, not heavy. Grab a fruit or vegetable rather than a piece of pizza. Heavy and spicy foods keep you awake.
- Take a hot bath or shower in the evening. This may help you sleep.



## 1 hour before bed:

- Get ready for bed (e.g., put on pyjamas, brush teeth, wash face, etc).
- Get off all screens (e.g., TV, cell phone, computer, gaming console). The light from screens stops sleep hormones from being released in your body. Use a setting on your phone that turns it, or at least the blue light, off automatically an hour before bedtime.
- Put electronics outside your bedroom
- There are stories (“guided meditations”) and relaxation apps that might help you fall asleep, but this will mean having your phone near you. If you can do this without getting on your phone, try it.
- Some teens say that exercise right before bedtime helps them fall asleep faster.

## Still can't sleep?

- Put your phone down if you still have it out.
- If you go to bed and can't sleep, try for 20 minutes, then get up for 20 minutes and read or listen to music. Then try to sleep again for another 20 minutes.
- Don't stress out! Even 20 minutes with your eyes closed counts as light sleep.
- If you try these steps and it takes you over an hour to fall asleep, talk with your doctor about using melatonin to help you fall asleep.

# NUTRITION

Many teens with ADHD are drawn to quick, easy snacks.

The problem is that these foods are often processed, meaning they have unhealthy and unnatural ingredients.

When you don't eat regular, healthy food, it may be harder to control your attention and emotions. You may have more mood swings.

## HERE ARE SOME TIPS:

**1** Try to eat whole foods. This means that the food looks very close to what it would look like in nature (e.g., fruits, vegetables.) Food should only have a few ingredients.

For example, an apple has 1 ingredient. An apple turnover might have over 20 ingredients.

**2** Limit junk food — foods that are high in sugar, salt, and caffeine (e.g., cookies, chocolate, candy, chips, fries.)

If you love chips, try eating frozen fruit in a bowl to make snacking healthier and easier.

**3** Drink water. Set a cue, like every time you pass the kitchen, get a glass of water.

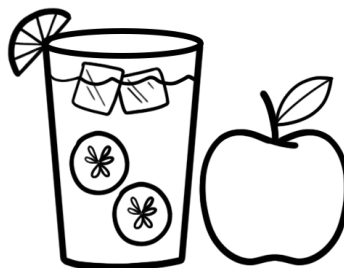
You can also make water less boring by adding fruit, ice cubes, or decaffeinated tea. Caffeine dehydrates you.

**4** If you read an ingredient list, you should recognize the items as food. (e.g., What is tert-Butylhydroquinone?)

**5** Don't add sugar to food and drinks (e.g., most cereals are packed with sugar.)

**Fun Fact:**

Eating a healthy breakfast improves your memory, energy levels, and ability to focus during the day.



WANT MORE IDEAS? CHECK OUT THE [CANADA FOOD GUIDE!](#)

# EXERCISE

Exercise is good for many reasons, but did you know that it boosts the chemicals in your brain that help you focus and feel happy? It also reduces stress. Research shows that regular exercise is really important when you have ADHD.

## HERE ARE SOME TIPS:

- 1** Exercise before you start homework. Keep it simple: A quick walk or bike ride, shoot some hoops, do a 7-minute workout.
- 2** Join a sports team. If team sports aren't your thing, start doing an individual exercise like swimming, running, or going to the gym.
- 3** Walk or bike to and from school if you can. If you take the bus or get a ride, ask to be let off 15 minutes from school so you can walk.
- 4** Download an exercise app, like High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) workouts that you can do at home.
- 5** To boost your motivation to exercise, have a goal. Set a target number of exercise minutes per week, enter a walk, run, or bike challenge for a fundraiser, etc.

### Fun Fact:

If you want to start a new habit, keep track of it. Get a wall calendar and make a check mark for every time you exercise, for example. You can also use this strategy to decrease a behaviour. For example, mark an "S" each time you drink soda after 6pm.



## WANT MORE IDEAS?

CHECK OUT [CANADIAN SOCIETY FOR EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY](#) & [LIVE5210.CA](#)

ORGANIZING STUFF

# BINDER

Having a good binder system can make your life easier.

## HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

### 1 HOW MANY BINDERS DO I NEED?

Are your classes spread out over 1 day or 2 days?

1 Large Binder		2 Smaller Binders	
✓ All things in one place	✗ Heavy	✓ Lighter	✗ Don't have all stuff with me if needed
	✗ Hard to fit in school bag	✓ Easy to fit in bag	✗ Bring wrong binder

### 2 WHAT TYPE OF BINDER WORKS BEST FOR ME?

- 3 ring binder (traditional)
- Zipper to open
- Accordion binder
- Pocket binder



### 3 MATERIALS I NEED:

- Hole punch (small portable one)
- Plastic dividers (with pockets)
- Lined paper and/or graph paper; notebooks with hole punches
- Clear plastic sheet protectors/sleeves
- Tabs (small sticky papers that are put directly on papers in the binder)

### 4 PUT YOUR BINDER(S) TOGETHER. SOME IDEAS:

- Colour code: Pick a colour of divider for each subject.
- Put the dividers in the binder in the order of your classes (English first, math second, etc.)
- Put your schedule on the front face of your binder or in a plastic sheet protector at the front of your binder.
- If you have the 3-ring binder, put your pencil case at the front.
- Put each class outline in a plastic sheet protector/sleeve at the front of each subject area.
- You may need to divide work within a subject into subcategories (notes, homework, assignments, tests). Use tabs for this.

# COMPUTER FILES

Teens with ADHD end up spending a lot of time searching for documents they need.

Often, this happens at the “last minute,” when a deadline is right in front of you.

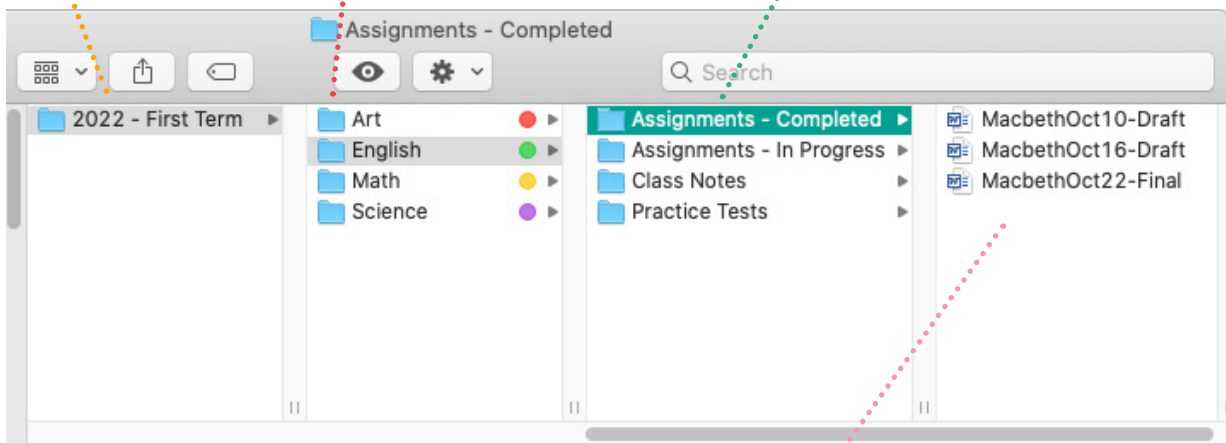
Taking time to organize your computer files at the beginning of each term will save you time and energy when you need it most.

## FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

**1** Make a folder for the current term or semester (year, then term).

**2** Make sub-folders for each of your classes this term. Colour code the folders so they match your binder colour-coding system (e.g., science is purple, math is yellow, etc.)

**3** Add subfolders for each class: class notes, completed assignments, in-progress assignments, practice tests, etc.



## SAVING FILES:

- Use a consistent method to save your files so they are easy to find. One example is to use a key word that identifies the assignment and the date or stage you are working on it: MacbethOctober10 or MacbethFinalCopy.
- When you are working on a file, rename the file with the date you last worked on it. This helps prevent you from losing work.
- Set up a system to back up your files in case your computer glitches. (e.g., external hard drive, storage area network like iCloud).

# SCHOOL BAG

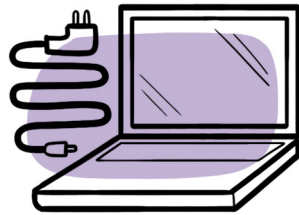
**PACK YOUR SCHOOL BAG AT NIGHT,  
BEFORE YOU GO TO BED.**

▶ Use this image to help you:

○ Homework



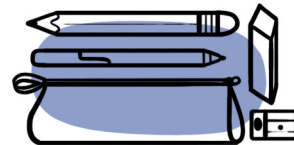
○ Technology



○ Binders/Books



○ Writing tools



○ Food/Drinks



○ Wallet/Money



○ Fidgets



○ Clothing



○ Misc. papers



## Fun Fact:

A backpack should weigh around 10% of your body weight. This means if you weigh 150 pounds, your bag should weigh 15 pounds or less.

Once a week, clean out your school bag. Write this on your wall calendar and set a reminder on your phone.

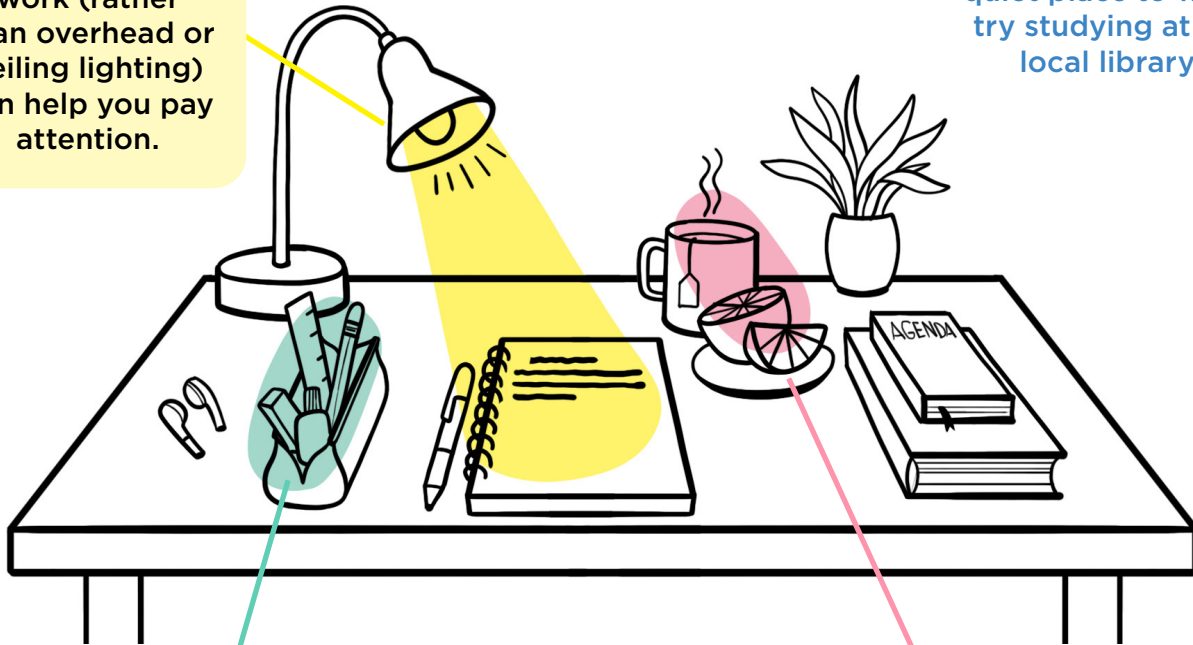
Remove papers you don't need, wrappers, mouldy lunch leftovers, lunch containers, gym clothes, extra school supplies (20 erasers), etc.

# STUDY SPACE

Good lighting that shines directly on your work (rather than overhead or ceiling lighting) can help you pay attention.

Try to find a quiet, distraction-reduced place to do your school work. If you don't have this option, wear ear plugs or listen to instrumental music (i.e., music without lyrics.)

If you don't have a quiet place to work, try studying at the local library.



Put your school supplies with the stuff you need in 1 place (small open box or pencil case).

- Pencils
- Pens
- Erasers
- Blank paper
- White-out
- Calculator
- Ruler
- Fidget tools (e.g., elastic band, squeeze ball, silly putty, paper clips, chewing gum)

Get your snacks ready before you start working. This stops you from getting up and down for food and drinks, which can lead to distractions.

## Fun Fact:

When studying for tests, follow the Goldstein principle. Study in a setting that is similar to where you will be taking the test. You will remember more of the information you learned. Study during free periods at school. At home, study at a desk or table rather than on your bed.

# “SEE” TIME: THE WALL CALENDAR

Wall calendars can be very useful for teens with ADHD.

You know the saying “out of sight, out of mind”? When due dates are in a planner or phone, you don’t see them and might forget about them.

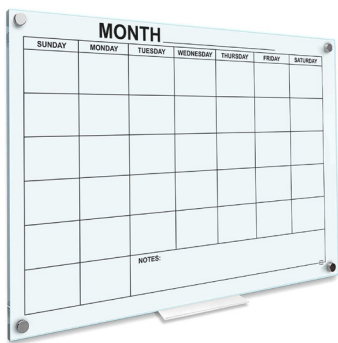
Using a large wall calendar can help you stay on track of your work and fun stuff. You can order wall calendars online or go to an office supply store. You can also make one yourself.

We suggest using calendars where you can see a whole month at once.

## MATERIALS:

If you have a **plasticized wall calendar**, you will need:

- Dry erase markers in different colours
- An eraser or cloth
- Cleaning spray



If you have a **paper wall calendar** you will need:

- Markers in different colours



**ALTERNATIVE:**  
Some teens prefer using coloured sticky notes. These can be moved around easily if plans change.

### Fun Fact:

Many teens with ADHD have “time blindness”: They are very much “in the moment” and don’t think ahead. Bringing the future into the present time with a wall calendar can help.

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# “SEE” TIME: THE WALL CALENDAR

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## FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

**1** Put the wall calendar close to where you do your school work.

**2** Choose a different colour for each subject.

**3** Choose a colour for fun stuff (e.g., activities with friends.)

**April**

Legend:

- Art (Red)
- English (Green)
- Fun! (Yellow)
- Math (Orange)
- Science (Purple)
- Extracurricular (Blue)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26	27	28	29	30	31 <i>Drama rehearsal 4:15</i>	1
2 <i>family trip to the city</i>	3	4	5 <i>Art project due</i>	6	7	8 <i>Movie night @ Julian's house!!</i>
9	10 <i>English essay due</i>	11	12 <i>Dance class 7:30 pm</i>	13	14	15
16	17 <i>Volleyball practice 6:30</i>	18	19	20 <i>Math assignment due</i>	21	22 <i>Dentist appointment 2:30 pm</i>
23 <i>Football game with auntie!</i>	24	25 <i>* Science * presentation due</i>	26 <i>Dance class 7:30 pm</i>	27	28 <i>Dinner with Shannon!</i>	29
30	1	2	3	4	5	6

May

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
30	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3

**4** At the beginning of the month, write down all due dates and event dates.

**5** Write down any chores or other responsibilities that you have.

**6** Look at the calendar once a day. Pair the timing of this with something you do at the same time most days, like right after supper.

# THE PLANNER

As a teen with ADHD, the single most important thing you can do for yourself is to have AND USE a planner.

So many valuable brain cells are used trying to remember due dates for assignments and tests!

Save your brain power for sleeping, being with friends, and learning.

## HERE ARE 3 TIPS FOR HAVING A PLANNER: HAVE ONE, USE IT, CHECK IT

# 1

### HAVE ONE!

Use a planner. It can be a paper planner or an electronic planner. For paper planners, go to an office supply store and look at different models to find one you like. If you use an electronic planner, try a few different types (e.g., Google, Microsoft).

#### PROS/CONS:

Electronic planners have so many distractions once you pull out your device.

Paper planners have no “back up” if you lose it.

Try each type to see what works best for you.

# 2

### USE IT!

Have your planner with you during the school day.

**For due dates:** When your teacher announces a due date, take out your planner and write down the information.

**For studying/working:** Work back from your due dates to plan time to get the work done.

*See the next section on Planning Time to prepare for tests and assignments.*

# 3

### CHECK IT!

This is an important step that often gets missed. Get into the habit of looking at your planner each night after supper (after you look at your wall calendar). This gives you time to get work done if you forgot about a test or assignment.

Having, using, and checking a planner is an essential part of managing ADHD.

If you are overwhelmed with school work, using a planner can help you feel grounded and less anxious.

### Fun Fact:

A lot of teens with ADHD don't like the idea of using a planner, but find it useful when they do.



# PLANNING: START TO FINISH

You will need to have a regular time to plan your week.

Pick a day and time, like Sunday after supper. Set an alarm to remind you if that helps.

Set this as your time to look at your planner, check due dates and set activities for the upcoming week, add any new due dates, and plan when you are going to study or work on assignments.

## 5 STEPS:

### 1 END GOAL

Set and record “end goals” in your planner.

### 2 BREAK IT DOWN

Break the “end goal” down into smaller steps.

### 3 TIME ESTIMATION

Estimate time for each chunk.

### 4 PLAN TIME

Work back from the due date to plan times to work.

### 5 MATERIALS

Make a list of materials you will need to round up before you start.

### Fun Fact:

Your brain learns new information better when you spread the material out over time. This is called “distributed practice.” Cramming the night before something is due makes it harder to learn new information.

LET'S EXPLORE EACH STEP FUTHER...

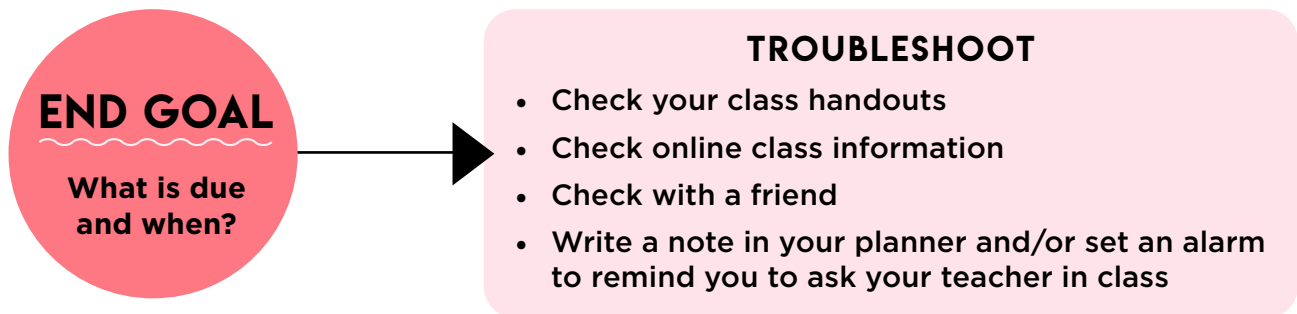
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# PLANNING: START TO FINISH

...CONTINUED

## STEP 1: END GOAL

Set and record “end goals” in your planner. An “end goal” is the final step for a test or assignment: *What is due and when?*



## STEP 2: BREAK IT DOWN

Break the “end goal” down into smaller steps.  
List the steps in the order you will do them.

You will need complete instructions for this step. See “*Troubleshoot*” from Step 1.

### SOCIALS TEST

1. Look at study questions
2. Look at practice test
3. Read chapter from textbook
4. Make flash cards
5. Memorize flash cards
6. Study with a partner

### ENGLISH PAPER

1. Review topics and pick one
2. Do research
3. Brainstorm ideas
4. Organize ideas into categories/paragraphs
5. Write the introduction
6. Write each paragraph
7. Write the conclusion
8. Do the references
9. Proofread the paper

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# PLANNING: START TO FINISH

...CONTINUED

## STEP 3: TIME ESTIMATION

Estimate time for each step. This can be tricky because teens with ADHD tend to underestimate how much time things take.

In other words, *you think things will take less time than they do.*

One teen who struggles with time estimation told us that this step is, hands down, the MOST IMPORTANT one for them.

SOCIALS TEST: CHUNKS	TIME ESTIMATE
Look at practice test	30 min
Read chapter 1	30 min
Do study questions	1 hour
Make flash cards	30 min
Memorize flash cards	2 hours
Study with a partner	1 hour
<b>Total:</b>	<b>5.5 hrs</b>

ENGLISH PAPER: CHUNKS	TIME ESTIMATE
Review topics & pick one	30 min
Do research & take notes	2 hours
Brainstorm content	30 min
Organize content into categories/paragraphs	30 min
Write the introduction	30 min
Write 3 paragraphs	2 hours
Write the conclusion	30 min
Do the references	30 min
Proofread the paper	1 hour
<b>Total:</b>	<b>8 hrs</b>

### TIP: DOUBLE YOUR ESTIMATE!

If you think a chapter takes 30 minutes to read, plan for 1 hour.  
If you think researching your topic will take 1 hour, plan for 2 hours.

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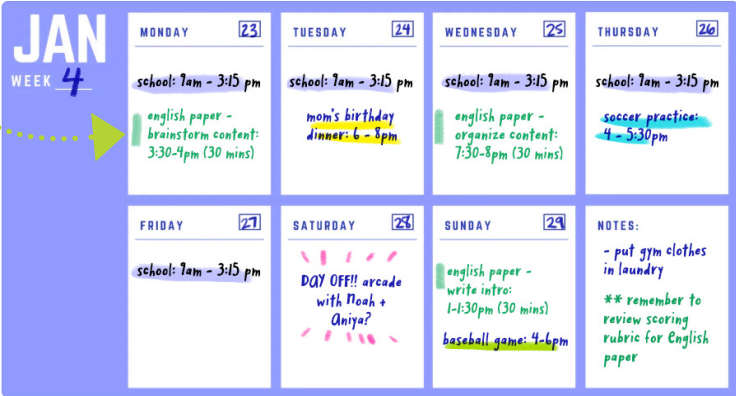
# PLANNING: START TO FINISH ...CONTINUED

## STEP 4: PLAN TIME

Work back from the due date to plan times to work.  
Put tasks (with time estimation) into your planner.

**TIP: GIVE YOURSELF A "BUFFER" DAY**

Plan to be ready a full day before the due date for unexpected things like getting sick, getting called in to work, underestimating how much time you needed, computer glitches, etc.



## STEP 5: MATERIALS

Make a list of materials you will need to round up before you start.  
Think about these categories:

- Instructions
- Information (textbook, notes, scoring rubric)
- Writing tools (pens, highlighters, paper)
- Technology (computer)
- Energy tools (food, drinks, fidgets)

**SOCIALS TEST: MATERIALS**

- Practice test
- Textbook
- Index cards
- Different coloured pens
- Yellow highlighter
- Snacks/drink
- Fidget tool
- Text your study partner

**ENGLISH PAPER: MATERIALS**

- Instructions (with topics)
- Scoring rubric
- Notes (from research)
- Computer
- Website blocker on
- Graphic organizer
- Blank paper and pen
- Snacks/drink
- Fidget tool

# STAYING FOCUSED

**BEFORE YOU WORK OR STUDY:  
THINK ABOUT YOUR MIND/BODY AND  
YOUR SURROUNDINGS.**

## **MIND/BODY: TAKE CARE OF YOUR BASIC NEEDS.**

- Hungry or thirsty? Get something to eat or drink.
- Tired? Take a 7-minute “nap” (set a timer); change your plan and work on something easier (e.g., make flashcards rather than memorize new material); do sit-ups or push-ups.
- Restless? Go for a quick 15-minute walk.
- Too hot? Open a window or change into lighter clothes. Too cold? Put on a sweater or socks.
- Racing thoughts? Close your eyes for 1 min and notice your thoughts without trying to change them.

## **SURROUNDINGS: BLOCK DISTRACTIONS OR MOVE AWAY FROM THEM.**

- Distracting Sights: Move your seat so you are facing away; put your hoodie up or wear a baseball cap; move to another place.
- Distracting Sounds: Put on earplugs, listen to music (without lyrics), turn a fan or white noise machine on, close the door, or move to a quieter place (e.g., library).

## **SCREENS**

Screens are the biggest distraction for most teens: your phone, computer, TV, gaming console.

Before you work, put devices away or block access to websites and programs that waste time (*See [Screens page](#)*).

## **Fun Fact:**

**Multitasking doesn't work.**  
Research shows that you get work done faster and it is higher quality when you do 1 thing at a time. When you switch back and forth between 2 tasks, it takes longer and the quality of your work is worse on both.  
Try to stick with 1 task until it's finished.

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# STAYING FOCUSED

...CONTINUED

## DURING YOUR WORK/STUDYING

### MIND/BODY

- Eat healthy, crunchy snacks (e.g., carrots, celery, popcorn). Crunchy food is a fidget and keeps you alert.
- Stay hydrated (drink water).
- Use a fidget tool (e.g., elastic band, stress ball, silly putty, paper clips, chewing gum).
- Take 10-minute movement breaks (e.g., walk around) as needed. Some teens with ADHD get more work done if they take frequent breaks (every 30 minutes). Other teens with ADHD get into a “hyperfocus” state and find taking breaks distracting. Do what works best for you.
- Wear ear plugs or listen to instrumental music (i.e., music without lyrics).
- Try to work when your ADHD medication is still active. If you don’t take medication for ADHD or it is wearing off, have something with caffeine in it (e.g., chocolate, tea, coffee). You may need to speak with your doctor about long-acting medications for ADHD or short-acting medication that you can take at the end of the day.
- Have a piece of paper or notebook and pen beside you when you work. If you have a thought (“I forgot to tell Sara about...”), write down a few key words. When you take a break, look at the key words and decide if you need to deal with it NOW (call a friend, take your gym strip out of your school bag) or can it wait until LATER?

### ACTIVE LEARNING

Use active study skills:

- don’t just read — take notes
- draw diagrams
- make flash cards
- read aloud
- summarize information in your own words
- explain what you’re studying to a family member or classmate

Some teens with ADHD find they learn better using paper materials (books, paper handouts) rather than working off electronic materials.

Paper materials tap into more senses (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling), which helps you learn.



# SCREENS

Screens (video games, social media, YouTube) are a big part of your life.

Screens are not all good or all bad.

The trick is to find a balance.

**BELOW ARE SOME THINGS YOU MIGHT LIKE OR DISLIKE ABOUT SCREENS. IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD DELETE OR ADD?**

- ✓ Fun
- ✓ Way to stay in touch with friends
- ✓ Helps me relax, unwind
- ✓ Keeps my mind off my worries

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- ✗ Stay up too late and tired the next day
- ✗ Makes me avoid doing school work
- ✗ I get upset by things people say
- ✗ My parents get mad at me for being on them too much

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## THINGS YOU CAN TRY:

If you want to see how much time you actually spend on screens, monitor it.

Phones have tracking programs that tell you how long you've been on your phone with a breakdown of the amount of time you spend on specific apps or sites.

### Fun Fact:

Teens spend an average of 7.5 hours a day using screens for entertainment. That's 114 days a year!

If you want to see what it's like to work without screens around, try one of these ideas:

- Put your electronics in another room.
- Turn off or unplug your electronics.
- Put your phone on Airplane mode or "Do Not Disturb".
- Turn off notifications to stop your phone from buzzing and lighting up.
- Use internet-blocking apps (e.g., block YouTube, web browser).
- Delete time-wasting apps, games, etc. from your home screen or even your device.

# PROCRASTINATION

Late nights? Asking for extensions?  
Everyone procrastinates some of the time.  
Teens with ADHD procrastinate more often than other people.

## WHAT HELPS?

1

**SETTING  
REALISTIC GOALS  
FOR YOURSELF**

2

**HAVING  
CONSEQUENCES**  
(DUE DATES, ACCOUNTABILITY  
PARTNER, REWARDS)

3

**MAKING TASKS  
INTERESTING  
AND FUN**

## HERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN TRY:

### 1. SETTING REALISTIC GOALS

- Break down tasks into smaller steps and make a realistic plan (see *Planning* section).

### 2. HAVING CONSEQUENCES

- Tell someone about your goal.
- Turn up the pressure: Work with a partner and set regular meetings to go over work you've done. If you didn't get the work done, use the time to do the work with your partner.
- Take a mental picture. Visualize what it will look like and feel like to accomplish your goal.
- Use rewards to motivate yourself: Make plans to do fun things, but only do them if you get your work done for that day.

Ideas of fun plans:

- meet up with friends
- get a treat at the corner store
- download a movie or song
- watch YouTube for 30 minutes
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

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# PROCRASTINATION

...CONTINUED

## 3. MAKING TASKS INTERESTING AND FUN

### Be “on the ball”:

If you have a choice of topics for a class assignment, pick yours fast so you get your top choice.

If there is no option that interests you, ask your teacher if you can choose a topic that is not on the list.

### Be creative:

Ask your teacher if you can change up the format of the assignment.

Present your information via:

- slideshow (e.g., PowerPoint)
- newspaper article/eyewitness report
- board game
- a rap song
- game show format
- storyboard
- time capsule or timeline
- blog post
- flip book or graphic novel
- digital artwork
- website

### Fun Fact:

You are 4 times more likely to complete a goal after you tell someone about it.

# OVERWHELMED?

Last but not least, are you feeling overwhelmed about school work?



*Spending a lot of time worrying is not productive.*

Ask yourself,  
“Is what I’m doing or thinking about right now helpful?”

**HERE ARE SOME TIPS THAT COULD HELP:**

## RELAX YOUR BODY

- Close your eyes and take some slow, deep breaths. Search and try different methods:
  - 4-7-8 breathing
  - box breathing
  - physiological sigh
- Go for a walk or run.
- Take a shower or bath.
- Try meditating: Sit on the floor, straighten your back, close your eyes, and notice your thoughts, feelings, and body sensations without judging yourself. You might try a guided meditation (on an app).

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# OVERWHELMED?

...CONTINUED

## HAVE A BRIEF, FUN DISTRACTION

- Call, text, or hang out with a friend
- Play with your pet
- Watch something funny on the computer, TV, or your phone
- Listen to music
- Take photos
- Get outside (walk, shoot a basketball, play tennis against a brick wall, go biking)
- Lie on your bed or a couch
- Play video games
- Go on social media

**Keep fun distractions brief.** Set a time limit (and an alarm or timer). Your goal is to distract yourself for a short time to recharge your batteries.

If you watch TV or are on your phone for longer than you'd planned, after a certain amount of time you might ask yourself, **“Is this making my worries about school work better or worse?”**

## START SMALL

Sit down (with your planner or wall calendar) and think about how and when you are going to get your work done.

**Ask yourself:** **What can I do right now that will move me toward my goal?**  
Sit at my work area? Open my books?  
Look at the assignment instructions?  
Work for 10 minutes only?

### Fun Fact:

Getting started, no matter how small, will reduce your anxiety!

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Do you have questions or feedback about this resource?

We would love to hear from you!

Please email [info@rollingwithadhd.ca](mailto:info@rollingwithadhd.ca)

Additional *Rolling with ADHD* resources can be found at:

<https://healthymindslearning.ca/rollingwith-adhd/>



Provincial Health  
Services Authority



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