

Procrastination Tips For ADD

TAKEN FROM **ADDITUDE**



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Procrastinator's Guide To Getting Things Done

Do you put off starting important projects until it becomes painful? Whether you're terrified of letting someone down or you just can't get your thoughts in order, here are straightforward strategies to help ADHD adults start - and finish - even the toughest projects.



Difficulties Getting Started

You have a big project coming up. But it seems overwhelming, and like many ADHDers, you've been putting off getting started for days, or even months. Knowing that others see failure to complete projects on time as a sign of disrespect, incompetence, or even laziness fuels your anxiety, fear of failure, imperfection, and indecisiveness, making it even harder to break through the paralysis. There's hope! Cognitive behavior techniques can help even the chronic procrastinator.

Know That You Can't Do Everything Perfectly

Stop the negative self-talk! Think of positive, realistic things you can say to yourself to stay motivated. Write down "positive affirmations" and keep them nearby. For example: "I'm going to feel great when I hand this in to my boss on time." Or, simply, "I can do this!" Instead of saying "This will take forever," say "I might not finish this today, but I can do the first two steps within the next 30 minutes." What we silently say to ourselves about doing the task at hand has a strong impact on how (or whether) we do it.

Know that you can't do everything perfectly. Sometimes focusing on being productive at work means that you order take out for dinner or the laundry piles up. You're only human, so give yourself some slack.

Create The Right Environment

Create the workspace that's right for you. Some ADHDers get more done when listening to loud music. Others need clutter-free, distraction-free zones -- many ADHD college students go straight to the library, not their chaotic dorm room. If noise distracts you, noise-reducing headphones can be a lifesaver. If your racing thoughts are distracting, putting them on paper can banish them from your mind. Lock your door. Put your phone on silent. Do what works for you.

Set yourself up for success. Before you sit down, go on a scavenger hunt and retrieve everything that needs to be within arm's reach, so you don't interrupt yourself to retrieve it later. Trust me. You'll love an excuse to stop what you're doing -- take that option away at the start.

Setting Up The Task

Before even starting the project, give yourself the task of collecting everything you'll need in one place -- papers, graphs, directions from the boss -- and place it in your inbox, on your desk, or on your chair. For *ADDitude* blogger Stacey Turis, this includes a cup of green tea and a square of dark chocolate. The setup doesn't take long, but it makes it much easier to jump into the task.



Break Big Projects Up

Break projects into smaller projects, and **assign a deadline** for completing each step. Most of the time, we're given a deadline for the date by which the entire project has to be completed. To keep yourself on track, mark the date by which you should complete one-quarter of the project, one-half, and so on. Those dates will alert you to problems while there's still time to play catch-up.

Because of that ever-present risk that we'll get distracted, ADDers tend to have trouble with long, multi-step tasks. The secret to completing large tasks is to break them into a series of small pieces that can be tackled one at a time. The smaller steps aren't as intimidating. If a project can't be completed over several days, keep up your momentum by focusing only on the next doable step. Write this step on a sticky note and post it within your line of sight.

Post Your Deadline

Post deadlines for each step of your project where you can see them. This will remind you to use your time wisely. When ADHD coach Sandy Maynard was struggling to finish her long-delayed thesis, she created a computer screensaver that read "February 26 or Bust."

Do the Fun Stuff First

To get started, many people with ADHD find that once their brain is both relaxed and active, they can transfer that positive involvement to begin a daunting project. So, light up your brain by going for a walk, listening to music or practicing breathing exercises or short meditations. You can also just start with the project's fun stuff. Set a timer for fifteen minutes if you are worried about getting lost in the fun zone.

Start Somewhere, Start Anywhere

After your project is broken into small pieces, you face the moment when you have to start. Set a timer for fifteen minutes and tell yourself that you can do anything for fifteen minutes. Even if your first completed work is a bit sloppy, hey, at least you're moving! Half the time, you'll get in a groove and be ready to move forward with the next steps.

Make It Public

Knowing that we need to answer to other people can be a tremendous motivator. Ask a friend to call you at a prearranged time to make sure you're sticking to your deadlines. It's okay to ask for help -- that's what friends are for, right? You can return the favor later on when she needs a boost.

Beware of Multitasking

You know what they say, "Out of sight, out of mind." Only have on your desk what you're currently working on and don't try to multitask. If you absolutely must work on two projects at a time, don't bounce back and forth haphazardly. Stop the first project at a point where you can easily pick up, and shift your focus completely to the second task.



Be Realistic

Be realistic about time needed to do something -- everything will take ridiculously longer than you think. Plan for that, so you don't go ballistic on everyone within karate-chopping distance over missing your own deadline.

Leave Time for Transitions

Give yourself a transition time between tasks -- especially for mentally challenging projects. Set a timer for 10 minutes and take a walk, do some yoga, or sip your favorite tea. Use this time to psych yourself up for the next task on your list.

Do a Brain Dump

For most ADDers, the only way to keep track of the things we're supposed to remember is to write them down in a planner. Just about every task should be jotted down as it's assigned. Otherwise, it will be displaced by new thoughts, facts, requests, or bits of gossip. Get a planner with lots of space to "dump" your ideas, as well as your appointments. And never leave home without it. Ever.

