

Stop Procrastinating! 5 Ways to Improve Productivity With ADD/ADHD

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If you have ADD/ADHD, you've probably noticed that you procrastinate more than others. Such behavior can cause problems for students*. When we fail to complete tasks on time, others see it as a sign of disrespect, incompetence, or laziness. Because procrastination is essentially a mind-set, cognitive-behavior techniques can help even chronic procrastinators break the habit. If you've been putting something off for days (or weeks), try the following ADD time-management tips.

1. Do Something Fun First

Many people with ADHD find it helpful to do something they love first as a way to get in the mood to do less enjoyable tasks. Any stimulating activity you enjoy will do the trick. Set a timer for 20 minutes to make sure you don't get so absorbed in the fun activity that you forget to do the necessary one.

2. Create the Right Work Environment

People who have ADHD often are most productive in unconventional surroundings. You may need earplugs to ensure silence, or you may find that you get more done when listening to loud music.

If you work best under pressure, but still turn in projects late or exhaust yourself by pulling all-nighters, set your own deadline for completing portions of the project. This way, you can still work under pressure to finish each portion "on time."

Do it: If you're taking ADHD medication, it's generally best to schedule difficult tasks for times when your symptoms are fully covered.

3. Don't Beat Yourself Up

What we silently say to ourselves about doing the task at hand has a strong impact on how (or whether) we do it. Avoid negative self-talk, and send yourself positive, realistic messages.

Instead of saying, "This will take forever, and it's so late already..." substitute "I might not be able to finish this today, but I can do the first two steps within the next 30 minutes."

The messages you send yourself when you complete a task can be powerful deterrents to future procrastination. They can also diminish the guilt that procrastinators often feel about having missed appointments in the past or having turned in work that doesn't measure up to their ability.

4. Just Do It

Just starting a task — even if it's begun poorly — makes it easier to follow through. Next time you find yourself avoiding something, take a "first sloppy step." If you need to write something, for example, start by typing a "brain dump." In one place, list anything you need to get out of your head so you can work, then a list of thoughts related to the paper you need to write. You're on your way!

5. Take One Step at a Time

Break large tasks into pieces. The smaller steps aren't as intimidating and facilitate getting started. If a project can't be completed piecemeal 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.

Put on your blinders and focus on this one step rather than on the task as a whole. When that's done, move on to the next step in the same manner. Before you know it, you'll be done.

Try it: If you need external pressure to stick to a task, enlist someone to work quietly next to you.