

Organization Strategies for ADHD | Psych Central

People with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder ([ADHD](#)) face extra challenges getting and staying organized. The symptoms of ADHD include restlessness, lack of concentration, inability to focus and impulsivity. Many adults with ADHD are gifted but the ADHD interferes with their ability to achieve goals.

Adults with ADHD might not have been given useful tips for managing their ADHD while at school. But there are many organizational tools available that can help people with ADHD to focus on and succeed in activities at work and at home.

Planning ahead, deciding on priorities and setting goals can all help to get where you want to be. Time management reduces the sense of chaos and complexity in your life. Getting support from friends, workmates and family can also be essential, as some things cannot be dealt with on your own.

A good place to start is goal setting. Take the time each day to set specific goals and determine what you want to achieve. Try to find the middle ground between aiming too high and not high enough, bearing in mind your abilities and enthusiasm. When choosing a goal, it's useful to think along these lines: is the goal challenging, valuable, specific, and measurable, and does it have a specific deadline?

Writing down the goal will make it official and will add to your sense of commitment to it. Decide where to begin, and make a detailed step-by-step plan of the major tasks needed to achieve the goal. Keep deadlines realistic to avoid disappointment.

When things get busy, [ADHD symptoms](#) can lead a person to lose perspective. On a daily level, to-do lists can help organize your schedule according to the importance of each activity. Use stars, arrows, numbers, or letters or devise your own system. Prioritize daily activities into urgent, important, and nonessential. Allow some margin for unpredictable interruptions and delays. Plan to maximize your sense of accomplishment while creating space for relaxation too.

Color-coding files, reminders and schedules can be particularly useful as many people with ADHD are visually oriented. Take advantage of this by making things memorable and attention-grabbing with color.

Poor time management can reduce your productivity. Underestimating the time it will take to complete tasks can throw off your schedule for the rest of the day. However, this is difficult for many people with ADHD, who have particular problems giving themselves enough time. If you are in the habit of pushing yourself too hard because of unrealistic expectations and standards, ask yourself the following questions: Do I have enough time to do the things I enjoy? Am I constantly rushing and often late? Do I often cancel enjoyable activities because I'm too busy? Do I feel there are not enough hours in the day? Do I get frustrated and impatient?

This will highlight your need to consider how you allocate time and whether it is working for you. If you are not happy with the amount of time you spend on any one area, think of ways to reallocate your time and achieve a new balance.

Notice how and where you work best, and let yourself work under whatever conditions are ideal for you. Make lists when you feel overwhelmed, as things will seem more organized on paper. Simply by writing the list, you will feel you have already begun to conquer it.

To keep track of your daily tasks, you can use Post-it notes, diaries, calendars, personal or electronic organizers and appointment books. Time is often lost due to disorganized filing systems, lack of an 'in-tray' system, or keeping unnecessary copies of paperwork. You need systems for filing and making appointments. Ensure that computer data is backed up regularly.

Keep a notepad in your car, by your bed, and in your jacket. You never know when a good idea will hit you, or when the inevitable cascade of 'off-topic' thoughts will arise. It's also OK to [multitask](#). People with ADHD often need to be doing several things at once in order to be productive.

Disorganization caused by family and children is an emotional issue. Relationships are potential minefields of pressure and [anxiety](#). With children, your daily routine changes, your [sleep](#) is disturbed, and new pressures arise. For a person with ADHD, the challenges can be enormous. Staying calm and collected all the time is an impossible goal. Small hassles can add up and pressure can build until you are ready to burst.

Ways to reduce the strain include adjusting your priorities, including standards of order and neatness. Don't take on unnecessary duties and responsibilities. If you're doing your best, don't feel guilty (easier said than done!) Accept any help that's offered. If you can afford it, consider paying someone to help with the cleaning, shopping or laundry, especially at busy times. Take advice from people whose opinion you trust, and get specific advice on problems.

Plan ahead. Get as much ready for the following day as possible, and give yourself extra time to leave the house. Anticipate and prepare for problems before they occur; you can't be expected to remember everything. Build up your resources: support network, emergency funds, and your own energy. Finally, don't put impossible pressure on yourself.

APA Reference

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