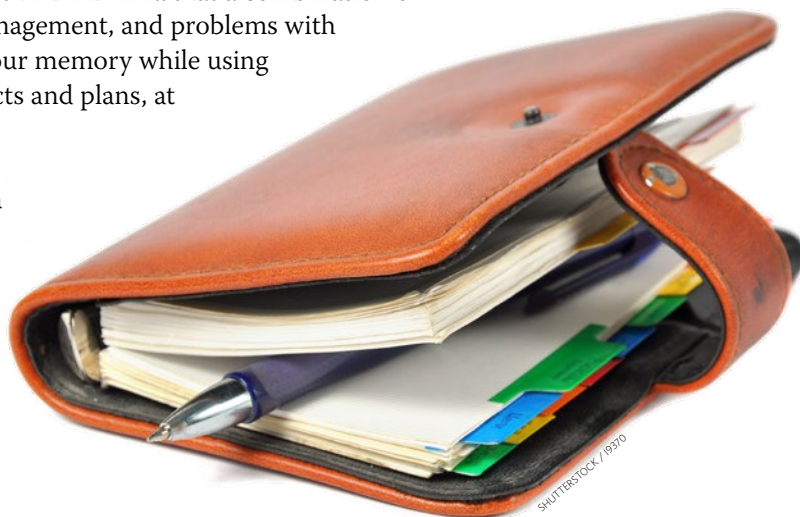


## Time Management and ADHD: Day Planners

**I**F YOU HAVE DIFFICULTY MANAGING YOUR TIME or following through on plans, you are not alone. Many people with ADHD find that a combination of weak organizational skills, poor time management, and problems with working memory (holding information in your memory while using it) add up to lost time and incomplete projects and plans, at both work and home.

A day planner can be an important tool, a place to keep short-term and long-term schedules. Using a day planner can help you:

- manage your time
- remember your responsibilities
- stay organized
- feel less of an impact of ADHD on your work and home lives



### Choose the right planner for you

All day planners include some kind of calendar, of course. But most also have space for to-do lists, as well as a section for frequently used phone numbers, email addresses, and other information. A planner may be paper or electronic:

- a paper-and-pencil model (examples include such brands as [Franklin Planner](#), [Day-Timer](#), [Planner Pad](#), or [Bullet Journal](#))
- an [app](#) on your tablet or smartphone
- [time management software](#) on a laptop or desktop computer

Each has its advantages, and you'll need to determine which works for you. If you're someone who likes having things visible at all times and want the flexibility to jot notes here and there, a paper planner is probably best. Take a look at the options in an office supply store or online. If you have a lot of appointments every half-hour or hour, choose one that can accommodate those by giving each day its own page. If you need a planner

more for lists, with few scheduled appointments, one that shows each week at a time rather than each day should be fine.

If you don't want to have to worry about another thing getting misplaced, a planner app on your smartphone might be your best choice. An app can remind you that you have something scheduled through pop-ups, email, or an audio reminder. It can also sync with calendars on your computers at home and work to make it less likely that an event slips through the cracks.

### Using your planner

If you used a planner in the past and it didn't seem to help, don't be afraid to try again. Remember that making a new habit takes time. You might find it useful to break the process of using a planner into manageable steps, such as the following. Use them a few at a time for a week or so, until they start to feel natural. (Some steps apply only to paper planners.) You might also

ask a spouse, friend, or coworker to be your “planner coach.” That person can prompt you to practice the steps—or you can report to him or her that you have practiced the steps—and encourage you.

- 1. Enter your information in the planner.** That should include contact information for people you need to reach regularly, as well as information for any medical professionals, your children’s schools, and anywhere else you might need to contact someone in a hurry.
- 2. Get in the habit of carrying your day planner with you whenever possible.** If you have a purse or a bag you usually keep with you, that can be a good place to store your planner. Keep it on your desk when you’re at work and take it with you to meetings for scheduling purposes, but also in case you need to write something down and don’t want to forget it.
- 3. Find one safe place to keep the planner when you are not carrying it.** Once you are in the habit of storing your planner in a safe place, you’ll know exactly where it is when you head out. You might keep it wherever you keep your phone, with your car keys, or near your front door, for instance.
- 4. Conduct a daily planning session.** Set a scheduled time each day to do your daily planning (put it on your calendar until it becomes a habit!). The goal is to plan the next day’s activities and appointments. Doing so will give you a mental map that will help you in completing the tasks on your list.
- 5. Refer to the planner regularly.** Start by checking your planner no fewer than three times a day: once

in the morning as you are looking ahead to your day, once around midday, and once in the evening to review and plan the next day.

- 6. Use the day planner as your calendar for everything.** That includes medical appointments, exercise classes, work meetings, and dates to mail bills. If you have recurring events, such as a piano lesson every Tuesday or physical therapy twice a week for three weeks, put that in your electronic calendar once and choose how often it should appear—the calendar will put it on the correct dates for you. If you have a paper planner, enter one or two months’ worth of such appointments at a time.

You may also want to use your planner as a “brain dump,” if there’s room. That means noting ideas or important thoughts as they come to you, rather than relying on your memory to retain them. Brain dumping can also be part of your daily to-do list. [See **Time Management and ADHD: To-Do Lists** fact sheet.]

If you find that the step-by-step approach outlined here is difficult to follow, think about breaking it down into even smaller steps, based on your personal needs. You may need to face emotions based on a lifetime of organizational and planning challenges before you can master the use of a day planner. If needed, seek out strong support systems and consult a professional, such as a therapist familiar with adult ADHD or an ADHD coach. 🧠

#### Related Document:

[Time Management and ADHD: To-Do Lists](#)



For further information, please  
contact National Resource Center on  
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