

A Get-Things-Done Guide for the Overwhelmed and Overloaded

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"There are many benefits
to ADHD,
too many to list.

It becomes a disadvantage
when you're expected
to conform
to a structure that
doesn't make sense
to you."

- Peter Carlisle

ADDitudemag.com

You can't hide from your to-do list forever.

Here are 11 strategies for de-cluttering, managing paper, overcoming distractions, and getting things done.

Overcome the Overload



Every day we're confronted with information, distractions, work, and lots of other stuff. Is it a surprise *anyone* gets anything done, never mind those with attention deficit disorder (ADHD or ADD)?

People with ADHD are easily [overwhelmed](#) by the fast pace and interruptions, so they need some stay-focused strategies to keep them on track. Consider this your "how to get things done" guide.

Capture All That Information

Instead of going crazy trying to write down all those bits of information that come your way, try these solutions:

- Call important information into your voicemail and leave yourself messages. Your smartphone's voice recorder app can also come in handy for this.
- Convert verbal information into text, using apps like [Google Keep](#) (Android, iOS, Web) and [Evernote](#) (iOS, Android, Windows, Mac)



Finish Something, Anything, Early in the Day



Completing a chore — a small task or something larger that you worked on yesterday — gives you a sense of closure, making the rest of the day meaningful.

No matter how the day goes, you can say you got something done, which gives you a sense of satisfaction that will encourage you to keep going the next day.

Get a Grip

If a phone call or a request from your friend or roommate distracts you from a task you're working on, hold on to a physical artifact to remind you what you were doing,

An unopened envelope, for instance, will remind you that you were opening mail before the interruption, and will focus your attention more quickly.



Put It on the Calendar



It's not enough to write down a task on your to-do list. You have to enter it into your calendar.

Assigning a task to a specific day increases your chances of [getting it done](#). With a to-do list only, you have a 40 to 50 percent chance of doing the task.

Scheduling the task increases your chances of completing it by 70 percent or so.

Just Do It

Don't get overwhelmed about where or when to start a [de-cluttering task](#). It doesn't matter where you start; begin at any spot in a room.

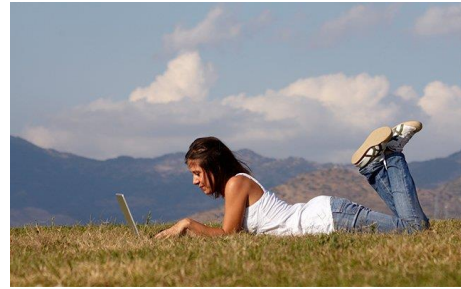
After you start, continue in some kind of logical order. If you start on the left side of the room, keep going to the left. If you start on the top shelf of a cabinet, work your way down. There is no ideal time to tackle clutter.



Change the Scene

People with [ADHD](#) can optimize their [focus and attention](#) by doing different tasks in different kinds of places. If you have to write an essay, go to a café. You can spread out all the papers and receipts, with fewer distractions than the dorm.

Some people with attention deficit can't get anything done — studying, writing, reading — in the quiet of a library. Finding a setting like a Starbucks, with some background noise, will help them be more productive.



Enlist a Support Team



Stop trying to be an ordinary person who keeps it together in the same way that people without ADHD do. Support might mean another set of hands, someone to keep your morale up, or someone to function as a body double.

A body double is somebody who is physically present as you do a task but doesn't do the task with you. Your body double anchors you to the chore at hand (in your young years, this body double was called Mom or Dad).

Switch Up Your Routine Every Quarter

People with ADHD get bored with their routines more quickly than those without the condition. The higher boredom factor keeps them from tackling things they once completed with ease.

Routines — whether it's opening mail, doing dishes, or tackling a project at work — can be kept fresh by changing them up every three months. This doesn't mean a complete overhaul, just a tweak.



Play It Loose with Deadlines

Schedule extra time to finish a task. Rather than trying to precisely estimate how long a task will take, just say, “Okay. I’m going to need 30 percent more time for everything I plan, no matter what.”

Just pick a number: Twenty percent more, 50 percent more, and allot that. The worst that could happen is that you finish it early.



Keep Calm and Carry On



As you start your day, do the first three things that worry you the most to get them off your plate. The internal distraction of worry plays more on people with ADHD than on other people and prevents them from getting things done.

If you do any small part of what is worrying you, chances are you’ll break the anxiety and move forward.

Manage the Mail

- To cut off junk mail at its source. Unsubscribe to email from businesses, stores, organizations, etc.
- If you do receive junk mail (regular post or email) don’t open it. Junk mail goes, unopened, right into the recycling bin, trash or spam folder.
- Only check your email at set times of the day (first thing in the morning, at lunch and in the evening).



For more great ideas for managing your ADHD: [ADDitude: Inside the ADHD mind](#)