

PARENT HANDOUT: REMEMBERING THINGS I NEED TO DO



ADHD Skill 5

WHAT IS REMEMBERING THINGS I NEED TO DO?

- ▶ Remembering Things I Need to Do is a skill that helps with your child's memory and planning. It involves making "to do lists" that help them remember what they need to do and when they need to do it.
- ▶ By developing a system for tracking tasks, assignments, and due dates, your child will improve their memory and get things done on time. Follow the instructions below to help your child make lists of what they need to do today, this week, and this weekend.

HERE'S HOW TO REMEMBER THINGS YOU NEED TO DO

You can introduce this skill by saying, "We are going to try a new way to keep track of the things you need to do and when you need to do them. This will help improve your memory and planning skills. Your goal is to **make checklists** of the things you need to do today, this week, and this weekend. As you make your lists, be specific about each task so you know exactly what you need to do. After you complete a task, be sure to check it off.

- 1 First, pull out a copy of these **three worksheets**:
 - Things I Need to Do Today
 - Things I Need to Do This Week
 - Things I Need to Do This Weekend
- 2 Start by filling in the "**Things I Need to Do Today**" worksheet. Include tasks that are time-sensitive or must be done today. Look at George's list for an example.
- 3 Next, use the "**Things I Need to Do This Week**" worksheet to make a list of the things you have to do this week. Include tasks you have to complete on a regular basis, such as making your bed or bringing your homework assignments home. Look at Molly's list for an example.
- 4 Now, use the "**Things I Need to Do This Weekend**" worksheet to make a list of the things you need to do over the weekend. It can be harder to remember weekend tasks when you're not in the usual routine of a school day. Making a list for these days can be just as important. Look at Sam's list for an example.
- 5 **Set reminders to check your lists a few times a day.** Set reminders to see what you still need to do. You can set alarms on your phone or watch, ask parents/teachers to remind you, and/or stick a note where you will see it, like in your locker or planner.
- 6 **Keep copies of your lists where you will see them.** For example, having copies in your backpack and on your refrigerator will give you multiple reminders. You can also keep these lists in a planner, notebook, or on your phone. Be sure to put the lists where you can easily access them and look at them throughout the day.
- 7 **If it's hard to remember everything you need to do, ask for help.** If you're not sure what to include on your list or are having a hard time using the worksheets, ask your caregivers, teachers, or friends/classmates for support.
- 8 **Notice when you're doing a good job.** Take a moment to feel proud of your effort to stay on top of what you need to do. Give yourself a pat on the back for getting things done!

The next worksheet shows you some examples of **To Do Lists**. Go over the examples together and then have your child make their own lists.

Things I Need to Do Today: George

	Done?
Turn in English paper	✓
Give book back to Hannah	✓
Turn in Math homework	✓
Submit field trip permission slip	
Find out where track tryouts are	
Go to band practice	

Things I Need to Do This Week: Molly

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Make my bed	✓	✓			
Eat breakfast	✓	✓			
Put homework in backpack	✓	✓			
Get lunch out of fridge	✓				
Bring homework assignments home	✓				
Eat snack after school	✓				

Things I Need to Do This Weekend: Sam

	Saturday	Sunday
Make my bed	✓	
Eat breakfast	✓	
Do chores (take out trash, sweep up kitchen)	✓	
Work on History project		
Do Science homework		
Get baseball equipment for practice (Saturday at 11)		
Movies with John and Hector (Saturday at 7)		



HOW CAN REMEMBERING THINGS I NEED TO DO HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ When your child has symptoms of ADHD, it can be harder for them to keep track of important information, such as what they need to do to get ready for school or the due dates for their assignments.
- ▶ This makes it challenging for them to do things when they're supposed to. They may notice that adults are frequently reminding them what they need to do, or asking them if they've completed different tasks. This can feel discouraging and be frustrating for everyone.
- ▶ Remembering Things I Need to Do helps your child make a system to stay on top of their daily and weekly tasks. Over time, they will need fewer reminders from other people, and you will all feel good about them staying more on top of things.

COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

My child isn't sure what to put on their list.

If your child is having a hard time remembering what they need to do, aren't sure what to put on their list, or finds it challenging to use the worksheets, review our examples and/or get some extra support. Your child's teachers and friends/classmates may have some good ideas based on what they know your child needs to do. Remind your child that the more they practice, the easier it will get!

My child makes all of their lists, but then forgets to look at them.

At first it can be challenging for your child to remember they made lists and need to refer back to them! It can help for them to set reminders to look at their lists and see what they still need to do. They can set alarms on their phone or watch, ask parents or teachers to remind them, and/or leave reminder notes for themselves somewhere they will see them, like in their locker or planner.

It also helps if they make copies of their lists and keep them somewhere they tend to go to or look during the day. For instance, they can keep a copy in their backpack, on their phone, and in their notebook.

My child looks at their lists and can't figure out what to do first.

One method your child can try is to start with the easiest task. Another is to start with the one with the earliest deadline. Remind them that Tasks on the What I Need to Do Today checklist usually have to be completed before those on the What I Need to Do This Week or Weekend checklists.

My child complains that I'm always bugging them about making lists and checking things off. They say that I'm annoying, but I'm trying to help!

Sometimes family members' eagerness to participate in skill-building can be frustrating to children. See if you can have a calm discussion about the best ways to support their use of this new memory tool. For example, you can see if your child is comfortable with you offering some encouragement in the mornings before the school rush, or checking in with them once or twice during homework time, but not asking them about the lists repeatedly or throughout the day. Decide together what will help your child get the support they need without being overwhelmed. Kindly remind your child that as they successfully make and complete their "to do lists", they will show you they need fewer reminders to do this on their own.

Even after my child makes their lists, it's hard for them to follow through on doing their tasks.

Many kids with ADHD feel this way. Take a look at the handouts on How to Get Things Done (ADHD Skill 6), How to Organize My Stuff (ADHD Skill 7), and How to Manage My Time (ADHD Skill 8) together, and see if practicing these skills helps your child improve their ability to start and complete tasks, get organized, and meet deadlines. If their difficulty with memory and organization gets in the way at school, home, or with friends, your child may need additional support. Check in with your child's primary care provider. They can connect you to a behavioral health specialist who can help.