

PARENT HANDOUT: HOW TO GET THINGS DONE



ADHD Skill 6

WHAT IS HOW TO GET THINGS DONE?

- ▶ How to Get Things Done is a skill that helps your child plan, start, and finish assignments and tasks. It involves looking over their "to do" list(s), choosing a task, making a schedule, and overcoming obstacles to reach their goals.
- ▶ By making a careful plan to tackle a task, your child can improve their organization, attention, and follow through skills. Use the guide below to help your child make their plan and get things done!
- ▶ This skill is most useful for older children.

HERE'S HOW TO GET THINGS DONE

You can introduce this skill by saying, "We are going to try a new way to help you get things done. Your goal here is to **make a plan** to complete a task and then **follow your roadmap** to finish it. As you do each of the steps below, fill in the **Roadmap to Getting Things Done worksheet**. Let's try it together." Go through the steps below to help your child make their own Roadmap, and create your own examples that fit your child's school and social activities.

1

First, look at your "to do" list(s) and **pick a specific task** to complete. If you need help making a "to-do" list, see ADHD Skill 5 (How to Remember What I Need to Do) to make checklists of your daily and weekly tasks.

2

If possible, **break your task up into "mini tasks."** Many goals can feel less difficult or overwhelming if you approach them one step at a time. Think of all the steps you need to take to reach your goal, then split your task up into smaller, more manageable "mini tasks". Be sure to decide what **order** the steps go in.

Example: Alicia split her math homework up into 5 steps: reading the assignment, reading the textbook chapter, and then doing 5 problems at a time.

3

Calculate **how long it will take** you to complete each step. Be sure to consider how much time you have. If you have trouble paying attention, it can help to **take short breaks** (5 minutes or less) after you complete each step.

Example: Between arriving home after school and dinnertime, Lucas had 2 hours to do homework. With homework in 3 subjects, he split his time into 35 minutes/subject. He took a 5-minute stretching break in between the subjects, leaving him 40 minutes per subject. He used any extra time at the end to finish up assignments that needed more time.

4

Based on this, choose what time you plan to **start and stop** each step. Be sure to leave wiggle room and set realistic deadlines so you don't get discouraged.

Example: It usually takes Olivia at least 30 minutes to practice the piano, so she schedules 40 minutes to complete the task just in case she needs more time.

5

Identify what **materials you need**. Use a **timer** to stay on schedule and keep track of time.

Example: Alex needs her textbook, assignment outline, paper, pencil, and calculator to do her math homework. She also sets up a kitchen timer.

6

Think of **where** you will do this task. Choose a place where you can think clearly and focus.

Example: Jordan finds that when he has music or the TV on in the background, it takes him twice as long to finish his homework. He also puts his phone away so texts and social media don't distract him.

7

Choose **when** you will do your tasks. Think about your schedule and when you'll fit this in. If possible, it helps to do harder tasks during the time of day when you're most alert and clear-headed.

Example: Lily does her homework as soon as she gets home from school, before she gets too tired or hungry.

8

Plan **how to get help** if you need it. Identify who can provide extra support if you're not sure what to do or get stuck. The goal is to keep moving until you finish a task, so reach out for help if you're not sure what to do. Family, friends, teachers, and classmates can provide useful advice

Example: Ben finds homework easiest to do if he does it at his after school program, where there are tutors available.

9

Pick a **reward** you will get for finishing this task. Choose something that you can get easily; it doesn't have to be big, fancy, or expensive. Something like a tasty treat, spending time outside, or watching a favorite show can feel great after reaching a goal. Ask your parents for ideas if you're not sure what to choose or what is allowed.

10

Follow your roadmap. Now that you've made a great plan, be sure to follow it. Keep your Roadmap worksheet where you will see it, then follow it until you've completed your task. **Make notes** on what went well, or any adjustments you want to make so your next task goes even more smoothly.

11

Pat yourself on the back for getting something done. Be sure to take a moment to notice how hard you're working!





NOAH'S ROADMAP TO GETTING THINGS DONE

ADHD Skill 6



1 Choose Task

Task/Goal Studying for Friday's spelling test

2 Define Steps

3 Budget Time

What steps do I have to take? Write them in order.

Step 1	Review word list
Step 2	Practice with flash cards
Step 3	Take practice test #1
Step 4	Take practice test #2

How much time do I have?	2 hrs
How much time to I have per step/task?	2 hrs/4 tasks = ~40 min/task
Time I need for step 1	15 min
Time I need for step 2	25 min
Time I need for step 3	25 min
Time I need for step 4	25 min
Total Time	90 min
Time Left Over	30 min

4 Create Schedule

	Day	Start Time	Stop Time	Short Break?
Step 1	Monday	3:00	3:30	10 min if needed
Step 2	Tuesday	3:00	3:30	5 min if needed
Step 3	Wednesday	3:00	3:30	Test without break
Step 4	Thursday	3:00	3:30	Test without break

5 Overcome Obstacles

What materials do I need?	Word list, practice tests, pencil, timer
Where will I do it?	Dining room table after school
What distractions can I eliminate?	Put away electronics
What will I do if I need help?	Ask mom or dad, check in with Mrs. Young
What is my reward for working hard?	One episode of TV show on M/W; ice cream sandwich on T; game with family Th
Notes for next time	It was helpful to take more than one practice test



CHILD ROADMAP TO GETTING THINGS DONE

ADHD Skill 6



1 Choose Task

Task/Goal

2 Define Steps

What steps do I have to take? Write them in order.

Step 1	
Step 2	
Step 3	
Step 4	

3 Budget Time

How much time do I have?	
How much time to I have per step/task?	
Time I need for step 1	
Time I need for step 2	
Time I need for step 3	
Time I need for step 4	
Total Time	
Time Left Over	

4 Create Schedule

	Day	Start Time	Stop Time	Short Break?
Step 1				
Step 2				
Step 3				
Step 4				

5 Overcome Obstacles

What materials do I need?	
Where will I do it?	
What distractions can I eliminate?	
What will I do if I need help?	
What is my reward for working hard?	
Notes for next time	

PARENT HANDOUT: HOW TO GET THINGS DONE TIPS



ADHD Skill 6

HOW CAN GETTING THINGS DONE HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ When your child has ADHD, it can be challenging to get things done. For example, they may have a hard time getting started on a task, figuring out what to focus on, or staying on track once they get going. Your child may notice that they miss important deadlines, or take a long time to complete an assignment, only to do things partway.
- ▶ This makes it difficult to check tasks off their “to do lists”, even when they know what they need to do. This can be frustrating and make it harder for them to enjoy school and feel good about themselves.
- ▶ How to Get Things Done helps your child make a plan to complete a task and then follow that plan. By practicing this skill, they can develop better habits, get things done more easily, and feel proud of reaching their goals.

COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

My child has a hard time figuring out how to break a task into smaller steps.

Encourage your child to ask themselves, what do I need to do first? Help them think about what absolutely has to happen so that they can get started. Then ask, what do you need to do next to keep moving toward your goal of completing the task? Your child can also try thinking of all the steps they need to take, then going through and putting them in order. If they're still having a hard time, see if help from you, a teacher, or a friend gets them going.

It always takes my child longer than they expect to finish something, so it's hard to stick to their plan.

Many tasks take longer to complete than we think! It can be challenging at first to know how much time your child needs to do a task, so their time estimates may be inaccurate. If they have multiple tasks to complete, it may help if they split the time evenly between them, then use any extra time to finish any incomplete tasks. Use the tips in How to Manage My Time (ADHD Skill 8) to get a better sense of how much time your child needs to do things. This will help them make a more realistic schedule.

My child knows what they need to do and made their plan, but then they said they don't have all the materials they need. Many kids with ADHD have trouble keeping track of their things, especially school assignments and papers. It helps if they can think ahead of time about what they will need to do a task. You can offer to double check that they've thought of everything. Have your child write the required materials down on their Roadmap to Getting Things Done worksheet. If they need extra help with organization, the worksheets in ADHD Skill 7 (How to Organize My Stuff) can help too.

My child gets distracted while trying to get things done.

Try to limit your child's distractions (e.g., TV, phone, etc.) and help create an environment that maximizes their focus and productivity. You or teachers can offer suggestions based on what you've seen work well for your child at home or school.

My child made a plan but then forgot to follow it.

Be sure to tell your child, “Good job making a plan!”. Remind them to keep a copy of their Roadmap to Getting Things Done worksheet somewhere they'll easily see it. They can try setting a timer or alarm for the start times they chose, or ask you to give them a friendly reminder. Your child can also brush up on their memory skills (ADHD Skill 5, How to Remember What I Need to Do) and time management (ADHD Skill 8, How to Manage My Time) and see if using these skills together helps them reach their goals.

If your child's difficulty with planning and organization gets in their way at school, home, or with friends, they may need additional support. Check in with your primary care provider. They can connect you to a behavioral health specialist who can help