



"I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG ANYTHING TAKES"

Planning Help for ADHD Brains (with a Little Assist from AI)

RECOGNIZING THE CHALLENGE

If you find it difficult to plan your day, you're not alone. Many ADHD adults experience:

- Trouble estimating how long tasks will take
- Getting stuck before appointments
- Avoiding plans because everything feels uncertain
- Collecting planners but not using them

This isn't a character flaw. It's part of how ADHD shows up in daily life — through time blindness, executive function challenges, emotional regulation difficulties, and inconsistent motivation.

USING AI AS A SUPPORT TOOL

Digital tools like ChatGPT can help bridge the gap between knowing what you want to do and figuring out how to actually do it. With the right approach, it can:

- Break tasks into smaller, doable parts
- Suggest timelines that feel more realistic
- Help you prioritize without judgment
- Prompt self-care and rest — not just productivity
- Offer encouragement, reframe negative thoughts, and help with emotional stuckness

Try asking:

- "Help me reframe this task — I'm feeling overwhelmed."
- "Can you make this task more fun or interesting to get me motivated?"

HOW TO USE AI TO MAKE DAILY PLANNING EASIER

Step 1: Start with Some Basic Info

Before asking ChatGPT for a schedule, take a moment to think through:

- What needs to get done today or this week?
- What time do you have available?
- Are there meals, dog walks, breaks, or appointments that need to be factored in?
- What do you want to include, like hobbies or rest?

Step 2: Give Clear, Simple Prompts

ChatGPT works best when it has context. Try:

- "I have 4 hours this afternoon. I need to clean, email my therapist, and take a walk. Help me make a plan."
- "Can you create a flexible schedule for today? I'd like to be done by 5 PM, include breaks, and start with lunch."
- "Break down how to clean my kitchen in one hour. I get distracted easily."

Add what matters to you:

- If you want to be done by a certain time, say that.
- If you need reminders to eat or take meds, ask AI to build reminder points into the plan that you can copy into phone alarms, calendar alerts, or another reminder tool.
- If there's a task you tend to avoid, ask it to put that early in your schedule.

You can also build or adjust routines with prompts like:

- "Can you help me create a simple morning routine that feels doable?"
- "I want to start a 3-day weekly structure — can you help?"





SUPPORTING YOURSELF WITH TIME CUES

Time blindness makes it hard to track time internally. External supports can help:

- Set alarms to start or stop a task
- Use timers to avoid spending too long on one thing
- Add visual reminders if alarms alone don't work
- Try music playlists that match the length of a task block
- Use analog clocks or visual timers to make time feel more real

Example: Set a one-hour timer for cleaning. When it rings, stop — even if it's not done. You can always come back to it later.

Encourage "time wisdom" by guessing how long something will take, timing it, and adjusting your future estimates. Over time, this helps recalibrate your internal sense of time.

Build in buffer time between tasks — even 5–10 minutes — to help with transitions and avoid feeling rushed.

MAKING TRANSITIONS EASIER

Switching tasks can feel abrupt, especially with ADHD. Try using cues to help your brain shift gears:

- Play a specific song or sound to signal transition
 - Use a 5-minute buffer between time blocks
 - Incorporate a physical reset (stretch, drink water, quick movement)



OVERWHELMED BY A TASK? BREAK IT DOWN

If "do laundry" feels like a mountain, ask ChatGPT to break it into smaller steps. Same with cooking, errands, or getting ready for a social event. You can say:

- "Help me make a step-by-step list for doing laundry when I'm low energy."
- "Plan out what I need to do to grocery shop for three days of meals."

Smaller steps reduce decision fatigue and make it easier to get started.

If you know what to do but still can't start, try:

- Asking ChatGPT: "What's the very first micro-step I could take?"
- Doing just 2 minutes, then reevaluating
- Pairing the task with a low-effort action like turning on music or grabbing a snack

ENVIRONMENT AND SENSORY SUPPORT

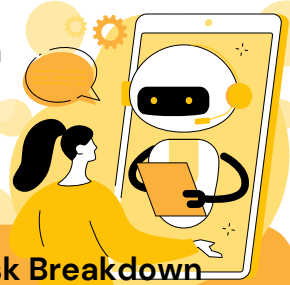


Sometimes your surroundings make more difference than your to-do list. Try:

- Using sticky notes or whiteboards for visual cues
- Adjusting lighting, scents, or sound to shift energy
- Creating designated zones for certain types of tasks (even symbolic ones)
- Asking ChatGPT for customized sensory-friendly break ideas (e.g., "Give me a low-stimulation break idea that helps me reset")

PERSONALIZING AI PROMPTS FOR EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SUPPORT

Tailoring AI prompts to your specific executive function challenges can make digital tools like ChatGPT far more effective and supportive. Here's how you can make your prompts work for your unique needs:



1. Identify Your Executive Function Challenges

Start by naming the specific areas where you struggle, such as:

- Time management
- Task initiation
- Organization
- Emotional regulation
- Working memory
- Prioritization
- Impulse control

2. Include Personal Context in Your Prompts

Give the AI relevant background about your day, energy, or preferences. For example:

- "I get overwhelmed by long to-do lists. Help me pick just three tasks to focus on today."
- "I have trouble starting tasks in the morning. Suggest a gentle, step-by-step morning routine."
- "I lose track of time easily. Help me plan break checkpoints every 30 minutes that I can copy into alarms or calendar reminders."

3. Request Task Breakdown and Time Estimates

Ask AI to break down complex or overwhelming tasks into smaller, actionable steps, and to estimate how long each might take:

- "Break down 'clean my kitchen' into steps that each take 10 minutes or less."
- "Help me estimate how long each step of this project will take so I can plan my afternoon."

4. Leverage AI for Emotional and Motivational Support

Prompts can address emotional barriers and motivation:

- "I'm feeling stuck and unmotivated. Can you encourage me and help me get started?"
- "Remind me that it's okay to take breaks and that progress matters more than perfection."
- "Help me reframe negative thoughts about not finishing everything on my list."

5. Personalize for Sensory and Environmental Needs

If distractions or sensory issues are a challenge, include them:

- "Suggest a 5-minute break that helps me reset without overstimulation."
- "Remind me to put on noise-canceling headphones before starting focused work."

6. Build in Accountability and Social Support

Use prompts that encourage check-ins or external accountability:

- "Help me draft a check-in message to my friend to stay accountable for my goals."
- "Remind me to update my progress at the end of the day."

8. Template for a Personalized AI Prompt

You can use a template to quickly personalize your requests: I have [your diagnosis/challenge, e.g., ADHD, trouble with time management].

My main struggle right now is [describe the specific challenge].

Please help me by [describe the kind of support you want: breaking down tasks, providing time estimates, encouraging me, etc.].

My preferences: [e.g., short steps, reminders, positive tone, etc.].

Example:

"I have ADHD and struggle with starting big tasks. I'm feeling overwhelmed by my to-do list. Please break it down into three small, actionable steps and estimate how long each will take. Remind me to take a break after each step and encourage me along the way."

7. Customize for Learning and Processing Preferences

If you process information best in certain ways, tell the AI:

- "Explain this concept using a simple analogy and bullet points."
- "Summarize this article in three key takeaways."

9. Review and Adjust

After using a prompt, reflect on what worked and what didn't. Adjust your future prompts for even better support. AI is most helpful when you refine your prompts based on what worked and what did not.



ACCOUNTABILITY AND SOCIAL SUPPORT

AI can help support social connection, too:

- Script a check-in message to a friend or accountability buddy

- Role-play asking for help or setting boundaries
- Get help finding ADHD-friendly forums or local groups

SELF-COMPASSION AND PERFECTIONISM

Some days will be messier than others. The goal isn't perfect execution — it's showing up for yourself with curiosity and kindness.

Try asking:

- "Remind me that I'm allowed to have off days."
- "Can you help me feel less guilty for not finishing everything?"

A PROMPT TO TRY:

"It's 11 AM and I have 5 hours. I want to do laundry, eat lunch, call the vet, and fit in some painting. Please help me plan a gentle, flexible schedule with breaks that ends by 4 PM."



REFLECT AND ADJUST

At the end of the day, ask:

- Did this plan help me feel more organized or more overwhelmed?
- Were there parts that felt supportive?
- What would I change next time?

These check-ins help you learn more about what works for your brain — and how to adapt your tools.

If you keep "falling off the plan," that's not failure — it's feedback. ADHD brains need systems that expect change and offer grace. Every day gives you new data to build from.



WHEN TO SEEK MORE HELP

If daily planning continues to feel overwhelming or is affecting your well-being, consider support from:

- An ADHD-informed therapist or coach
- Your primary care provider or psychiatrist (for med evaluations)
- Online ADHD communities or peer support groups

ChatGPT can also help you:

- Search for possible local providers, then verify credentials and availability through official clinic or professional sources.
- Write an email to ask for accommodations
- Summarize what ADHD coaching or therapy might involve