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Homework and Study Shortcuts: 12 Ways to Get Things Done Quicker

Small steps can bring huge rewards in getting homework done and in studying for tests.

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You Can Get It Done

Talk with a parent about raising her ADHD child and, sooner or later, the conversation will turn to the homework wars. "You can't believe how long it takes for my son to finish homework," she will say. "Will it ever get better?" Yes, it will. There are ADD-friendly strategies for finishing homework and studying more effectively. Don't tell your child which strategy to use. Instead, let her choose. Choice is a key factor for inspiring motivation.

Take Ten

When you first sit down to do homework, take two minutes to put loose papers into the proper folders. Use the next eight minutes to reread notes and/or handouts from school. These 10 minutes will save you hours of searching and studying. You will quickly get into the habit of putting assignments where they belong. Reviewing your notes transfers information to long-term memory, saving hours of study time when test time comes around.

Work in 30-Minute Blocks

Set a timer and limit each study or work session to 30 minutes. Challenge yourself to finish a certain amount of work within that time. The adrenaline rush of the challenge will improve your focus.

Take Five-Minute Breaks

Both your body and brain need frequent refreshers. Set another timer for five minutes, then do jumping jacks, run in place, or stretch. Start another 30-minute block of homework. This sounds too simple to work, but these breaks keep you sharp to get your work done faster. After two weeks, you will find that these five-minute blocks will significantly reduce procrastination.

Create a User-Friendly Planner

A lot of ADHD students who keep a planner forget to use it throughout the day. Always keep it in your main folder or binder, along with a pen in the binding. Use a binder clip to mark your current page. It should take only a few steps to access your planner and to write down assignments and reminders—and you won't waste time later, calling friends to ask about homework.

Sip Something Sweet

When kids do homework, they should sip (not gulp) a drink with sugar in it, says Dr. Russell Barkley, Ph.D., author of *Taking Charge of ADHD*. Lemonade or sports drinks are good choices. These beverages deliver glucose to your brain, which is its only source of fuel. The more fuel you have, the more you will be able to work effectively and efficiently.

Skip Problems That Stump You

If you come to a homework question (or two or three) that you find confusing, highlight or circle it and move on. The more you dwell on something you don't understand, the more anxious you will get. The more anxious you get, the less energy you have for the rest of your homework. Stick with what you can figure out. Take the hard problems to your teacher at the start of class and ask for help.

Review Your Notes Out Loud

Your brain will process the information in three ways: through your eyes as you read it, your mouth as you say it, and your ears as you hear your own voice. This improves your focus and memory.

Create Test Questions from Your Notes

Writing down questions helps you learn better than reciting or memorizing information. The process forces you to think about the information at a higher level. Higher-level thinking helps you learn more things, thus shortening your study time.

Read Your Textbook: Just Not Every Word

Read through related sections of your textbook, but don't read every word. Read headings, diagrams, and captions to photos and illustrations to get started. Set your timer and spend one 30-minute block reviewing a textbook chapter. Your enhanced comprehension will help you sail through your homework.

Do a Quick Review Before Class

Review textbook chapters before teachers lecture about them in class. This process gives your brain enough knowledge to help you pay better attention in class. You can reduce study and homework time if you have a deeper understanding of the material.

Get Ready for School at Night

Most ADDers are groggy in the morning, so it's easy to forget things if you are trying to get organized. Instead, gather all of your folders, books, notebooks, and supplies, and put them in your bag before you go to sleep. When you don't deal with chaos in the morning, you have more resources to stay focused through the day. The calmer your day, the more energy you'll have to blast through homework in the evening.

More Homework Help

For more must-have resources on helping your ADHD child address homework issues and develop better study skills, visit the Homework Help Resource Center.

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