

Adult ADHD Skills Library: Task Chunking for ADHD: How to Break Overwhelming Projects Into Small, Manageable Steps

Skills Practice Sheet LESSON: Task Chunking

SL-002

Many adults with ADHD can occasionally start a task but become overwhelmed once they see the size of the project. A report, tax return, home project, presentation, or job application may feel so large that it becomes difficult to continue. Task Chunking is an evidence-informed strategy that helps reduce overwhelm by breaking large projects into smaller, manageable actions. The goal is not to finish the entire project today. The goal is to identify and complete the next step.

Use This Skill When...

- ☐ A project feels too big.
- ☐ I don't know where to start.
- ☐ I keep procrastinating.
- ☐ I feel overwhelmed.
- ☐ I keep thinking about the project instead of working on it.
- ☐ I am avoiding the task because it feels impossible.

How to Do It...

Step 1. Define the Project

Project:

Step 2. Break It Into Major Chunks

Chunk 1:

Chunk 2:

Chunk 3:

Chunk 4:

Step 3. Break One Chunk Into Actions

Action 1:

Action 2:

Action 3:

Action 4:

Step 4. Identify the Next Physical Action

What is the next action I can physically do?

Examples:

- Open laptop
- Log into bank account
- Download W-2
- Open resume file

Next Physical Action:

Step 5. Use Five-Minute Activation

- ☐ Timer started
- ☐ I began immediately
- ☐ I worked for five minutes
- What happened when I started?
- ☐ I kept going
- ☐ I took a short break
- ☐ I stopped after five minutes

Success?

- ☐ I identified the next step.
 - ☐ I started.
 - ☐ I completed one chunk.
- Remember: Success is making progress—not finishing the entire project.

Practice Log

Did I identify a clear next action?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Not yet

How overwhelming did the project feel before chunking?

(Low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (High)

How overwhelming did the project feel after chunking?

(Low) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (High)

What helped? _____

What got in the way? _____

What will I try next time? _____

Weekly Practice Log

	Project	Chunk Completed	Started Next Step
Monday		☐	☐
Tuesday		☐	☐
Wednesday		☐	☐
Thursday		☐	☐
Friday		☐	☐
Saturday		☐	☐
Sunday		☐	☐

Clinical Pearl. When a project feels overwhelming, the problem is often not motivation. The project may simply be too large or too vague. If a chunk still feels difficult to start, make it smaller until the next action feels clear and manageable.

Evidence-Informed Resource. This practice sheet was developed by Peace & Prosperity Psychiatry, APNC using evidence-informed principles from research on adult ADHD, working memory, executive functioning, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), cognitive rehabilitation, and behavioral activation. Task Chunking is a clinical application of these research-supported principles. For a complete discussion of the evidence, see the companion lesson SL-002.

References

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