

# Manage Distractibility

Getting off track is a common way that ADHD folks wind up losing time and thereby don't have enough time to do the things that they were supposed to get done. Some of this is big chunks of wasted time, but they can also leak away small bits of time that add up. To the extent possible, it's generally best to set up these strategies beforehand, when they're on your mind, rather than relying on doing the right thing in the moment. Once you're distracted, it's too late.

- Use reminders to keep you on task, whether small taped up notes or large white boards.
- Work to ingrain the habit of frequently asking yourself, "What should I be doing now?". Cue yourself to do this by using a repeating alarm that forces a small break in the progression of time so that you can notice what you are doing and then make a conscious choice as to whether it's the best use of your time.
- Work in a quieter and less visually stimulating place or use a sound machine or fan to provide white noise to screen out other sounds. Alternatively, if it won't become distracting in itself, use the television or music. You can also buy noise canceling headphones relatively inexpensively these days. Foam ear plugs cost virtually nothing, but may block too much sound.
- Try to keep an orderly work space, but if your work space is currently messy, rather than jumping into organizing it, clear it to the side and schedule a time to come back later to deal with it.
- When you find yourself off on a tangent, go back to the original task and finish that before moving on to the next. A certain amount of this is to be expected, so there's no point in beating yourself up about it. Just go back to the previous task.
- Use hyper-focus for good instead of evil by immersing yourself in a project and completing a big chunk of it.
- Break work sessions into smaller pieces with short breaks in between to reduce wandering attention or to prevent crashing and abandoning work all together. However, if you are going to give the devil his due, set an alarm to cue you to return so the breaks don't become longer than the work sessions.
- Employ active learning or active processing techniques to stay involved in what you're doing.
- Work with a partner or in a group if feasible and if there will not be an undue social price paid in resentment from your only partially willing team mates.
- Set aside specific, interruption-free periods of your day for tasks that require extra focus. Preserve the sanctity of this time by closing your web browser, turning off your phone, and turning off your new email alert. If necessary, explain to coworkers or family members that you would prefer that they came back later unless there's an emergency and then put up sign to remind them.
- If a new idea for a project keeps popping up, take a small moment to write it down so that you can return to it later rather than pursuing it immediately.
- If you are simply too distracted at work, then maybe you need a new job.