

CUSTOMIZABLE EXECUTIVE FUNCTION TOOLBOX TEMPLATE

(Designed for ADHD, autism, and neurodivergent adults)

My Executive Function Toolbox

Name: _____

Date Created: _____

Last Updated: _____

1. My Executive Function Strengths

(What comes easily, naturally, or reliably?)

- _____
- _____
- _____

2. My Executive Function Challenges

(Skills that feel inconsistent, draining, or easily overwhelmed.)

- _____

- _____
- _____

3. My Supportive Tools By EF Skill Domain

Working Memory Tools

(e.g., checklists, visual sequences, posted reminders, planners)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Planning Tools

(e.g., daily pages, weekly layouts, project breakdown sheets)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Prioritization Tools

(e.g., Top 3 list, energy-based prioritizing, urgent/important grid)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Task Initiation Tools

(e.g., micro-steps, “start with 5 minutes,” task blast-off page)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Organization Tools

(e.g., labeled bins, visual storage, digital folders, routines)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Time Management Tools

(e.g., timers, pacing prompts, analog clocks, time-blocking)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Cognitive Flexibility Tools

(e.g., transition cues, flexible time blocks, backup plans)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Emotional Regulation Tools

(e.g., emotional log, grounding strategies, sensory supports)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Stress Tolerance Tools

(e.g., sensory breaks, coping cards, pacing schedules)

- _____
- _____
- _____

4. My Daily Executive Function Supports

(What I want to use every day to keep life manageable.)

- _____
- _____
- _____

5. My Weekly Executive Function Supports

(Check-ins, resets, planning sessions.)

- _____
- _____
- _____

6. My Sensory + Emotional Backup Supports

(What helps when I'm overwhelmed or shutting down.)

- _____
- _____
- _____

7. My Environment Setup

(Where I place tools so I actually remember to use them.)

- _____
- _____
- _____

8. Early Warning Signs That I'm Dysregulated

(What I tend to feel, think, or do before EF collapses.)

- _____
- _____
- _____

9. My Reset Strategies (When I'm Overwhelmed)

(Gentle steps I can take to regain access to my EF skills.)

- _____
- _____
- _____

10. What Success Looks Like for Me Right Now

(Clear, compassionate expectations based on your capacity.)

- _____
- _____

- _____

11. Notes / Customizations

(Anything extra you want to add.)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Executive Function Skills Checklist (Downloadable PDF)

Instructions

- Read each statement and check the box if it describes you *most of the time*.
- Use this checklist as a self-assessment or to track progress over time.
- Repeat every 4–6 weeks to see growth and identify new areas to focus on.

Planning & Prioritization

- I can break big tasks into smaller, manageable steps.
- I decide what needs to be done first instead of jumping into tasks randomly.
- I can create a plan and stick to it, even if new tasks come up.

Organization

- My physical spaces (desk, home, bags) are generally tidy and easy to navigate.
- I can quickly find information or materials I need.
- I use systems (folders, labels, apps) to keep things in order.

Working Memory

- I can follow multi-step instructions without forgetting the steps.
- I remember important details long enough to act on them.
- I can hold information in my head while doing something else.

Time Management

- I can estimate how long a task will take and plan accordingly.
- I meet deadlines without last-minute stress.
- I use my time effectively without getting overly distracted.

Task Initiation

- I can start a task without procrastinating, even if I don't feel like it.
- I take action promptly once I know what needs to be done.
- I rarely need someone else to push me to get going.

Emotional Regulation

- I can stay calm enough to think clearly when stressed or frustrated.
- I don't let strong emotions derail my day.
- I can recover quickly from setbacks or disappointments.

Impulse Control

- I pause and think before speaking or acting.
- I can resist distractions and temptations that take me off task.
- I make thoughtful decisions instead of reacting automatically.

Cognitive Flexibility

- I can adapt when plans change unexpectedly.
- I can look at a problem from different angles to find solutions.
- I can switch between tasks or ideas without getting stuck.

Perseverance

- I can handle periods of discomfort if I know the payoff will be worth it.
- I can recover from setbacks and continue moving forward.
- I look for new ways to solve a problem instead of quitting.

TIME BLINDNESS TOOLKIT

A supportive PDF toolkit for ADHD adults who struggle with sensing, tracking, or estimating time.

1. What Is Time Blindness? (Quick Explanation Page)

Time blindness is the difficulty of *feeling*, *perceiving*, and *tracking* the passage of time. For ADHD brains, time often exists in only two states:

- **Now**
- **Not Now**

This toolkit helps you bring time **outside your head** so you can work with your brain, not against it.

Common signs:

- Tasks take much longer than expected
- Hours disappear during hyperfocus
- You feel surprised by deadlines
- You struggle to start or stop activities
- Time either feels too fast, too slow, or nonexistent
- You rely on alarms/timers but still lose track

You're not broken — your brain processes time differently.

This toolkit gives you tools to compensate, not "willpower your way through."

2. Time Estimation Calibration Worksheet

Why this matters:

ADHD brains often *feel* time inaccurately.

This worksheet helps recalibrate your internal sense of time.

Instructions:

Choose 5–10 everyday tasks.

Estimate how long each task will take.

Then time yourself (no judgment — accuracy grows with repetition).

Task	My Estimate	Actual Time	Difference	Notes
Example: Load dishwasher	10 min	17 min	+7 min	Felt quicker

Reflection Prompts:

- Which tasks took longer than expected?
- Which took less time?
- Are there tasks that always surprise you?
- What patterns do you notice in over/underestimations?

Repeat weekly — this strengthens your “time sense” over time.

3. “How Long Does It *Really* Take?” Master Chart

Fill this out once, then reference whenever you plan your day.

Morning Tasks

- Brush teeth: ____ minutes
- Shower: ____ minutes
- Get dressed: ____ minutes
- Pack bag: ____ minutes

Household Tasks

- Dishes: ____ minutes
- One load of laundry (wash + dry + fold): ____ minutes
- Clean kitchen surfaces: ____ minutes
- Vacuum one room: ____ minutes

Work Tasks

- Check email inbox: ____ minutes
- Write a short message: ____ minutes
- Outline a blog post: ____ minutes
- 1 focused work block: ____ minutes

Self-Care / Transitions

- Transition between tasks: ____ minutes
- Getting out the door: ____ minutes
- Winding down for bed: ____ minutes

This chart removes uncertainty and helps time feel *predictable*.

4. ADHD-Friendly Time-Externalization Tools

Visual Timers (best for ADHD brains):

- Time Timer
- Visual countdown bars
- Digital hourglasses
- YouTube timers with shrinking circles

Physical Tools:

- Wall clock in every room
- Magnetic kitchen timers
- Hourglasses for 5–15 minute increments

Digital Tools:

- Forest app (visual focus timer)
- Focus To-Do
- TickTick (offers visual timeline planning)
- Google Calendar with color-coded blocks

Why They Work:

ADHD brains struggle with internal clocks — visualizing time makes it *real*.

5. Micro-Block Time Templates

20-Minute Micro-Block Template

- Minutes 0–3 → *Warm-up / gather materials*
- Minutes 3–15 → *Focused work*
- Minutes 15–18 → *Wrap-up*
- Minutes 18–20 → *Transition / notes*

10-Minute Sprint Template

- Min 0–1: Start timer
- Min 1–8: Quick-task sprint
- Min 8–10: Wrap-up

5-Minute “Momentum Starter”

- Pick an easy win
- Set a 5-minute timer
- Stop when the timer ends
- If momentum happens naturally, ride it (but don’t force it)

Use these when feeling frozen, overwhelmed, or unsure how long something will take.

6. Time Anchors & Daily Structure Pages

Time anchors create predictable rhythm, helping your brain feel the flow of the day.

My Morning Anchors

- Start coffee / tea
- Open curtains
- Quick body or sensory check
- 10-minute planning block
- First focus task

My Afternoon Anchors

- Lunch break
- Reset workspace for 5 minutes
- Mini-walk or stretch
- Second focus block

My Evening Anchors

- Kitchen reset
- Shower or calming activity
- Set phone charging station
- Prepare tomorrow's top 3 tasks

Having anchors reduces chaos, time-slipping, and emotional overload.

7. Time-Blindness-Friendly Planning Page

Use this daily.

Today's Top 3

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Estimated Time for Each

1. _____ minutes

2. _____ minutes

3. _____ minutes

Actual Time (Fill in later)

1. _____ minutes

2. _____ minutes

3. _____ minutes

Timers I Will Use Today

- 5-min timer
- 10-min timer
- 15-min timer
- 20-min timer
- Visual countdown
- Hourglass

My Time Anchors Today

- Morning anchor: _____

- Midday anchor: _____
- Evening anchor: _____

Where Did Time Slip?

Use this gently, without blame.

- Hyperfocus
- Unexpected task
- Emotional overwhelm
- Decision paralysis
- Phone / tech
- Transition difficulty
- Underestimated task length

8. Transition Assistance Page (ADHD-friendly)

Transitions are where time blindness hits hardest.
Use this script to move between tasks.

1. Stop:

Say out loud: *“I am ending this task now.”*

2. Shift:

Take one breath.
Move your body (stand, stretch, walk 5 steps).

3. Start:

Name the next task:
“Now I’m going to ____.”

4. Anchor:

Start a timer immediately.

9. Emotional Regulation for Time Blindness

When time gets slippery, emotions often flare:

- shame
- urgency panic
- overwhelm
- decision paralysis
- frustration at yourself

Use one of these grounding supports:

Regulation Menu

- 30-second cold water splash
- 1-minute sensory reset
- Weighted blanket for 3 minutes
- Standing stretch
- 4–7–8 breathing
- Quick physical reset (pick up one item and put it away)

Once regulated, time perception becomes clearer.

10. Weekly Time Awareness Reflection Page

Use at the end of each week.

1. Where did I lose the most time?

2. Which tools helped the most?

3. One task I consistently underestimate:

4. One thing that made time feel easier this week:

5. One change I want to try next week:

This reinforces learning and helps your time sense calibrate.

The Task Launcher Worksheet

This page helps you walk yourself through starting one real task—even (especially) if you’ve been avoiding it. Use it whenever you feel stuck and want to move forward *gently and intentionally*.

Step 1: Choose Your Task

What’s one task you’ve been avoiding—but still want to do?

Step 2: Break It Into Micro-Moves

What’s the *absolute smallest* starting action you can take right now?

(Example: “Open the document” or “Pick up the laundry basket”)

Optional: Keep going if it feels good. If not, pause.

Step 3: Reduce the Pressure

What's *not required* for today?

(e.g., perfection, completion, doing it all in one sitting)

What would “starting with kindness” look like?

What can you tell yourself instead of “I should have done this already”?

(Example: “I’m starting now—and that’s enough.”)

Step 4: After You Try

Did you take a step—even a micro-step?

Yes

No, and that’s okay

What helped—or got in the way?

Do you want to keep going, rest, or try again later?

What's one thing you can appreciate about yourself right now?

Emotional Regulation Log

A gentle tool to help you notice patterns, understand triggers, and support your nervous system.

How This Log Works

This Emotional Regulation Log is designed to help you build awareness around your emotions, reactions, and triggers in a way that feels structured, safe, and non-overwhelming.

The system uses two connected parts:

1. Quick Entry Page

On the first pages of the log, you'll see a numbered list with space for the date and a brief description of the situation (e.g., "argument with roommate," "felt overwhelmed starting homework," "unexpected sensory overload").

These numbered entries (1–30) are your snapshot moments—simple, fast, low-effort.

✓ Just jot down enough so you remember what happened later.

2. Detailed Reflection Pages

Each number on your entry page corresponds to a matching number on the reflection pages that follow (e.g., Situation 1, Situation 2, up to Situation 30).

On these pages, you'll find thoughtfully structured prompts such as:

- How did I feel leading up to this moment?
- What likely triggered this?
- How did this reaction affect myself and others?
- Notes for additional context

Emotion & Trigger Log

#	Date	Situation
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		

#	Date	Situation
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		
26		
27		
28		
29		
30		

1

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

2

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

3

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

4

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

5

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

6

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

7

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

8

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

9

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

10

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

11

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

12

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

13

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

14

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

15

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

16

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

17

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

18

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

19

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

20

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

21

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

22

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

23

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

24

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

25

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

26

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

27

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

28

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

29

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

30

Situation

How did I feel leading up to this moment?

What likely triggered this?

How did this reaction affect myself and others?

Notes:

Hours of Sleep: _____

I'm Feeling: Groggy Energized Irritable Stressed

Yesterday's Nutrition: _____

Calm Impulsive Hungry Thirsty Motivated

Top Priorities

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

To-Do List

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

8a _____

9a _____

10a _____

11a _____

12p _____

1p _____

2p _____

3p _____

4p _____

5p _____

Evening:

I'm Feeling:

What's Been Difficult?

How Will I Be Kind to Myself?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Today's Big Accomplishments!

Needs met:

<input type="checkbox"/> Quality Rest	<input type="checkbox"/> Exercise	<input type="checkbox"/> Water
<input type="checkbox"/> Food	<input type="checkbox"/> Fresh Air	<input type="checkbox"/> Fun

Quick-Start Guide for ADHD & Autistic Adults

A simple, gentle way to begin building executive function supports without getting overwhelmed.

1. Start With One Area of Struggle

Don't try to overhaul everything at once.

Choose **ONE** executive function challenge that affects your daily life the most, such as:

- Time blindness
- Emotional dysregulation
- Task initiation
- Organization
- Sensory overload
- Working memory problems

Circle it, highlight it, or write it down.

This becomes your anchor.

2. Add ONE Tool to Support That Area

ADHD and autistic brains work best with **small, controlled changes**.

Pick one simple tool:

- Emotional Regulation Log
- Time timer or analog clock
- Micro-step task sheet
- Daily planner page
- Sensory regulation object
- Sticky-note reminder
- Weekly check-in page

The goal is not perfection — it's *access*.

3. Make the Tool Visible and Easy to Use

Out of sight = out of mind.

Place your new tool somewhere you naturally look:

- On your desk
- By the coffee maker
- On a wall
- Inside a planner left open
- On your home screen

Reduce friction by making the tool impossible to forget.

4. Create One Gentle Daily Check-In

This is where most EF progress happens — in micro-reflection.

Choose a prompt such as:

- “What does my brain need right now?”
- “What’s one thing I can start?”
- “How is my body feeling?”
- “What’s the next tiny step?”

This takes **10 seconds** but gives you back clarity.

5. Expect Your Capacity to Change (That’s Normal)

ADHD and autistic adults do not have linear or predictable energy patterns.

Your capacity will vary because of:

- Sensory load
- Emotional cycles
- Social burnout
- Executive fatigue
- Sleep swings
- Disrupted routines

Your toolbox is designed to **support the brain you have today**, not the one you “should” have.

6. Use Routines as Flexible Frameworks — Not Rules

Rigid routines often fail.

Flexible routines **bend with your nervous system**.

Try frameworks like:

- Morning routine = 2 things: check-in + priority
- Evening routine = 2 things: reset + prepare
- Work block = 1 focus + 1 break

Structure without pressure is the sweet spot.

7. Notice Early Warning Signs

You regain executive function faster when you identify early cues that you're dysregulating.

Common warning signs:

- Feeling foggy or scattered
- Avoiding simple tasks
- Sensory irritation increases
- Overthinking or emotional spikes
- Losing track of time
- Staring at a wall or screen
- Getting stuck on transitions

When you notice a sign → take a **one-minute regulation break**.

8. Build Slowly — Add One Tool Each Week

Your toolbox will grow over time.

A suggested timeline:

- Week 1 → Add a daily tool
- Week 2 → Add a time management tool
- Week 3 → Add an emotional regulation tool
- Week 4 → Add a sensory support
- Week 5 → Add a weekly check-in

You don't need everything at once.

Small foundations compound.

9. Self-Compassion Is a Tool Too

ADHD and autistic adults often internalize shame around:

- inconsistency
- emotional intensity
- forgetfulness
- starting and stopping
- burnout cycles
- losing time
- unfinished tasks

None of these are personal failures.

They are **executive function load responses**, not character traits.

Self-compassion makes every EF tool more effective.

10. Your EF Toolbox Will Evolve With You

As your routines shift, burnout levels change, or new supports become available, your EF toolbox will update itself.

Your needs are *allowed* to change.

Your systems can change with you.

The only goal of this guide is to help you begin — gently, realistically, and with tools that honor your neurodivergent brain.

