

The Executive Function Skills Checklist (Downloadable PDF) from the ExecutiveFunctionToolkit.com

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.

Sections

- Planning & Prioritization
- Organization
- Working Memory
- Time Management
- Task Initiation
- Emotional Regulation
- Impulse Control
- Cognitive Flexibility
- Perseverance

Planning & Prioritization

How you break down tasks, decide what matters, and form actionable plans

- I can identify which tasks are truly important versus just urgent.
- I can choose a realistic number of tasks for the day without overwhelming myself.
- I can sequence tasks in a logical order that makes the day flow more smoothly.
- I can recognize when I'm avoiding a task and revisit whether it still matters.
- I can pause and decide the "next best step" when I feel stuck or unsure.
- I can balance long-term goals with short-term needs when choosing what to focus on.
- I can break down vague tasks (like "work on project") into actionable steps.
- I can prioritize tasks based on deadlines, energy levels, and available time.
- I can start with the most meaningful or high-impact task rather than the easiest one.
- I can pause before starting to clarify the goal or expected outcome.
- I can estimate whether I have enough energy, materials, or time to begin a task.
- I can plan breaks or rest periods into my schedule when needed.
- I can look ahead to upcoming days and prepare for what's coming next.

Organization

The ability to create and maintain systems that keep information, objects, and tasks accessible, structured, and easy to manage.

- I can group similar items together in ways that make sense to me.
- I can sort through items and separate what I need from what I don't.
- I can create simple systems that help me keep things in order.
- I can set up my physical spaces so they are easy to navigate and use.
- I know where my belongings go and can return them to their proper place.
- I can organize digital information (files, notes, emails, apps) so I can find it later.
- I use tools like folders, labels, or color-coding to keep things structured.
- I can maintain organization over time with small resets or cleanups.
- I can put high-use items in accessible places and low-use items farther away.
- I can quickly find what I need without searching for long periods.
- I use visual cues (labels, icons, colors) to help keep spaces or systems clear.
- I can break big projects into organized parts or lists to stay on track.
- I notice when clutter is building up and take steps to address it.
- I can make decisions about what to keep, toss, store, or donate.
- I can adjust my environment to support focus and reduce sensory overwhelm.
- I know when an organizational system is no longer working and can revise it.

Working Memory

The ability to hold information in mind long enough to use it.

- I can hold information in my mind long enough to use it.
- I can keep track of where I am in a task without losing my place.
- I can follow multi-step instructions without forgetting parts of them.
- I can remember verbal instructions long enough to act on them.
- I can update information in my mind when something changes.
- I can work with information in my head (compare, calculate, or problem-solve).
- I can think through ideas without losing important details.
- I can handle two mental tasks at once without getting overwhelmed.
- I can remember what I was about to do before I got distracted.
- I can quickly pull information back to mind when I need it.
- I can keep my main goal in mind while working through smaller steps.
- I use notes, reminders, or visuals when I know my memory needs support.
- I can choose the right memory support (list, sticky note, planner) for the task.
- I can keep track of details without needing to constantly start over.

Time Management

The ability to understand time, plan around it, use it intentionally, and adjust as needed.

- I can estimate how long tasks will take before I start them.
- I notice when time is passing faster or slower than I expect.
- I can schedule tasks into specific time blocks that work for me.
- I choose how to use my time based on what matters most.
- I can identify activities that waste time or pull me off track.
- I can pace myself so I don't rush or drag through a task.
- I can start tasks at the time I planned to start them.
- I can transition from one task to another without losing momentum.
- I can stop a task when needed and move on to what's next.
- I can create and track deadlines without waiting until the last minute.
- I use external tools (timers, alarms, planners, apps) to stay aware of time.
- I can choose tasks that fit the amount of time and energy I have.
- I can adjust my plan when time gets away from me and recover quickly.

Task Initiation

The ability to begin tasks independently, efficiently, and without excessive delay or avoidance.

- I can push through the initial resistance I feel when starting a task.
- I can identify a clear, concrete first step instead of getting stuck.
- I can start tasks even when I feel anxious, bored, overwhelmed, or unsure.
- I can build enough mental or physical energy to get myself into action.
- I can transition from one activity to the next without long delays.
- I can remove barriers (materials, clutter, noises) that make starting harder.
- I respond to reminders or cues instead of ignoring or dismissing them.
- I can break overwhelming tasks into small steps that feel doable.
- I can prepare just enough to begin without getting lost in over-planning.
- I can interrupt procrastination and redirect myself back to the task.
- I can start tasks independently without needing someone else to prompt me.
- I can use supports like timers or body doubling when starting feels difficult.
- I can build momentum once I begin so I keep going after the first step.

Emotional Regulation

The ability to notice, manage, recover from, and work with emotions in a way that supports functioning and wellbeing.

- I can notice when my emotions are starting to rise before they get overwhelming.
- I can identify and name what I'm feeling with reasonable accuracy.
- I can understand what triggered my emotions or contributed to them.
- I can pause instead of reacting automatically when emotions spike.
- I can calm myself enough to think clearly when I'm upset or stressed.
- I can tolerate uncomfortable feelings without shutting down or losing control.
- I can reframe negative or unhelpful thoughts during emotional stress.
- I can return to baseline after emotional activation or conflict.
- I can use grounding, breathing, or self-compassion strategies to soothe myself.
- I can recognize when sensory overload is affecting my emotions.
- I can adjust my environment or sensory input to help myself stay regulated.
- I can set emotional boundaries so I don't absorb others' stress or feelings.
- I can stay functional and continue tasks even when I'm feeling mildly stressed.

Impulse Control

The ability to pause, evaluate, and choose responses rather than acting automatically.

- I can pause before speaking or acting, even when I feel the urge to jump in.
- I can resist distractions and stay focused on the task I'm doing.
- I can keep emotional reactions from turning into impulsive actions.
- I can choose long-term goals over immediate urges or temptations.
- I can notice when I'm starting to act on impulse and stop myself.
- I can filter out thoughts or ideas that aren't relevant in the moment.
- I can manage social impulses, like interrupting or oversharing.
- I can think through consequences before making decisions.
- I can follow rules and boundaries even when I feel tempted not to.
- I can interrupt automatic habits or behaviors that happen without thinking.
- I can catch myself when I start doom-scrolling, clicking, or checking compulsively.
- I can use strategies (breathing, pausing, grounding) to delay impulses.
- I can choose actions that align with my goals instead of reacting automatically.

Cognitive Flexibility

The ability to shift thoughts, strategies, perspectives, and behaviors when situations change.

- I can shift from one task to another without getting mentally stuck.
- I can adjust my thinking when my first plan or strategy isn't working.
- I can consider different perspectives or interpretations of a situation.
- I can adapt when plans or expectations change unexpectedly.
- I can recover from mistakes or setbacks without shutting down.
- I can come up with alternative solutions when the original plan doesn't work.
- I can shift my emotional state or expectations when needed.
- I can change direction or tone in conversations when the context shifts.
- I can avoid all-or-nothing thinking and stay open to possibilities.
- I can tolerate uncertainty or ambiguity without panicking or freezing.
- I can generate new ideas or creative approaches when faced with challenges.
- I can update my decisions or plans when new information becomes available.
- I can rethink rigid beliefs or internal narratives when they no longer serve me.

Perseverance

The ability to persist through challenges, maintain effort, and keep moving toward goals despite discomfort, obstacles, or delays in reward.

- I can stay focused on a task long enough to make steady progress.
- I can tolerate frustration or confusion without giving up.
- I can manage my effort so I don't give too much or too little at once.
- I can stick with long-term goals even when they take days or weeks to complete.
- I can finish tasks instead of abandoning them near the end.
- I can recover and continue after setbacks or mistakes.
- I can regain motivation when I hit emotional or mental dips.
- I can keep working even when the reward or payoff isn't immediate.
- I can find internal reasons to continue a task when it's not interesting.
- I can stop myself from quitting or switching to easier tasks just to avoid discomfort.
- I can adjust my approach when I'm stuck instead of giving up on the goal.
- I can return to a task and rebuild momentum after interruptions.
- I can keep going through boredom or low-interest periods without shutting down.

How to Use This Checklist

This checklist is designed to help you understand where your executive functioning skills are thriving — and where you might benefit from supports, tools, and new strategies.

You can use it as:

- **A personal self-assessment**
- **A progress-tracking tool** (repeat every 4–6 weeks)
- **A reflection aid for coaching or therapy sessions**
- **A way to identify which skills to focus on next**
- **A gentle, clarity-building snapshot of how your brain is functioning right now**

For additional resources, tools, and strategies, visit the executivefunctiontoolkit.com.