

ADHD Overwhelm Cheat Sheet



Seven ways to get moving when everything feels like too much - built for how ADHD brains actually start, switch, and stop. Wiring, not willpower.

1 FIND THE JAM

2 MAKE IT SMALLER

3 MOTION BEFORE IMPORTANCE

The Unfreeze Move

START HERE WHEN FROZEN

- When task paralysis hits, don't hunt for the most important thing. Pick the **physically nearest tiny action** - the mug beside you, the one email already open, the sock on the floor - and do it. Motion restarts the engine. Importance can wait 90 seconds.

2 Shrink the Doorway

CAN'T START · 2 MIN

- Rewrite the task as its first two minutes: *"open the document,"* not *"write the report."*
- Name a physical action you could do half-asleep: open, put on, walk to.
- Still stalling? The doorway is too big. Halve it again.
- Once you're through, keep going or stop - both count as a win.

WHY ADHD brains stall at ambiguous entrances. A doorway you can see through is one you can walk through.

3 Externalize Everything

FORGETTING · ONGOING



- One capture place for every task and idea - not five apps and a napkin.
- Timers you can see; let the clock do the counting, not your head.
- Put reminders where the action happens: note on the door, pills by the kettle.

WHY Your brain is for having ideas, not holding them. Working memory is the bottleneck - stop billing it.

4 Body Doubling

NO MOMENTUM · ANY LENGTH

- Work alongside someone: same room, a video call, or a focus stream.
- Nobody has to talk, and nobody checks your work. Presence is the whole trick.
- Trade it: "I'll sit with your taxes if you sit with my inbox."

WHY Another person's quiet presence steadies your attention the way a metronome steadies tempo. Co-regulation, not supervision.

5 The One-Surface Rule

TOO MANY INPUTS · 1 MIN

- One tab, one desk zone, one task visible. That's the whole rule.
- Sweep everything else into a "later" box or off the screen.
- A sticky note with the current task is the only thing allowed to face you.

WHY Every visible extra is an open loop shouting for attention. Out of sight really is out of the bidding.

6 Transition Ramps

SWITCHING TASKS · 5 MIN

- Give yourself the five-minute warning you'd give a kid.
- Alarm at minus five: "start landing this." Alarm at zero: stand up.
- Say the next task out loud while you walk toward it.
- Leave a breadcrumb: one line on where to restart later.

WHY For ADHD brains, the switch is the expensive part, not the task. A ramp makes the price payable.

7 The Movement Snack

FRIED FOCUS · 90 SEC



- 90 seconds of stairs, wall push-ups, or dancing hard to one fast song.
- Go until your breath picks up, then stop and come back.
- Don't wait to feel ready - readiness follows movement, not the reverse.

WHY A short burst of movement resets a fried attention system faster than more forcing ever will.

READ THIS TWICE

This is not laziness

Lazy is indifferent. **You are agonizing** - and nobody spends three hours dreading a five-minute task because they don't care. Overwhelm plus a jammed task-initiation system is a well-known ADHD pattern: a wiring difference, not a character flaw. Working **with** the wiring beats fighting it, every time.