

Stop Losing Your Week: ADHD Routine Builder for Real Life

A brain-based system using reward anchors and body-doubling slots so your week finally runs itself

For: Adults 25-40 who are diagnosed or self-identified with ADHD, have tried and abandoned multiple planners, feel chronic guilt every Monday morning, and need a system that works with their dopamine-driven brain — not against it

By **HogTron Factory** · hogtron.com

Contents

- 01 Why Every Planner Has Failed You
- 02 The Three Pillars of a Sticky ADHD Routine
- 03 Map Your Brain's Energy Zones
- 04 Build Your Week Block by Block
- 05 Your Weekly Reset Worksheet
- 06 When the Routine Falls Apart (It Will)
- 07 Stack Habits and Scale Over Time

01

Why Every Planner Has Failed You

Validates the reader's frustration by explaining the neuroscience gap between standard planners and the ADHD brain.

You didn't fail the planner. The planner failed you. And there's a neurological reason for that — not a character flaw, not laziness, not a lack of trying hard enough.

The Dopamine Problem No One Told You About

Standard planners are built on the assumption that writing something down makes it feel real and worth doing. For most brains, that works. For the ADHD brain, it often doesn't — because **dopamine** is the key player, and it's in short supply.

Dopamine is the chemical your brain releases in response to rewards. It's what makes an action feel worth starting. When you look at a task on a planner — something due in three days, or worse, "sometime this week" — your brain does a quick unconscious calculation: *how real is this reward?* If it feels distant or abstract, dopamine doesn't show up to the party. No dopamine, no motivation to start. It's not a willpower gap. It's a chemistry gap.

Now vs. Not-Now

ADHD brains experience time differently than neurotypical ones. Researchers call it **time blindness** — but a more honest description is this: there are only two time zones. Now, and not-now. Tomorrow morning is not-now. Thursday's deadline is not-now, right up until it's

terrifyingly now.

This is why your lovingly color-coded hourly schedule collapses by Tuesday. The 10 a.m. block you planned on Sunday exists in not-now. When Tuesday arrives and life has already happened — you slept badly, something urgent came up, the block is already missed — the whole architecture feels broken. So you abandon it.

The Shame Spiral Is Real

Here's where it gets cruel. Every abandoned planner doesn't just disappear. It leaves a residue. After enough failed systems, your brain starts associating *planning itself* with failure. So you avoid it. You feel guilty on Sunday nights. You start the week already behind. That guilt and avoidance become their own barrier — completely separate from the original scheduling problem.

What Your Brain Actually Needs

Research on ADHD consistently points to four conditions that help the brain initiate and sustain effort:

- **Novelty** — something new or interesting enough to grab attention
- **Urgency** — a real or manufactured sense that it matters right now
- **Interest** — personal relevance or genuine curiosity
- **Challenge** — enough friction to feel engaging, not so much it triggers shutdown

Standard planners provide none of these. They're static, future-focused, and reward-free.

Why This System Is Different

This PDF doesn't ask you to want things more or try harder. Instead, it builds **reward anchors** — planned, genuine payoffs woven into your schedule so your brain has something real to move toward. And it uses **body-doubling windows** — structured time alongside other people, real or virtual — to manufacture the urgency and accountability your brain needs to actually start.

Willpower is not the engine here. Your brain's own wiring is.

02

The Three Pillars of a Sticky ADHD Routine

Introduces the core framework — Anchor Tasks, Reward Slots, and Body-Doubling Windows — before any scheduling begins.

Before you touch a calendar, you need to understand what your routine is actually built on. Most planners are built on willpower. This one is built on three structural pillars that work *with* how your brain generates momentum — not against it.

Pillar 1: Anchor Tasks

Anchor tasks are tiny, repeatable actions that signal to your brain: *the week has started, I know what's happening*. They're not your most important tasks. They're your most *consistent* ones.

Think: make coffee + open your planner. Put on shoes before 9am. A two-minute tidy of your desk before sitting down. The specific action barely matters — the repetition is the point. Anchors create a groove your brain can fall into instead of spending 40 minutes negotiating with itself.

The most common mistake here is **stacking too many anchors at once**. If your morning anchor routine takes more than 10-15 minutes, you've built a to-do list, not an anchor. Pick one to three max, keep them dead simple, and protect them like appointments.

Pillar 2: Reward Slots

Here's what most productivity advice gets catastrophically wrong: treats and breaks are not the same thing. A break is passive recovery. A **reward slot** is a *deliberate dopamine hit* you've earned and scheduled in advance.

The key is placement. Reward slots live *after* a hard or boring task — not whenever you feel like checking your phone. This creates a real incentive loop your brain can learn to predict.

Example sequence:

- 25 minutes of focused work on a report
- 10-minute reward slot: watch a video, scroll guilt-free, make a snack
- Back to the next task

When you skip reward slots — thinking you'll just push through — you train your brain that hard work leads to nothing good. Eventually it refuses to cooperate. Schedule the reward *first*, so your brain knows the payoff is coming.

Pillar 3: Body-Doubling Windows

You're not lazy when you work better with someone else around. That's just how many ADHD brains regulate — presence activates attention. **Body-doubling windows** are scheduled blocks where you work in parallel with another person, live, virtual, or even via a recorded study-with-me video.

This is not optional. It's infrastructure. Treat these windows exactly like meetings you can't move.

Options that work:

- A 60-minute virtual co-working call with a friend
- A live-streamed focus session on a platform like YouTube
- A body-doubling app where strangers work on camera together

How the Three Pillars Work Together

Anchors get you started. Reward slots keep you moving. Body-doubling windows carry you through the hardest stretches. None of them requires a perfect day — which is exactly the point. When one pillar wobbles, the other two hold the structure up. Momentum, not perfection, is the goal.

03

Map Your Brain's Energy Zones

Guides the reader through a personal energy audit so they schedule hard work when their brain is actually online.

Your brain doesn't run on a flat line of productivity. It spikes, crashes, and sometimes surprises you with a second wind at 9 p.m. Before you build any schedule, you need to know *your* actual curve — not the one productivity culture assumes you have.

The ADHD Energy Curve

Most ADHD brains move through three distinct phases in a day:

- **Hyperfocus peaks** — windows where your brain locks in, time disappears, and complex work flows
- **Crash windows** — the foggy, restless stretches where even replying to a text feels impossible
- **Rebound periods** — a second (sometimes third) wave of usable energy, often mid-afternoon or late evening

The problem with standard planners is they assume your best hours are 9–11 a.m. That's true for some people. It is absolutely not true for everyone, and assuming it is will wreck your week before Tuesday.

Are You a Morning Brain or a Night Brain?

Honestly answer these two questions:

1. In the last month, when did you do your best, most absorbed work — before noon or after 6 p.m.?
2. When you have a task you genuinely care about, what time do you *naturally* start moving toward it?

Trust the pattern, not the ideal. "I should be a morning person" is not data.

The 15-Minute Energy Audit

For three typical days — not your best days, not your worst — pause every two hours and log four things. You can use a notes app, a sticky note, anything:

1. **Focus level** — rate 1 to 5 (1 = scattered, 5 = locked in)
2. **Mood** — one word: flat, anxious, good, wired, etc.
3. **Output** — did you actually finish something in the last two hours? Yes or no.
4. **What you were doing** — not what you planned, what you actually did

After three days, look for the clusters. Where are your 4s and 5s? Where are your 1s? Those patterns are your personal energy map.

Protect Your Kryptonite Hours

Every ADHD brain has a stretch of time — usually 60 to 90 minutes somewhere in the day — where cognitive demand of any kind backfires. Maybe it's right after lunch. Maybe it's 4–5:30 p.m. You know the one. **Name it.** Write it down. These are your Kryptonite Hours, and in the next section you will deliberately protect them from anything requiring deep focus or decision-making.

Match Task Types to Zones

Once you have your zones mapped, assign task types like this:

- **Peak zones** → creative work, hard decisions, writing, complex problem-solving
- **Mid-energy zones** → admin tasks, email, scheduling, easy calls
- **Social energy zones** → meetings, collaborative work, check-ins (ADHD brains often regulate better with another person present)
- **Low/Kryptonite zones** → physical movement, passive learning, walks, or deliberate rest

You're not fighting your brain anymore. You're routing work through it strategically.

04

Build Your Week Block by Block

Step-by-step walkthrough for constructing a personalized weekly time-block template using the three pillars and energy map.

You've done the groundwork. You know your energy zones, you understand the three pillars. Now it's time to actually build the thing.

Work through these steps in order. Don't skip ahead — each layer depends on the one before it.

Step 1: Drop Your Anchor Tasks First

Before anything else goes on the template, place your **morning anchor** and **evening anchor**. These are your non-negotiables — each one takes under 10 minutes and signals to your brain that the day has a shape.

A morning anchor might look like: make coffee, open your task list, write down your one must-do for today. That's it. An evening anchor might be: close your tabs, write tomorrow's top task, charge your phone outside the bedroom. Small, repeatable, predictable.

Write yours here:

- My morning anchor: _____
- My evening anchor: _____

These go on every single day of your template, even weekends if you want the routine to hold.

Step 2: Block Your Hard Work — Then Reward It Immediately

Look at your energy map from the previous section. Find your two peak windows per day. Those are your **deep work blocks** — the slots for tasks that need real cognitive effort.

Here's the rule: the moment a deep work block ends, a **Reward Slot** begins. Back to back, no gap. The reward doesn't have to be big — a walk, a snack, 15 minutes of a game or show. What matters is that your brain can see the payoff coming before the hard work starts. That's not bribery. That's dopamine working with you.

Step 3: Lock In Two Body-Doubling Windows

Choose at least two blocks per week where you'll work alongside someone else — virtually or in person. Free virtual co-working rooms exist on platforms like Focusmate, YouTube livestreams labelled "study with me," or casual Discord servers for remote workers. Search "free body doubling ADHD" and you'll find options within minutes.

Mark these on your template as **BD Windows** and treat them like appointments.

Step 4: Fill Remaining Blocks With Categories, Not Tasks

For the rest of your time blocks, use **task categories** — not specific to-dos. Label blocks things like: Admin, Creative Work, Errands, Calls, Movement. This keeps the structure without making the template collapse the moment Monday's actual tasks look different from what you planned.

Step 5: Add Buffer Blocks and Defend Them

For every three or four blocks, leave one **buffer block** — 20 to 30 minutes of intentionally empty time. Buffers absorb overruns, transitions, and the unexpected meeting that appears at 2pm. White space is a feature. A template with no margin is a template you'll abandon by Wednesday.

The Good Enough Week Rule

Design your template for **70% completion**, not 100%. If you hit every anchor, both body-doubling windows, and roughly two-thirds of your task category blocks — that is a successful week. Build the template so that 70% still moves your life forward.

Handling Meetings and External Obligations

Drop fixed obligations onto the template first, before any flexible blocks. Then treat the time immediately before each meeting as a buffer (not a work block) and the time immediately after as a recovery buffer. Meetings expand — assume they will. Never schedule a deep work block to start five minutes after a call ends.

Once your meetings are placed, fill around them with your remaining categories. The template bends around your real life. That's the whole point.

05

Your Weekly Reset Worksheet

A hands-on, fill-in template the reader completes each Sunday to activate their routine for the coming week.

Sunday doesn't have to feel like dread. Done in about 20 minutes, this reset shifts you from reactive to ready — not by planning harder, but by making next-week decisions while your brain isn't already on fire.

Work through the six steps below in order. First time through, expect 25 minutes. After two or three weeks, you'll move through it in 15.

Step 1: Brain Dump (5 minutes, timer on)

Open a blank page — paper, notes app, whiteboard, doesn't matter. Set a five-minute timer and write down everything rattling around in your head: tasks, errands, worries, ideas, "oh I should really..." items. No sorting yet. Just empty the buffer.

Prompt: *What's in my head that isn't written down anywhere safe?*

Stop when the timer stops, even if the list feels incomplete.

Step 2: Triage the Dump

Now sort each item into one of three columns:

| This Week | Someday | Delegate |

|---|---|---|

| Has a real deadline or needs to move forward now | No urgency — park it | Someone else can or should do this |

Aim to land no more than 10-12 items in the **This Week** column. If you're over that, you're planning a fantasy week, not a real one.

Step 3: Slot Tasks Into Your Block Template

Take your weekly block template from Section 4 and pencil your "This Week" items into their matching energy zones. High-focus tasks go in your peak windows. Admin and errands go in your low-energy slots. Leave at least two blocks empty — buffer space is not wasted space.

Step 4: Name Your Most Important Task (MIT)

From everything on your list, pick **one task** that would make this week feel like a win even if nothing else gets done.

Fill in: *My MIT this week is _____, and I'm anchoring it to my body-doubling window on _____ at _____.*

Write it somewhere you'll see it Monday morning — sticky note on your laptop, lock screen, whiteboard corner.

Step 5: Choose Three Reward Slots

Pick three points in your week and name the specific reward waiting there. Vague rewards don't fire dopamine anticipation. Specific ones do.

- After I finish _____ on _____, I get _____.
- After I finish _____ on _____, I get _____.
- After I finish _____ on _____, I get _____.

Examples: a specific podcast episode, a walk to a particular coffee shop, 30 minutes of a game with notifications off.

Step 6: Set Your Monday Morning Trigger

Decide on one tiny action that fires the whole routine — something that takes under two minutes and has zero friction.

Fill in: *Monday starts when I* _____ . (Examples: open my block template before coffee, put on my "work" playlist, write today's MIT on a sticky note.)

Using This Worksheet

Paper version: Print one sheet per week, keep a stack in a Sunday folder or clip to your planner.

Digital version: Duplicate a template page in Notion, Google Docs, or any notes app each Sunday — rename it with the week's date and fill in directly. Set a repeating Sunday evening reminder titled "20-min reset" so the habit has its own trigger.

06

When the Routine Falls Apart (It Will)

Gives the reader a compassionate, practical recovery protocol so a missed day doesn't spiral into a lost week.

Let's get this out of the way right now: your routine **will** break. Not might. Will. A bad night's sleep, a surprise obligation, a week where your brain just won't cooperate — these aren't signs you chose the wrong system. They're signs you have an ADHD brain. The skill you're actually building here isn't perfect consistency. It's **repair speed**.

The gap between people who have a working routine and people who don't usually comes down to one thing: what they do on Day Two after everything goes sideways.

The 10-Minute Re-Entry Protocol

When you've missed a day (or three), don't try to catch up. Don't rebuild the whole week. Just do one thing: your **anchor task**. That's it.

Here's the exact protocol:

1. Open your routine template (don't fix it yet — just look at it)
2. Identify the single anchor task you planned for today or the nearest slot
3. Set a timer for 10 minutes and start only that task
4. When the timer goes off, you're back in the routine — everything else is a bonus

The goal isn't productivity. It's re-entry. Momentum follows motion, not motivation.

The Mid-Week Micro-Reset

If Wednesday arrives and the week is already off the rails, you don't need to start over. You need a **micro-reset** — a 15-minute recalibration, not a full Sunday rebuild.

- Cross out anything that genuinely can't happen this week
- Pick two non-negotiable anchor tasks for the remaining days
- Protect one reward slot, even a small one

That's it. You're not recovering the week you planned. You're salvaging a functional version of it.

Know Your Routine-Killers in Advance

Think back on the last few times your routine collapsed. What actually caused it? Most people have two or three recurring culprits.

Worksheet prompt: Fill in the blanks below —

- My routine most often breaks when: _____
- When that happens, my usual response is: _____
- A more useful response would be: _____

Do this for your top three disruptors. Write the workaround *before* you need it. A pre-decided response costs almost no willpower. A decision made mid-chaos costs a lot.

Adjust the Template, Don't Scrap It

If a hard month has you convinced the whole system is broken, pause before you delete everything. Routines need seasonal tuning, not total replacement. Ask: *which part stopped working, and why?* Swap that block. Keep the rest.

Track Restarts, Not Streaks

Streaks reward people who already have strong executive function. Instead, count your **restarts**. Every time you re-enter after a break, mark it. Ten restarts in a month means you're someone who doesn't quit — that's the actual superpower here. A high restart count isn't failure. It's proof the system is sticking.

07

Stack Habits and Scale Over Time

Shows readers how to expand their working routine gradually, adding complexity only once the core is solid.

You've done the hard part. The core routine is running. Now comes the part where most ADHD advice goes sideways — people get excited, pile on ten new habits, and crash the whole system by week three. Let's not do that.

The 30-Day Stability Rule

Before you add *anything* new, run your minimal routine untouched for 30 days. That sounds painfully slow. It's actually the fastest path forward. What you're doing in those 30 days is building the neural groove — making the sequence feel automatic rather than effortful. When something feels automatic, it doesn't drain your working memory, which means you have cognitive room to absorb something new.

If you miss days during the 30 days, that's fine (see section 6). But the clock doesn't restart. Just keep going. You're measuring consistency, not perfection.

Stacking Without Destabilizing

When the 30 days are up, add one thing — and attach it to an existing anchor. This is **habit stacking**: the new behavior borrows its cue from something already running.

Here's the formula:

After [existing anchor], I will [new habit] for [specific duration].

- After my morning coffee anchor, I will write three sentences in my journal for five minutes.
- After my Friday wrap-up anchor, I will check my budget for ten minutes.

Keep the new habit small enough that on a terrible day, you'd still do it. If you can only imagine doing it when everything goes right, it's too big.

Temptation Bundling for the Long Haul

Temptation bundling means pairing a task you resist with something you genuinely enjoy — and only allowing the enjoyable thing during that task. Your favorite podcast only plays during your weekly admin block. A specific playlist only comes on during your Sunday reset. Over time, your brain starts associating the task with the reward, and the resistance softens. This isn't a trick — it's working with your dopamine system instead of white-knuckling through it.

Connecting to Bigger Goals Without Over-Planning

Once a month, spend 15 minutes asking one question: *Is what I'm doing this week moving me toward what I care about this quarter?* That's it. No elaborate goal-mapping system. Just a single alignment check.

Write your current top-three monthly priorities somewhere you'll see them during your weekly reset. Three is enough. More than three is a wish list.

Build Your Routine Library

Life has seasons. Create saved templates for:

- **Full capacity weeks** — your default routine
- **Low-energy weeks** — stripped to anchors only

- **Travel weeks** — portable, location-independent version
- **High-deadline weeks** — protection mode, social commitments cleared

Label them, save them somewhere you can find them in under 60 seconds, and pull the right one each Sunday without guilt.

Signs It's Actually Stuck

- You feel *off* on days you skip the routine — not relieved
- You stop clock-watching during anchor tasks
- Other people notice you seem less frantic

When you hit one of these markers, acknowledge it out loud or in writing. Then keep going. Momentum is the celebration.

HogTron Factory

hogtron.com