

Time Blindness

Your inner clock runs on now and not-now. "Later" stays invisible until it's suddenly now – so move time out of your head.



● What it is

Time blindness is a broken sense of time – how much has passed, how long something will take, and where you are in the day. It isn't carelessness or not caring. The internal clock most people run on is, for an ADHD brain, genuinely unreliable.

*The tell: "five more minutes" becomes an hour, and you meant it both times. A project due "next week" is suddenly due tonight, and the week in between never felt real. **You end up late even when you tried to be early.***

● Why it's harder for ADHD

Your brain mostly sorts time into two boxes: **now** and **not-now**. Anything in not-now – a deadline, a plan, a thing you swore you'd do – barely registers until it crashes into now and becomes an emergency. **A stretch of time you can't see doesn't feel real, so it doesn't pull on you.** The clock isn't the problem; reading it from the inside is.

● The during-task blackout

Once you're into something, the sense of time passing switches off and minutes stop counting. That's why "just a bit longer" has no brakes.

● Estimates run short

Judging how long something will take – or how much time is left – is a measurement, and that's a broken gauge for you. The guesses come out systematically too low: "twenty minutes" is really forty. It's a faulty instrument, not laziness.

● What helps

● Put the clock in the room

Don't rely on the clock in your head – that's the broken part. A timer or clock you can actually see, counting down, puts the passage of time where you'll notice it. A shrinking wedge beats digits.

● Pad your estimates

Because the gauge reads short, take your honest guess and multiply it – 1.5× or 2×. Plan around the padded number, not the hopeful one; the padded one is usually the true one.

● Turn "later" into "now"

If it's not-now, it barely exists to your brain. Don't schedule the *deadline* – schedule the *doing*: pick the real time you'll start and set an alarm for that, not for when it's due.

● Hook it to something fixed

Attach the task to a marker already in your day – "right after dinner," "before the bus" – so it rides a time that actually happens instead of floating in a vague "sometime."

● Alarms that interrupt, not reminders you check

A note you have to remember to look at fails the same way your internal clock does. Set signals that go off on their own and make you act – the time cue has to come from outside, because inside it isn't working.

▶ Action Card – Beat the Clock

Learn it when you're calm; keep it where you work.

PLAN IT • WHEN YOU GET A TASK, OR START YOUR DAY

- 1 Guess how long it'll take, then double it. Plan around the bigger number.
- 2 Schedule the **start**: pick the actual time you'll do it (not just when it's due) and set an alarm for that time.
- 3 If it's due later, build a "now" – set an earlier checkpoint earlier in the week.

RUN IT • WHILE THE CLOCK IS GOING

- 4 Put a timer you can see where you're working; start it when you begin.
- 5 Alarm goes off → move. No "in a sec."
- 6 Went over the timer? That's the real length – pad more next time.

Your sense of time is the broken instrument. Trust the clock, not your gut.

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