

ADHD Symptoms, Impairments and Accommodations in the Work Environment

This chart is to be used as a reference for **adults with ADHD** and **their employers**. Possible strategies and accommodations are meant to address specific ADHD impairments caused by a disability. The impairments listed are directly linked to DSM 5 and ASRS symptoms and appropriate workplace accommodations (employer approved) and strategies (self initiated). This list is a summary and not meant to be exhaustive. Adults with ADHD will differ in the type and quantity of accommodations required. A process of trial and error may be required to discover the best possible options since ADHD symptoms as well as successful accommodations and strategies are very individual. It is important to note that in some cases just a few simple strategies and accommodations may significantly increase both job performance and job satisfaction.

DSM-5 Symptom [ASRS-6 Q#]	DSM-5 Symptom	Possible Resulting Impairments in the Work Environment	Possible Accommodations
INATTENTION			
1a ASRS-6 Q1 Trouble wrapping up details	Fails to give close attention to details OR makes careless mistakes creating inaccurate work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Inattention to detail – leaves part of task undone or misses crucial steps <input type="checkbox"/> Poor quality of work – inaccurate, careless mistakes, rushed work <input type="checkbox"/> Poor time management – doesn't leave time to complete details, check for mistakes or ensure quality of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Review of work by co-worker, team lead or supervisor prior to due-dates or completing task to add details, make corrections, or improve quality of finished task or product <input type="checkbox"/> More frequent check-ins with supervisor, manager, team lead or co-worker to review project, check details, assist with time management and due dates <input type="checkbox"/> Allow for more clarification <input type="checkbox"/> Check off sheet with steps or list of required details for completeness and best quality
1b No ASRS-6 item	Difficulty sustaining attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulties remaining focused during meetings and reading or writing lengthy amounts of material <input type="checkbox"/> Day-dreaming or mind-wandering <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty staying focused on boring or mundane activities <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty switching focus or prioritizing focus on important rather than interesting duties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Organize day so work requiring most focus is done during times of highest alertness <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule blocks of uninterrupted time <input type="checkbox"/> Cuing to bring person back to discussion or when giving instructions <input type="checkbox"/> Allow audiotaping or note taking during meetings or lengthy instructions <input type="checkbox"/> Supply hard copy of instructions <input type="checkbox"/> 5 to 10 minute warning when switch in focus is required

		<input type="checkbox"/> Hyper-focusing on interesting or creative tasks and unable to disengage resulting in missed work, deadlines and meetings	<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure attention prior to giving instructions <input type="checkbox"/> Switch out mundane and interesting tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Use of intrusive reminders and warnings prior to meetings or when tasks need to be completed – electronic reminders <input type="checkbox"/> Use of timer for concentrated times of focus or completion of tasks
1c No ASRS-6 item	Difficulties listening when spoken to directly, mind wanders	<input type="checkbox"/> Poor listening skills <input type="checkbox"/> Mind often wanders when manager, supervisor or coworkers are speaking and during meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Often misses social cues or key words during one-on-one or small group interactions	<input type="checkbox"/> Allow note taking or recording <input type="checkbox"/> Follow-up meetings with written summary of instructions, due dates etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide written overview of steps to a task or project or post steps to a task <input type="checkbox"/> Allow for difficulty with social cues <input type="checkbox"/> Allow employee to opt out of social situations <input type="checkbox"/> With employee's permission explain impairment of social skills to co-workers
1d No-ASRS-6 item	Difficulties following through on instructions AND fails to finish tasks	<input type="checkbox"/> Has difficulty following through on lengthy instructions <input type="checkbox"/> Starts tasks but loses focus and becomes easily side-tracked <input type="checkbox"/> Fails to finish duties especially when not immediate	<input type="checkbox"/> Allow for frequent follow-up with supervisor, manager or team lead for clarification of steps of task or list of duties and completeness <input type="checkbox"/> Use "to-do" check lists as reminders of tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Print out, post and refer to steps of tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Employee to report back to assigned person when task is completed before beginning another task – this increases accountability
1e ASRS-6 Q2. Trouble getting things in order	Difficulty organizing tasks & activities	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to chunk projects or duties into manageable pieces – knowing what comes first or next – easily overwhelmed <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty staying on track of larger projects or assigned duties <input type="checkbox"/> Misplacing work-related documents, tools and materials <input type="checkbox"/> Maintaining an organized work space <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty organizing thoughts <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty sequencing or organizing steps in complex projects, creating an outline, or creating a schedule to finish projects	<input type="checkbox"/> Use professional workplace organizers to help employee set up an organized workspace, organizational strategies and filing systems <input type="checkbox"/> Assist with the chunking of larger tasks and projects and revisit periodically <input type="checkbox"/> Additional orientation or training may be helpful for employees juggling multiple or repetitive tasks <input type="checkbox"/> Chart and post daily, weekly and monthly tasks that occur routinely <input type="checkbox"/> Increase oversight and checking in by employee to report what has been completed

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Having to go over and over instructions and still unable to organize what has to be done and in what order <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to juggle, daily, weekly and monthly tasks without assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use posted “to do” lists or individual lists that can be checked off <input type="checkbox"/> Provide organizational/planning software plus instruction & support on its use <input type="checkbox"/> Promote teamwork amongst coworkers, including planning meetings for projects <input type="checkbox"/> Supervision with prioritization of tasks – schedule bi-weekly meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Limited number of projects worked on at one time – assign a new project only when previous project is complete, if possible <input type="checkbox"/> Gantt or flow-charts on time lines for larger projects – especially useful for team projects <input type="checkbox"/> Paperwork is often impairing – minimize, streamline, automate, colour code, dictate or delegate paperwork whenever possible
1f ASRS-6 Q4. Delay getting started	Avoids, dislikes OR reluctant to engage in tasks requiring mental effort - preparing reports, completing forms, reviewing lengthy papers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Puts off starting projects – procrastinates <input type="checkbox"/> Gets anxious about procrastinating <input type="checkbox"/> Putting off unpleasant tasks until the last minute <input type="checkbox"/> Late or rushed completion of assignments reducing quality of work <input type="checkbox"/> Delayed long term projects or excessive overtime to meet deadlines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Assign tasks suited to immediate response <input type="checkbox"/> Work with supervisor or co-worker to develop timeline and due dates – add extra cushion <input type="checkbox"/> Closer supervision – biweekly scheduled meeting with supervisor to check on progress <input type="checkbox"/> Balance workload and type of work – for example, set up a schedule where you take a break after 30 minutes of menial work to get up and stretch for 5 minutes, or balance a menial task with creative work throughout the day
1g no ASRS-6 item	Often loses things necessary for tasks or activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Loses tools, electronic organizers, laptop, books, papers, keys, phone, wallet <input type="checkbox"/> Loses things that are vital to completing assignments, duties, life activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Unify organisational strategies for workplace <input type="checkbox"/> Work on developing habits or strategies for keeping needed items in just one place <input type="checkbox"/> Teach retracing of steps to remember where item was last used <input type="checkbox"/> System of checking belonging before leaving a location

1h	Easily distracted by extraneous stimuli or wandering thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Distracted by noise, visual distractors and movement of others <input type="checkbox"/> Daydreams or gets distracted by own thoughts <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to remain focused during, meetings, group or social activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Allow to work in a quiet environment <input type="checkbox"/> Use of (noise-cancelling) headphones <input type="checkbox"/> Use of reminder alerts to refocus employee <input type="checkbox"/> Priority seating or allow to work away from sources of distraction – lower traffic areas <input type="checkbox"/> Flex-time to facilitate some less-distracting time to work – beginning work an hour early <input type="checkbox"/> Closing office doors or use of empty areas <input type="checkbox"/> Use of sound absorption panels <input type="checkbox"/> Working at home part-time – detail work may be easier to complete while uninterrupted <input type="checkbox"/> Employees to wear headsets when on phone <input type="checkbox"/> Use of space enclosures (cubicle walls) or face desk away from the line of traffic <input type="checkbox"/> Allow employees to bring in their own professional organizer for de-cluttering or reconfiguring their work environment, minimize visual distractions and the development of organizational systems
1i ASRS-6 Q3 Difficulty remembering appointments	Often forgetful in daily activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Often misses, duties, tasks, meetings appointments & due dates <input type="checkbox"/> Over-reliance on electronic reminders or on others to remind <input type="checkbox"/> Gets mixed up with days and duties <input type="checkbox"/> Forgets to record appointment in electronic scheduler/phone etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Forgets commitments resulting in difficulty sustaining work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use electronic organizers and reminders, timers, alerts and beepers <input type="checkbox"/> Request that employee take immediate action on tasks or place into electronic calendar <input type="checkbox"/> Help develop routine times of day for employee to check agenda for reminders <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage messages to be written in a binder <input type="checkbox"/> Follow-up meetings or verbal instructions with an e-mail or hard copy to review information <input type="checkbox"/> Employees to use charts or cheat sheets for tasks and instructions <input type="checkbox"/> Use agenda or phone calendar rather than scraps of paper or post-its <input type="checkbox"/> Promote an environment of teamwork where employees feel that they can ask one another questions when unsure of something

DSM-5 Symptom [ASRS-6 Q#]	DSM-5 Symptom	Possible Resulting Impairments in the Workplace Environment	Possible Accommodations
HYPERACTIVITY/ IMPULSIVITY			
2a ASRS-6 Q5 Fidgets or squirms	Often fidgets with or taps hands or feet OR squirms in seat	<input type="checkbox"/> Constant movement, pacing, tapping <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to remain seated at desk or in meetings for extended periods <input type="checkbox"/> Fidgets to the point of distracting others <input type="checkbox"/> Fidgets with objects, leg-jiggling, shifting positions frequently, humming <input type="checkbox"/> Bites nails, cracks knuckles	<input type="checkbox"/> Use of fidget toys or stress balls for intentional fidgeting <input type="checkbox"/> Private workspace where employee will not disturb others with movement, fidgeting or humming <input type="checkbox"/> Work from home <input type="checkbox"/> Explain need for movement to co-workers with employees' consent
2b No ASRS-6 item	Often leaves seat in situations when remaining seated is expected	<input type="checkbox"/> Unable to sit in meetings or at desk for extended periods	<input type="checkbox"/> Taking notes during meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Standing desks or exercise balls to sit on <input type="checkbox"/> Built in structured breaks that allow for movement <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise during lunch – combine break and lunch times for longer movement breaks
2e ASRS-6 Q6 Compelled to move or do things, overactive	Often 'on the go', acting as if 'driven like a motor'	<input type="checkbox"/> When working at desk, computer or work station feels compelled to get up and move about <input type="checkbox"/> Get bursts of energy and must move around <input type="checkbox"/> Unable to function, remain still in quiet environment or confined work spaces <input type="checkbox"/> Gets anxious if cannot move around – compelled to move <input type="checkbox"/> Cannot shut off creative side, streams of ideas, so constantly writing notes or muttering, recording voice notes because cannot write as fast as thinks	<input type="checkbox"/> Provision for more frequent breaks <input type="checkbox"/> Tasks that encourage movement breaks – walking to meetings, getting mail or coffee, walking to a co-worker rather than picking up the phone, using stairs not elevator <input type="checkbox"/> Allow preferred seating so pacing and leaving area will not distract others <input type="checkbox"/> Allow controlled movement – stress ball <input type="checkbox"/> Provision of standing/elevated desk or work station <input type="checkbox"/> Allow for independent work so movement will not distract others <input type="checkbox"/> Allow for outlets of creative side and provide white board etc. to record creative ideas so they thoughts need not continuously circle

<p>2g, 2h, 2i No ASRS-6 item</p>	<p>Often blurts out, unable to await turn, interrupts or intrudes and takes over what others are doing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Committing to tasks and projects impossible to complete <input type="checkbox"/> Blurting out inappropriate or regrettable thoughts and comments <input type="checkbox"/> Jumping into projects without a plan <input type="checkbox"/> Impulsively jumping from job to job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop a standard statement to fall back on when asked to commit to things, such as “That sounds very interesting, but I need to check my schedule or check with my supervisor” <input type="checkbox"/> Note taking of thoughts and potential points to avoid interrupting or off-topic comments during meetings – this will delay the thought process and allow for reflection <input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor to help create timeline of daily schedule of duties <input type="checkbox"/> Partner with a co-worker or supervisor to plan and organize larger tasks and projects <input type="checkbox"/> Create timelines for employee and lists of duties allowing for a continued reference <input type="checkbox"/> Implement accommodations and strategies to increase job performance and satisfaction <input type="checkbox"/> Allow time to discuss issues and implement solutions to increase job satisfaction and discourage impulsive quitting of job
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Emotional Dysregulation: While emotional dysregulation is not listed in the DSM as a symptom of ADHD, many people with ADHD present with this impairment. Those with ADHD are more easily frustrated and less likely to deal with that frustration in an acceptable way. They may have impaired social skills and have difficulty understanding how they are perceived by others. They may need help to become aware of and deal with these issues. It may be helpful, if the employee agrees, to discuss these impairments with co-workers so they understand that interrupting, bluntness and other lacking social skills are a medical impairment rather than rudeness. Employees should be given the option to decline social events if they feel uncomfortable.

Note to Employers and Employees: ADHD is a recognized mental health disability. It is very important to promote a collaborative and supportive workplace and management style by actively removing any possible stigma or perceived shame associated with accommodation requests.

Please access: [“Duty to accommodate may be triggered even when employee does not request accommodation”](#) By [Rudner Law, Employment / HR Law & Mediation](#). It outlines an employer’s duty to “make inquiries if they are made aware of an employee’s disability or if they ought to know of an employee’s disability (e.g. if there are any red flags)”. It also states that, “Employees must participate in the accommodation process by providing sufficient information so their employer can make an informed decision about appropriate accommodations and how they can be meaningfully implemented.”