Your Own Focus Interval

Finding the sprint length you can actually finish — not the twenty-five minutes someone else decided — and building work around it.

The right interval is the one you can repeat tomorrow.

WHAT THIS IS ABOUT

Almost everyone with ADHD has tried a timer method and abandoned it. Usually the interval was wrong: too long, so attention left before the bell; or too rigid, so a good run got interrupted and a bad one dragged on. The method was not the problem. The assumption that one length fits everyone was.

Your own focus interval is measured, not chosen. You time a few real work bursts, see where attention actually leaves, and set the interval slightly inside that point — so you stop while it is still working. Then the interval becomes a unit you can plan with, instead of a rule you keep breaking.

WHY IT CAN BE HARD — WHAT IS ACTUALLY GOING ON

- **Standard intervals are calibrated for other brains.** Twenty-five minutes assumes attention holds for twenty-five minutes. For many people with ADHD it holds for eight, or forty, depending on the task and the day.
- **Running past the drop-off teaches avoidance.** Every time you push on after attention has left, the task gets paired with strain. Stopping just before the drop pairs it with success.
- **A bad interval feels like personal failure.** When the bell rings and nothing got done, the conclusion is "I can't focus." The accurate conclusion is "that interval was wrong for this task."
- **Interest changes the number.** The same person may hold ninety minutes on something absorbing and six on admin. One interval does not fit one person, let alone everyone.

THIS DOES NOT MEAN
you have a short attention span, or that you should be able to hold longer. It means your attention has a shape, and work goes better when it fits.

FOR A PARTNER OR FAMILY MEMBER
If someone is working in short timed bursts, do not fill the breaks with questions. The break is part of the method, and the next burst depends on it.

Continued on the next page.

Where to go from here

This sheet is the introduction. The workbook that goes with it walks you through setting the skill up yourself.

1
BEFORE

Before you start: notice one thing for a week.

For one week, notice the moment your attention actually leaves a task — not when you stop, when it goes. Do not use a timer yet. Just notice roughly how long it took, and on what kind of task.

2
SET IT UP

Set it up: work through the workbook.

Use what you noticed. Time two or three real bursts, find your drop-off point for different kinds of work, set your first interval, and decide what a break looks like so it does not swallow the afternoon.

Your Own Focus Interval is a four-step sequence. Each step exists because of one of the difficulties on the previous page, and the order matters. The workbook takes you through them in that order.

3
AFTER

After: a review date, and the rest of the library.

Choose a review date before you start and look at what happened then — a plan that did not hold is information, not a verdict. This is one of thirty-three skills across five focus areas; the Skill Finder points to the others. If several fit, start with one.

READY TO START?

Open the workbook for **Strategy 06** in your library and set a review date.

WANT SUPPORT?

This works on your own. For support, a therapist or ADHD coach can work through it with you.

TWO THINGS PEOPLE GET WRONG

“If I can’t do twenty-five minutes I’m not trying hard enough.”

Actually — Twenty-five minutes was one man’s kitchen timer. It is not a standard.

“Short intervals mean I get less done.”

Actually — Eight minutes repeated six times, with attention on, beats forty-eight minutes of staring.

CHECK WITH A PROFESSIONAL FIRST IF

work bursts are being cut short by anxiety or distress rather than by attention leaving, or breaks reliably become hours. Those change which skill comes first — and none of them mean this is not for you.

EVIDENCE **B/C — Adapted time-boxing** PRIMARY TARGET **Sustained attention / task persistence**

Basis. Time-boxing and self-monitoring components in CBT for adult ADHD (Solanto; Safren); individual-difference literature on sustained attention in ADHD. Educational self-help information — not a diagnosis, treatment plan, or substitute for professional care. © 2026 STG Health Services Inc. Personal, non-commercial client use permitted. SaskADHD.com