

YOUR GUIDE TO ADULTING WITH ADHD:

A ROADMAP AND TOOLKIT



Boston Children's Hospital

Where the world comes for answers

Welcome!

Young adulthood is incredibly exciting. You have so many opportunities available to you.

All these choices are awesome and you can do so much. Yet it can feel overwhelming at times, especially if you don't know yet what your next step will be. We wrote this booklet for you — the young adult with ADHD.

Now that you're an adult, you want more independence and freedom. ADHD may create unique challenges as you start "adulting." The information and strategies in this guide are designed to help you plan for and reach your goals successfully.

Your Guide to Adulting with ADHD: A Roadmap and Toolkit

Heather Potts, PhD
Virginia Peisch, PhD
Jamara Possemato, LICSW
Katherine Barahona Paz, BA
Jason Fogler, PhD

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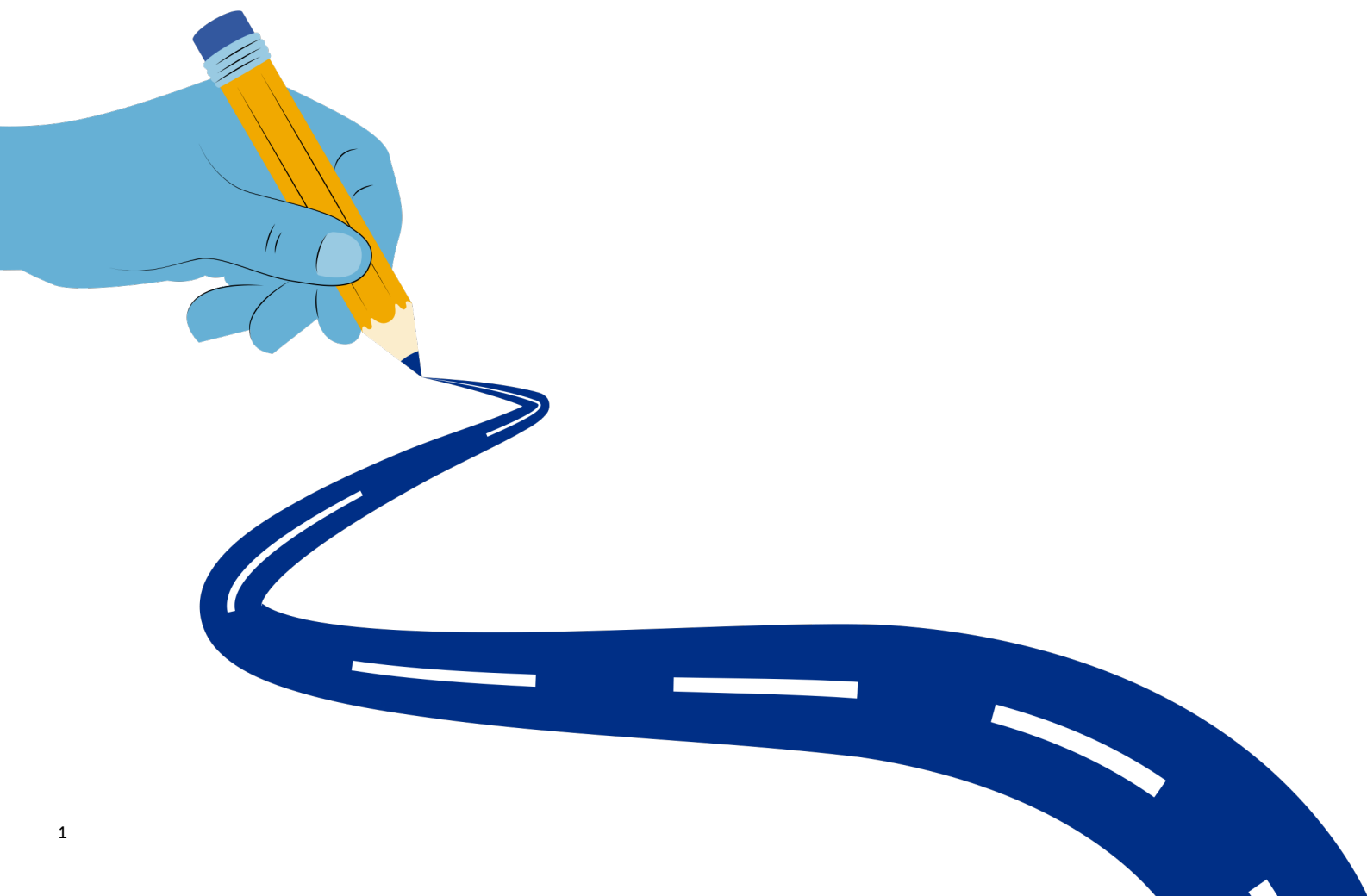
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Choose your own adventure!

There are many paths to building a happy and successful life. Use this guide to find information that's important to you now. You can go back to it later as you "mix and match" experiences to best fit your goals.



Part 1

ADHD in adults

ADHD symptoms often last into adulthood. However, the type and severity of symptoms can be different at different ages. Take a moment to think about how your ADHD symptoms may have changed over the years. The better you know yourself, the better you can advocate for yourself and achieve your goals.

ADHD Symptoms

Check off the ones that you relate to:

Inattentive symptoms:

- ☐ Difficulty paying attention to details (or makes careless mistakes)
- ☐ Has a hard time sustaining attention
- ☐ Trouble listening to others
- ☐ Difficulty doing tasks that require sustained mental effort
- ☐ Loses things (difficulty with organization)
- ☐ Is forgetful in daily activities
- ☐ Easily distracted
- ☐ Difficulty finishing tasks

Hyperactive/impulsive symptoms:

- ☐ Restlessness
- ☐ Fidgets with hands, legs, feet
- ☐ Feels driven by a motor
- ☐ Talks excessively
- ☐ Interrupts others
- ☐ Difficulty remaining seated
- ☐ Difficulty doing things quietly
- ☐ Blurt out answers before questions have been completed
- ☐ Difficulty waiting

Check out "ADHD Treatment" on [page 6](#) for more information on strategies to manage these symptoms.

Executive functioning

Executive functioning (EF) is the collection of skills that allows us to **organize** our thoughts, **regulate** our emotions, **prioritize** our goals, **stay** motivated and **much more**. The brain regions that are known to support EF skills continue to develop until the mid-20s. EF skills help us gain independence and complete “adult responsibilities” (like managing a daily schedule, paying bills, keeping track of medical/school paperwork and other routine tasks).

Below are a few examples of EF skills. Check off whether they are a strength or challenge for you:

EF skill	Challenge	Strength	Challenge
Inhibition: stopping automatic responses	Impulsivity: act without thinking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working memory: remembering and working with information in your mind	Distraction: quickly/easily forget multi-step directions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cognitive flexibility: ability to change your thinking/adapt your thinking to new situations	Inflexibility or stuck thinking: Not able to change or “shift gears” in your thinking or approach when things change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Organization: keeping things in order, being aware of structure and neatness	Disorganization: not able to keep a clean, uncluttered work/living area, and often losing belongings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Time management: making a good guess as to the time needed to complete projects	Lateness: turning in assignments late, being late for meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Planning: thinking about the future and mapping out goals and the ways to reach them	Being unprepared: forgetting to pack/bring materials you’ll need for a task (for example, forgetting to do laundry before a trip or leaving homework binder at home)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Initiation: starting tasks on your own, with enough time to get them done	Procrastination: waiting to start on tasks, especially those that are non-preferred (homework, paying bills, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

EF skills can be learned! If you’re noticing any of these challenges, make sure to read through the skills outlined in Part 2 — especially the Organization/Time Management section.

Strengths

People with ADHD have many strengths and talents.

Do any of these sound like you?

**Hyperfocus:**

The ability to focus on a task for hours without distractions

**Resilience:**

The ability to overcome setbacks and adversity

**Creativity:**

The ability to think of unusual solutions to problems

**Conversational skills:**

The ability to spark interesting conversations

**Spontaneity:**

The ability to enjoy unplanned moments and adventures

**Humor:**

Being able to easily make people laugh

**Optimism:**

Finding the bright side of things

**Kindness:**

Willing to help others

**High energy:**

Love to be active and doing something!

And so much more!

Part 2

Life management skills

Welcome to Part 2 of this guide, where we review practical skills to help you navigate life as a young adult with ADHD.

Healthy habits and routines

Adopting consistent routines and a healthy lifestyle can positively affect your mood, energy, and attention.



Restorative sleep

Getting good quality sleep helps with so much – like having energy, mood and attention/focus throughout the day.



Exercise and physical activity

Exercise can help with attention and mental health. When you are having a hard time focusing on a task, consider taking a movement break. Exercise is also a great mood booster that can help take your mind off stress and release “happy” chemicals in your brain.



Nutrition

Stay fueled and hydrated with water and wholesome snacks. If stimulant medications make you less hungry during the day, try to make up for it with larger breakfasts and dinners.



Routines

We all benefit from consistent routines as this helps with our physical and mental health, and improves our ability to get things done (such as remembering to take medication, get a good night's sleep, stick to an exercise schedule). Backward planning can be helpful with creating routines, so review [page 13](#).



Natural rhythms

Most of us have set times in the day or night when we function best and are most productive. Find out when your peak energy and low points are. If possible, create a routine that matches your natural rhythms for work and rest.

ADHD treatment

There are several treatments that help people manage their ADHD symptoms. We encourage you to work closely with your medical provider(s) to create a treatment plan that best fits your specific needs and helps you achieve your goals.

Medication

As you enter adulthood, you may need to switch to adult providers/prescribers. Talk with your current doctor(s) and prescriber(s) to help you with this transition.

Your medication needs may change as you get older, too. For example, needing a booster to get through an afternoon lecture or boring work tasks. Talk with your doctor about how your medication is working for you — and advocate if you think adjustments need to be made.

Stimulants

Stimulants are the most commonly used medications for managing ADHD symptoms.

- They are controlled substances, which means that they require a prescription.
- Based on your personal needs, you could take a short-acting (4 hours) or long-acting (6-8 hours) dose.
- You'll likely work with your prescriber to identify a drug type and dosage that works for you. When starting a new medication, you may start at a low dose and slowly increase until you have found the optimal dosage.

Nonstimulants

Nonstimulant medications are often considered when stimulants are not working, are causing significant side effects, or because the person wants to avoid stimulants. Nonstimulant medications often don't work as quickly or effectively as stimulants, though they can still be helpful alternatives to consider with your doctor.

Important medication tips

- Be open with your physician about your symptoms. Medication changes are common when you get older--and your doctor can figure out what works for you.
- Selling or sharing your medication is illegal and dangerous.
- Choose a safe place to store your medications and always keep them in that same place.
- Set reminders to prompt you to take your medications.
- Keep a list of your medications (type and dose) that you can easily share with your doctors.

Common ADHD medications

Stimulants

- Methylphenidate (Ritalin, Concerta, Daytrana patch)
- Dextromethylphenidate (Focalin)
- Mixed salts of amphetamine (Adderall)
- Dextroamphetamine (Vyvanse)

Nonstimulants

- Atomoxetine (Strattera)
- Alpha-2 agonist
 - › Guanfacine (Intuniv)
 - › Clonidine (Kapvay)
- Viloxazine (Qelbree)

A few ways to find a therapist are:

- Search for therapists through your insurance's website
- [psychologytoday.com](https://www.psychologytoday.com)
- Ask your provider for a referral

If you're having suicidal or self-harm thoughts, you can use these anonymous resources, below. You are worthy and deserve to get help.

- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: Call 988 (988lifeline.org)
- The Trevor Project: thetrevorproject.org
- Massachusetts Behavioral Helpline: masshelpline.com
- Tools: nowmattersnow.org

Therapy

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is an evidence-based treatment that can help young adults learn tools and skills to better manage ADHD symptoms and executive functioning challenges. CBT can also help build coping strategies for stress, anxiety and depression.

- CBT focuses on positive behavior change, which sometimes involves identifying and challenging thoughts and beliefs that get in the way of being successful.
- CBT is also an evidence-based treatment for mood and anxiety symptoms that can often be related to core ADHD symptoms.
- There are more evidence-based treatments for youth and young adults that are an extension of CBT and may be helpful. These include dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT), acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) and motivational interviewing (MI).

Some people may need to take some time off to work on their mental health and treatment. Speak to your providers, family and friends to weigh the pros and cons of taking a mental health break.

Coaching

Coaching is a practical intervention that can be used at the same time as medication and therapy.

- ADHD coaching mainly focuses on executive functioning skills to cut down on daily challenges related to ADHD symptoms.
- More specifically, an ADHD coach works together with the client to tackle challenges related to academic, vocational or interpersonal challenges.
- Coaches can help people with ADHD identify their goals and use practical skills toward achieving them.

Healthcare

It's important to know how you will access healthcare. Healthcare includes preventative care (like routine exams), medications, specialist visits (such as psychiatrists and therapists), emergency room visits and much more. Understanding your health insurance options is important, which is why we've highlighted some valuable information about healthcare below.

Healthcare in the community

If you're under the age of 26, you may be eligible to remain a "dependent" on your parent's health insurance plan. Check with your caregiver(s) and their insurance provider to see if you are eligible, because some states and plans have different eligibility rules.

If you're working, you may be able to get health insurance through your employer. During the hiring process, you should have the option to enroll in health insurance through your job. Once a year during open enrollment, you can change your healthcare package. Check with your company's human resources (HR) department to find out more information.

Another option available to you is to choose a plan through the state/federal marketplace or directly from the insurance company.

The price and kind of coverage for insurance plans can vary widely — make sure to compare all your options (for example, is your current provider in-network?).

You can find clinics and/or providers near you that accept your health insurance by visiting your health insurance's website or by calling your health insurance. The number is located on the back of your insurance card.

Remember to keep your insurance information close by, whether in your phone or the physical card itself.

The state/local health department in your state/county is another place to look for healthcare with or without insurance.

Healthcare in college

If you're in college, your school may offer a student health plan.

Student health centers are usually located on campus and are staffed by:

- **Primary care providers (PCPs):** Treatments include check-ups, immunizations and other routine healthcare needs. They can also provide sexual and reproductive services.
- **Counseling providers:** offer confidential mental health treatment.

Emergency care providers: are available in the community and sometimes on college campuses. They offer treatment of serious or life-threatening emergencies where there is a need for immediate medical attention. Examples are chest pain, severe asthma attacks, allergic reactions and broken bones.

Health Insurance card example

The diagram illustrates the layout of a health insurance card. The front side contains the following information:

- Plan type:** Preferred Provider Network
- Group number:** 12345-987-564
- Member Name:** John Murphy
- Member ID:** 54321-123-321
- Copay costs:**
 - Primary Care: \$20
 - Specialist: \$20
 - Urgent Care: \$20
- Plan type (icon):** PPO

The back side of the card contains the following information:

- Disclaimer:** This card is for identification only. This is not proof of membership, nor does it guarantee coverage.
- Member Service:** 1-800-777-7777
- Provider Service:** 1-800-234-0101
- 24/7 Nurse Care Line:** 1-800-980-456
- Behavioral Health:** 1-800-567-4321
- Pharmacy benefit manager number:** (indicated by a line pointing to the top of the back side)
- Member service number:** (indicated by a line pointing to the Member Service number)

Housing

Leaving your family's home and living independently for the first time is very exciting. But taking on the various responsibilities related to housing can be new and unfamiliar to many young adults.

Here are some things to consider when moving into your first new place:



Before you start searching

- **Budget:** Know how much you can realistically afford for rent. This means adding in utilities, groceries, transportation and any other regular expenses. A guideline is to find a place where the rent is around 30% (or less) of your income.
- **Prioritize your needs:** Decide which features are essential (for example, being close to work/school) and what you can compromise on (like having laundry in the building or a balcony).

Finding your place

- **Consider roommates:** Sharing an apartment can help a lot with cutting costs as well as providing social support. But be sure to choose roommates carefully! Good friends don't always make good roommates.
- **Housing search:** Use rental websites and apps to compare prices, features and neighborhoods.
- **Visit in person:** Schedule viewings and pay attention to the condition, noise levels and amenities of a house or apartment (never rely only on pictures).
- **Ask questions:** Don't be afraid to ask about future rent increases, pet policies, crime in the area, etc.

Bonus tips

- Think about getting secondhand furniture and decor. It's usually much cheaper and can make your space feel unique.
- Learn basic maintenance skills: Search online to learn how to make easy repairs and save money!



Before you sign a lease

- **Read the lease carefully:** Make sure that you understand every clause, including security deposits, repairs and termination policies. If it's confusing, find someone you trust and ask for help.
- **Negotiate, if possible:** If you feel the rent is too high, or you want to see whether utilities/amenities can be included, see if the landlord will work with you to reach a price you can more easily afford or include some amenities (like laundry or electricity) in the rent amount.
- **Renters insurance:** This protects your belongings in case of theft, fire or other damage.

Moving in and beyond

- Take pictures and document any damage to the space that was already there when you moved in.
- **Set up utilities:** Check out your options for different providers (electricity, heat, cable, etc.) and choose plans that fit your needs and budget.
- **Create a budget and stick to it:** Track your expenses and avoid overspending.
- **Communicate with your landlord:** Address any issues promptly and professionally. Always remain calm when you start a conversation about a problem.

Driving

ADHD symptoms, like distractibility and impulsivity, can be risk factors for motor vehicle accidents. This is especially true for young adults because driving is often still a relatively new skill for them.

The following tips can help young adults with ADHD stay safe on the roads:



Electronic distractions:

Turn cell phones off or disable notifications. Put your cell phone in the backseat while you're driving so you're not tempted to use it.



People distractions:

Ask passengers to help you stay focused on the road by being calm and quiet in your car. Having the company of friends and peers is great, but it can bring a lot of distraction to the car.



Music distractions:

Keep the music volume low.



Medication:

Pay attention to how your ADHD medication affects your ability to drive safely. Many people with ADHD are better drivers when they've taken their ADHD medications.



Alcohol/Drugs:

NEVER drive under the influence of illicit drugs or alcohol.



Sleep:

Drowsy driving is also dangerous — another reason to make sure you're getting enough good quality sleep!

Finances

Managing money and saving for the future is an exciting new responsibility for a young adult.

These tips can help you save money and set yourself up for a successful future.



Spending plan:

A spending plan helps you identify your financial goals and work toward them. A budget plan includes all your monthly expenses, such as rent, food costs, hobbies and other regular expenses (pet care, internet/phone and utility bills), as well as your monthly income.



Track your spending:

Keep track of when and how much you spend. Apps like Quicken can make tracking easy and are user-friendly.



Schedule your payments:

Use a calendar to keep track of payment due dates to avoid late payment fees (or having services cut off). Many companies allow you to schedule automatic payments, which can be very helpful to busy young adults.



Savings account:

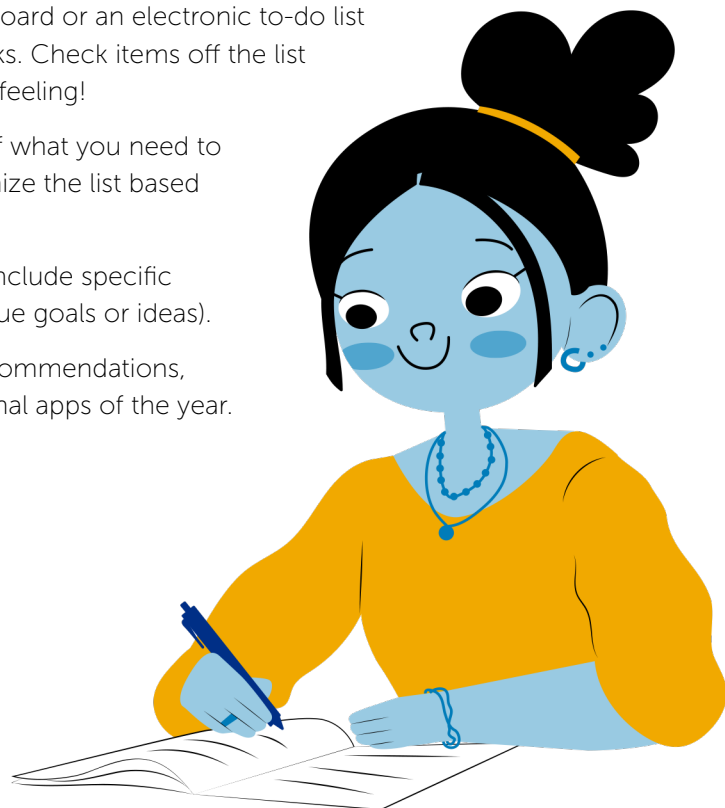
Consider putting leftover or extra money from the month into a savings account. This will help you create options for the future and prepare you for sudden emergencies. As a bonus, savings accounts often have higher interest rates, so your money grows faster.

Organization/time management

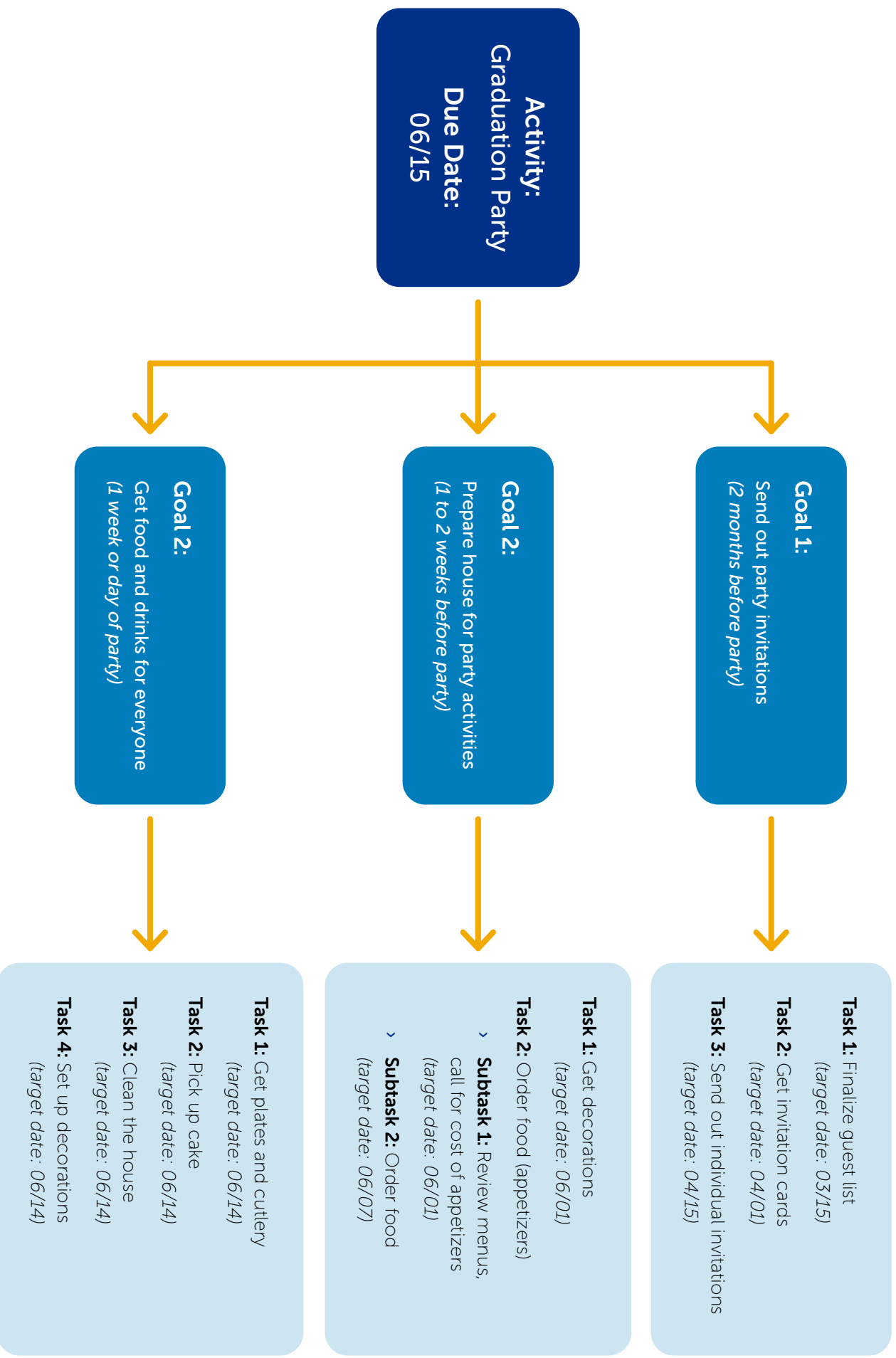
As a young adult, you're now responsible for many new tasks. This is exciting and it might also leave you feeling overwhelmed. If this is the case for you, it's completely normal!

Here are some tools that may be helpful:

- Create a **workspace** that's free of distractions (like electronics, clutter, posters, TV or anything that is likely to catch your eye).
- Create an **organizational system**. Decide where you want to keep important things you use regularly, such as your keys, wallet/purse or phone. If each thing has a "spot," you're more likely to find it when you need it.
- Create a **daily visual schedule** that includes both work time and short "brain breaks" to help keep your attention going strong. **Timers** can provide clear cues for the length of work and break periods.
- Use a **calendar** that also includes work and fun events. Calendars can be a great way to see and keep track of schedules and activities.
- **Planners** are great systems for managing daily schedules and appointments. You can use a paper planner, electronic planner or an app, depending on your preference.
- **Break down larger tasks into smaller goals** (like step-by-step written checklists) then "backward plan" by linking those smaller steps into your planner in reverse order, starting with the due date. This gives you a good sense of when to start.
- Keep a **to-do list** on a centrally placed whiteboard or an electronic to-do list (like Google Tasks) to help you remember tasks. Check items off the list once you've completed them. It's a satisfying feeling!
 - › You can have multiple to-do lists! Think of what you need to do at home, work or school — then organize the list based on deadlines and urgency levels.
 - › To-do lists are most effective when they include specific actions that you can take (rather than vague goals or ideas).
- **Apps** can be very helpful. For specific app recommendations, explore *ADDitude Magazine's* top organizational apps of the year.



Backward plan model example



Study strategies

The following tips can help you reach your full academic potential:

Study incrementally and avoid cramming.

Most people learn better when they review new information in smaller pieces across time. Divide it into small chunks (for example, by chapter or section) and review these smaller chunks a few times (or more, if needed) over several days.

Take tech-free breaks.

Schedule breaks into designated study time. Your brain can only take in so much information at a time. Breaks actually help you remember the material you're studying.

Tech-free breaks can help you recharge while also making it easier to bring your attention back to your studies. Phones can be tempting, but videos and doomscrolling can keep you from reaching your study goals. Some great resources are online Pomodoro timers, which time both your study and break sessions.

Try different learning strategies.

You might learn best with certain study methods, so find which ones work best for you and the course you are studying for! For example, writing guides might not be the best for chemistry or computer science courses, but great for philosophy or history.

Study with friends or peers.

Form study groups or review sessions with classmates. Having other people around to review the material will help you focus on what you're learning while also building social time into your schedule.

Choose a helpful environment.

Find a study space that's free of distractions and has everything you need nearby (such as chargers, drinks, snacks). Use earplugs or noise-cancelling earbuds if you get distracted by noises around you. In college, some great spots include the library and empty classrooms over your dorm or dining hall.

Make self-care a priority.

When creating schedules for homework and studying, make sure to create time for rest, nutrition and exercise. If you're taking medication, make sure you're eating well, too! Include things like "Lunch" and "Dinner" in your daily schedule or planner to take care of your mental and physical well-being.

Maintain good sleep hygiene.




Your brain will remember more if you get a good night's sleep before an exam. Again, avoid cramming!



Daily planner example

JANUARY

TO DO LIST

-  Pay phone bill
-  Buy birthday present for Andrew
- ☐ Cancel Netflix
- ☐ Return clothes
-  Call mom

NOTES

Andrew's birthday on the 18th!

16
MONDAY

5:00
6:00 Exercise
7:00 Hygiene
8:00 Breakfast
9:00 First class
10:00
11:00 Second class
12:00
1:00 Lunch
2:00 Last class
3:00 Grocery shopping
4:00
5:00 Dinner
6:00 Study
7:00 Study break
8:00 Study
9:00 Unwind
10:00 Sleep
11:00









17
TUESDAY

5:00
6:00 Hygiene
7:00 Breakfast
8:00 First class
9:00 Second class
10:00
11:00 Study
12:00 Lunch
1:00 Last class
2:00
3:00 Exercise
4:00 Clean room
5:00 Dinner
6:00 Study
7:00 Study break
8:00 Study
9:00 Unwind
10:00 Sleep
11:00

18
WEDNESDAY

5:00
6:00 Exercise
7:00 Hygiene
8:00 Breakfast
9:00
10:00 First class
11:00
12:00 Lunch
1:00 Last class
2:00
3:00
4:00
5:00 Birthday dinner
6:00
7:00
8:00 Unwind
9:00 Read book
10:00 Sleep
11:00

HABIT TRACKER

	M	T	W	T	F	S	S
8 hours of sleep		<input type="radio"/>		<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exercise				<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Skincare routine				<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Self-advocacy

A key part of self-advocacy is communicating your needs effectively. Educate yourself about ADHD and be aware of your strengths and challenges.

The following strategies may help you advocate for yourself:

- ☐ Be confident about asking for help when you need it. It's a sign of strength, not weakness.
- ☐ Identify trusted people you can talk to and ask for help.
- ☐ Brainstorm questions that you can ask a medical provider, teacher or employer before any meeting.
- ☐ Role-play with friends, parents, or other trusted adults to practice self-advocacy.

Communication skills

Some more communication skills that will help you make your way in school, at work and in your personal life:

- **Active listening**
 - › Focus your attention on the person speaking.
 - › Body language and non-verbal responses can help show that you're listening.
 - › Paraphrase what you heard, to make the other person feel heard and avoid miscommunication.
 - › Ask people to repeat themselves if needed. It's better to ask than to pretend that you understood.
- **Use empathic and respectful language**
 - › Use "I" statements to communicate what you think and feel and encourage others to do the same (for example, "I feel stressed when the house is so disorganized...").
- **Stay calm during disagreements or conflict**
 - › Encourage "time-outs" in the middle of arguments. You can regroup once tempers have cooled.

Dating and healthy relationships

Dating and relationships can be exciting parts of young adulthood, but even positive things can be stressful.

Dating/meet-ups

Here are some tips to keep you safe when meeting up with new people:

- **Meet in public:** For first dates, choose public, well-lit places with plenty of people around (like cafes, shops, restaurants or parks). Avoid locations where there aren't many people around. Wait until you know and trust the person before meeting in a private place (like your home or theirs).
- **Tell a friend:** Let a trusted friend or family member know where you're going, who you're meeting with and when you expect to be back. You can mention this to the person you're meeting, so they know someone's expecting you back by a certain time.
- **Have your own transportation:** Figure out how you will get to/from the location in advance, so you don't have to count on a ride from someone you haven't met.
- **Trust your gut:** If you feel uncomfortable or unsafe at any point, leave immediately. Trust your instincts and prioritize your safety.
- **Limit alcohol and drugs:** Being under the influence (high, drunk, tipsy) can impair your judgment and make you more vulnerable.
- **Watch your drinks closely:** Avoid the risk of someone putting a drug in your drink. Bring your drink with you if you walk away from someone. If you can't avoid leaving your drink, don't finish it. Wasting a drink is better than risking your safety.
- **Be cautious about sharing information:** Never share your address, phone number, other personal information, and never send money to someone you don't know or trust.

Healthy relationships

These tips can help you build and support relationships successfully:

- **Communicate** frequently, intentionally and respectfully.
- **Understand yourself**, including how your strengths, challenges and ADHD symptoms may affect you and your relationships.
- **Identify strategies** that may help you in your relationships, such as effective communication or even taking some space when you need to. Communicate and collaborate on strategies with your partner/friends.
- **Calendars and/or planners** can help you remember your partner's birthday, plan outings and other fun relationship moments.
- You may want to think about whether, when and how you want to tell your friends and/or your romantic partner about your ADHD diagnosis and symptoms. Sharing your diagnosis and describing the specific challenges that you may experience related to ADHD can help build understanding and compassion in your relationships.
- **Healthy relationships make you feel safe and respected.** Pay attention to "red flag" warnings in relationships, like controlling behaviors or behaviors or situations that make you feel unsafe or uncomfortable. Always talk to a trusted person if you have concerns.

For more reading, check out this website: opa.hhs.gov/adolescent-health/healthy-relationships-adolescence

Sexual health

The World Health Organization defines sexual health as the physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality. This definition highlights many aspects of sexual health. An important part of adolescent development centers around reproductive health, intimate relationships and sexual activity. This section talks about core aspects of sexual health and shares resources for more reading. We encourage you to have conversations with trusted people in your life (like close friends, parents, siblings, your pediatrician/primary care provider).

Consent is a must

Yes means yes and no means no. Always get freely given (given without pressure or demand) consent before any sexual activity. Remember, consent can be withdrawn (taken away) at any time. This means that anyone — you or your partner — can decide to stop the activity at any time, for any reason.

Protection

It's important to stay informed and safe if you choose to be sexually active, as sex can result in pregnancy and/or sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Contraceptives, such as birth control (e.g., "the pill,") and condoms, can help lower the risk of pregnancy. Sexually transmitted infections (STI) can pose different health risks if not treated. STI protection can include: use of condoms/dental dams, regular STI testing, and vaccination (HPV/Hepatitis A//B). Abstinence is always an option as well.

For more information on this topic, please go to
opa.hhs.gov/adolescent-health/reproductive-health-and-teen-pregnancy

Internet safety and tips

So much of modern life is based around the internet. School, work and personal life often involves browsing online, so it's important to keep in mind the benefits and the risks of using the internet.

We've compiled a list of tips to help you use the internet safely:

- Try to stay anonymous (not using your real or full name, not using pictures) when you're online.
- Be very cautious about who you send your private information to. Private information includes your full name, your social security number (even the last 4 digits), passwords, family members' names, credit card information, your current location and/or addresses.
- Think twice about sharing pictures with others on the internet — especially if you've never met them in real life.
- Remember that anything sent electronically (texted, emailed) can be saved and shared. If you don't want information public, think twice about whether it's worth sending — and whether you're sure you can trust the person you're sending it to.
- Be careful about meeting "virtual" (online or from an app) friends in real life. It's easy for someone on the internet to pretend to be anyone, so be safe before meeting anyone new.
- Check your mood before buying anything. Sometimes it's better to wait before impulse buying something you don't really want or need. It can help to imagine getting it in the mail and opening the package — how will you actually feel in that moment?



Community involvement

It's great for adolescents and young adults to get involved in their local communities, including voting, volunteering, joining committees and joining clubs.

In fact, a recent study found a link between levels of civic engagement (voting, volunteering and activism) during late adolescence/early adulthood and various outcomes in adulthood, including socioeconomic status and mental health.¹

Joining adult recreation leagues (softball, kickball, soccer, bowling, etc.) can also have physical benefits and help you meet new people.

Consider the following activities:



Voting

- Make your voice heard by registering to vote in local, state and national elections
- [vote.org](https://www.vote.org)

Volunteering

- Animal shelter
- Food bank
- Soup kitchen
- Homeless shelter
- Environmental conservation

Activism

- Climate change
- Inclusion and social justice
- LGBTQ+
- Black Lives Matter

Clubs

- Book groups
- Board game groups
- Musical groups
- Choir
- Adult rec league (ultimate frisbee; volleyball)
- YMCA

References for this section

1. Ballard, P. J., Hoyt, L. T., & Pachucki, M. C. (2019). Impacts of adolescent and young adult civic engagement on health and socioeconomic status in adulthood. *Child development*, 90(4), 1138-1154.

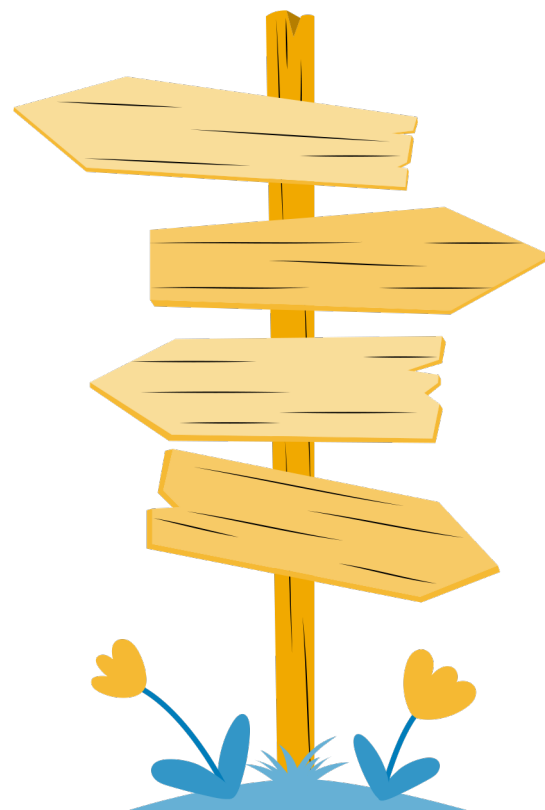
Part 3

Finding your path

Career exploration and development is an ongoing process throughout your life. Many people return to the process and change careers later in life. There are so many paths that you can follow. If you don't know where to begin with your career, then Part 2 is the best place to start. If you have a career idea, feel free to skip ahead to Part 3. You can always come back to this section later.

Career exploration

Thinking about all the different career options to choose from is exciting and can be a bit overwhelming, especially when you don't know where to start. On the next page are some resources that can help you narrow down your options.



Career informational interviews and job shadowing

A great way to learn about various careers is to talk to people who work them.

You may not know someone who works in a job you're interested in. In that case, you can try "cold emailing" (sending an email to someone even though you haven't met them) some people in the field to see if they'd be willing to answer your questions. You may be surprised how welcoming people can be! Some may be open to having you shadow them for the day too, so you can really experience what the job would be like.

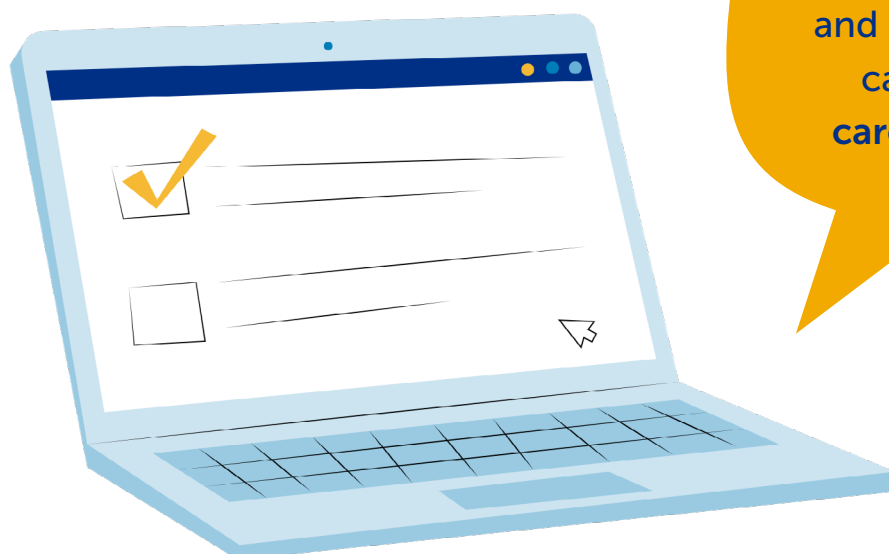
Work experiences

You may have already narrowed down your career options, but you are unsure which one to pursue in a college/training program. In this case, think about taking an unpaid or volunteer opportunity to get more experience.

Career planning

Once you've narrowed down what career area you'd like to pursue, the next step is to figure out how to pursue it. There are a lot of education/training options to explore after you graduate high school. You don't have to have everything planned the day after graduation, but it's a good idea to start looking into your options before you graduate (or as early as possible.)

Every career and educational path will require you to make different choices. The cost of educational programs can vary greatly, depending on what school or program you're interested in. You'll also need to keep other expenses in mind, like housing, food and transportation. Do your research before committing to a program so you can find the best fit for your budget, your life and your goals.



You can take
self-assessments
and explore different
career paths at:
[careeronestop.org](https://www.careeronestop.org)

Cold email example

There are 3 components to an email:

- **Subject line**
State what you want! If you would like to introduce yourself, request information, request a meeting, etc., make sure to put that in your subject line. (See example below.)
- **Body**
This section includes your greeting, an introduction, your request and any additional information needed to accomplish that request. (See example below.)
- **Signature**
End the email with your name, pronouns, preferred method of contact, etc.

New Message

To:

Subject: Informational Interview Request [Subject line]

[Body]

Dear Dr. Mouse (include correct title and last name),

My name is David Duck and I'm currently a student at Pluto University. I came across your profile on LinkedIn (why you're reaching out) and I am reaching out to request an informational interview with you to learn more about your position.

I am interested in learning more about the kind of education needed for [the position], examples of daily tasks and/or any other information you think would be helpful as I explore pursuing this position/career.

A brief conversation, in person or via phone/Zoom, would be greatly appreciated. I understand that you're busy, so please let me know what is most convenient for you.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

[Signature]

Daffy Duck (include pronouns)

(Include any relevant contact details.)

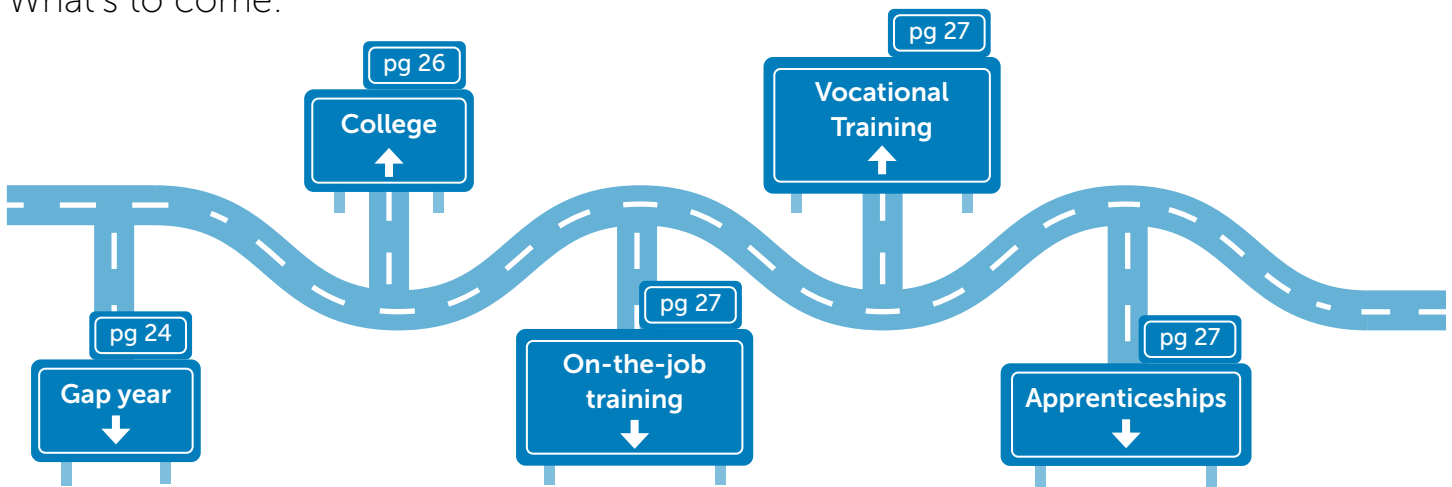
Send

A

Part 4

Options and opportunities

What's to come:



Gap year

If you feel like you need to take some more time after high school to think about what you want to do, or to save money for a training program, a gap year may be a good idea.

During this time (people usually stick to 1 year), you would take a break from being a student so that you can:

- ☐ Discover new interests (check out the Career Exploration section!)
- ☐ Save money for college/training/future goals
- ☐ Learn new skills
- ☐ Choose a career goal that excites and inspires you
- ☐ Make a plan for your career goal (for example, "backward plan" the steps you need to take to achieve your goal)

Example of a gap year plan

I'm taking a gap year because I'm not sure about what career path I'm interested in. I love working with animals but I don't have a lot of experience doing that. I've also never traveled abroad and I'm thinking about whether I'd like to study or live outside of the United States.



Summer / Fall:

- › I'll use the summer leading into my gap year to work and save money for gap year expenses.
- › I'll look for a job that involves working with animals (for example, front desk staff at my local veterinary clinic).
- › I'll apply to a study abroad program for the fall (like the EF Ultimate Break program).



Fall:

- › I plan to travel abroad, learn about different cultures and (I hope) even learn a new language.
- › I'll apply to volunteer positions abroad to help others — and get more work experience (for example, volunteering at an animal shelter).



Winter / Spring:

- › Consider my next steps (college? vocational training?).
- › Enroll in summer classes that prepare me for the next steps in my training program (summer classes) or adult life (investment course).
- › Apply to schools and/or training programs.



Summer:

- › Prepare for the school/training program.

College

Many young adults choose to attend 2- or 4-year colleges after they've finished high school. The terms "higher education" or "postsecondary education" are often used to describe this. After completing course requirements, students earn a degree. Executive functioning skills (see [page 3](#)) can help young adults manage college demands, like keeping track of assignments and studying for tests.

504 and IEP Plans **don't** carry over into college. You'll need to work with the college's disability service office to get special accommodations. These accommodations could include:

- Being able to take tests in a private exam room
- Note-taking assistance
- Access to assistive technology (like recordings of class lectures or presentations)
- Access to academic support and/or tutoring

You'll need to fill out a Request for Accommodations form and have documentation of your need for accommodations. The school will tell you what documentation to submit, such as previous evaluations or a letter from your provider(s), and any relevant medical records. Even though your IEP plans don't carry over to college, it's still a good idea to include them in your request.



It's important to remember that you'll need to **be your own advocate** in college. Compared to high school, you are responsible to provide each professor your accommodation letter and notify them when you need to access them (e.g., scheduling private room testing).

On-the-job training

This can include both paid or unpaid part-time or summer jobs, community service, volunteer work, apprenticeships or internships. These types of jobs offer you the opportunity to learn directly from your employer.

Vocational training

Vocational training (or vocational education, or career and technical education) is a training program that teaches you practical skills that you'll need for a specific job.

- Training often includes a mix of hands-on and classroom training, to help you be "work-ready" when you graduate.
- Vocational programs are often designed for various technical fields, trades or crafts, which are positions that often involve more hands-on, manual work.
- Examples of different careers include: cosmetology, childcare or caregiving, building trades (like masonry, welding, plumbing), automotive, medical jobs (certified nursing assistant) and many more.

Vocational education can happen in a range of settings. Some school districts offer vocational training during high school (vocational high schools). You can also find vocational training after high school in different places, such as at a trade school, technical school, community college or polytechnic institute.

Depending upon the training, graduates may receive a certificate, diploma or an associate's degree. You may need to take a licensure test after graduation.

Apprenticeships

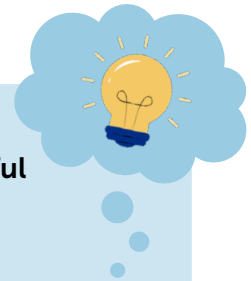
Like vocational training, apprenticeships are designed to get you "work-ready" for a specific technical field, trade or craft. The difference is that apprenticeships are work-based training programs, so you're working in the field while getting training and supervision from a qualified, experienced worker in that area. Basically, you are "earning [money] while you are learning!" There may also be classroom instruction as part of the training.

- You can get training for careers through either vocational education programs or through apprenticeships, including as a plumber, HVAC technician, pharmacy technician, medical assistant, cosmetologist, mechanic and many more.
- Registered Apprenticeship programs are approved by the U.S. Department of Labor or State Apprenticeship Agency. These programs are recommended because they are checked for quality.
- You can search for registered apprenticeships and related information on the government website: [apprenticeship.gov](https://www.apprenticeship.gov).

Would you believe it —
90% of people
 who
 complete a registered
 apprenticeship program
 make an average annual
 salary of \$80,000!
(DOL, 2023)

Work

At some point, your goal will be to start working. You may have completed or are about to finish your training/education. Or you may be more interested in getting a full-time job right after high school to contribute to your family, save up for college or exploring different job options. Some jobs even offer educational benefits to help make it financially easier to attend college for the first time or to take additional courses toward a different degree or certification later in life. Read on to the next section to learn more about searching for, applying for and accepting a job!



When looking at jobs and considering a job offer, it can be helpful to think about:

- ☐ **Job location**
Can you reliably get to the job either by car or public transit?
- ☐ **Job duties**
Does the job match your interests and skills?
- ☐ **Opportunities for advancement**
What are the possibilities for growth and/or promotion (if this is of interest to you)?
- ☐ **Work hours**
Is the job full-time or part-time?
- ☐ **Salary and benefits**
Think about the entire employment package (health care coverage, time off, retirement), not just the salary.
- ☐ **The company**
Are the company's values close to your own? How long has the company been around? What's the work environment and culture like?

Part 5

Searching and applying for a job or internship

Resume and cover letter

Your resume summarizes your previous work experience, education and training for potential employers to review.

A cover letter gives you the chance to express *why* you are interested in a particular job and why your past experiences make you a good candidate for the position.

You can find many resume templates and samples online or through Microsoft Office.

You can also get help writing resumes and cover letters through various programs, such as the YMCA or MassHire. Your parents, teachers and counselor(s) can help you as well!



There are many ways to find jobs! Here are just a few areas to consider:

- Employer website
- Online job search websites (like [indeed.com](https://www.indeed.com))
- Ask your friends and family
- Cold email (see [page 23](#))

Interviewing

Interviews are an exciting opportunity to meet your potential employer, learn more about the position you want and describe your qualifications. Here are some tips that will help you get the most out of your job interview:

Before the interview:

- ☐ Re-read the job description
- ☐ Research the company
- ☐ Prepare some questions to ask
- ☐ Review common interview questions

On the day of the interview:

- ☐ Arrive early
- ☐ Show interest and enthusiasm
- ☐ Listen and take notes
- ☐ Review common interview questions
- ☐ Look at the person
- ☐ Ask questions to express interest



Job Support

Vocational rehabilitation

If you ever feel like you could benefit from extra help and/or support with employment, you may qualify for transition planning and job-related services (like career exploration, college planning and/or job training) through MassAbility. Vocational rehabilitation is available in every state, so you can also access this service if you or your family move.

For more information and to learn how to apply for services in Massachusetts, visit: mass.gov/career-programs-and-services

Job accommodations

Job accommodations can help you succeed if you are coming up against challenges at work. Putting workplace accommodations in place might make sense if you're feeling overworked or underperforming.

To place a request, let your employer know you need an adjustment or change at work that's related to a disability/medical condition. You should do this in writing, if you can. But you don't have to. Ideally, you can work together with your employer to problem-solve and come up with reasonable accommodations.

For more information on this topic, including employment rights and sample templates, visit the Job Accommodation Network (JAN): askjan.org

The U.S. Equal Opportunity Employment Commission can also be a resource to you if you have concerns and/or are denied accommodations: eeoc.gov

Career centers

Every state (including Massachusetts) has Career Centers to help youth and adults find employment and training programs.

More information can be found at: mass.gov/masshire-career-centers

CareerOneStop is a website with additional tips that you may find helpful:

- careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Resumes/cover-letters.aspx
- careeronestop.org/JobSearch/Resumes/ResumeGuide/introduction.aspx

If you are feeling unsure about what type of job to pursue, refer to "Part 2: Finding your Path," on [page 22](#).

If you're ready to begin your job search, you'll find some additional tips in the previous section, "Part 4: Searching and applying for a job or internship" on [page 28](#).



Finish line

As a young adult, you have many new and exciting opportunities and adventures available. This guide is one of many resources meant to help you reach all your goals. If you need more information, ask a trusted person. The CHADD website is also filled with great, up-to-date information (chadd.org). You can also check out the DMC Transition Education Handout for an updated list of resources.

Thank you and good luck!

Notes

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This booklet is for educational purposes only. For specific medical advice, diagnoses and treatment, talk with your health care provider.

ADHD in Young Adults

Family Education Guide