

# Neurodivergent Study Tips

## FINDING WHAT WORKS FOR YOU.

Hyndland Secondary School

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# Introduction

Neurodiversity is an umbrella term for differences in the brain functions and behaviours. Dyslexia, ADHD, ASD and dyspraxia all come under the banner.

Being neurodivergent means that some study techniques might work better for you than others.

This handout will cover some of the considerations that you might want to think about to make your study time the most productive and least stressful for you.

# Sensory Friendly Study Space

It is important to create a sensory friendly study space based on your own sensory profile. If you create a space where you are comfortable, you will be more likely to be able to study.

It is important to think about what your stressors or aggravators are i.e. if you find mess distracting or stressful then make sure your study area is clear.

If you aren't 100% sure what is the best environment for you, spend some time thinking about what suits you and experimenting.



# FINDING YOUR COMFORTABLE SPACE.

## VISUAL



- Try and keep your study space clear as possible.
- Only have the essentials that you need for that study session.
- Have highlighters/coloured pens on hand to create visually stimulating materials if you are a visual learner.



## AUDIO

Some people find silence helps them be productive but others find they work better with some noise.

- Music-Some people find listening to music increases their productivity. If you think this could be you, try listening to different genres & note your productivity. Some neurodivergents like ambient focus music, 8-bit computer music or classical. BBC Sounds has some great, free playlists.
- Background noise-if music is too distracting, background noise may be better if you struggle in silence. Try pink noise, nature sounds, cafe sounds on your phone but dim your phone/laptop screen so you can't see it. The iPad has some limited options in accessibility menu under audio/visual.
- Silence- if you need silence, try noise cancelling headphones or ear plugs.

## TEMPERATURE



- If it is hot, try and sit near an open window or have a fan on your desk. Dress in light clothing and have a cold drink at home.
- If it is cold, dress warmly with layers and/or have a blanket at hand. Keep a warm drink close by.



## LIGHTING

Finding the right ambient lighting is important, not only if you have light sensitivity, but also to help you see your materials.

- Try and get as much natural light as possible
- Reduce/Increase screen brightness to avoid eye strain.

## CHAIR

Sitting comfortably will help keep your focus for longer on tasks.

- If you have a sensory seeking profile, you may benefit from using a chair that spins or being able to sit curled up or on the floor.
- If you have a sensory avoidant profile, you may prefer a fixed chair.
- A bean bag.



## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Make sure that you have snacks to hand, keep hydrated and have toilet breaks. If stim toys/chews or fidgets help you focus, make sure you have some at your desk.

# HELP TO PRIORITISE

It can be difficult for neurodiverse people to be able to prioritise their studying. It can be overwhelming to look at the subjects and timetable to decide what to do. It is important to spend some time working out your biggest priorities then breaking them down into manageable sections.

Eisenhower Matrix: A great decision making tool that can help prioritise work as well as the areas that need to be focused on. The grid is split into 4 different sections:

URGENT & IMPORTANT	NOT URGENT & IMPORTANT
URGENT BUT NOT IMPORTANT	NOT URGENT & NOT IMPORTANT

The Matrix can be easily adapted to prioritising topics or areas of subjects that a person needs to revise:

DEFINITELY KNOW	MOSTLY KNOW
NEED A BIT MORE HELP	DON'T KNOW

At the end of each study session, it may be helpful to write down a Top 3 priority list for the next session to help focus and task initiation.

# ORGANISATION

Being organised can be a major struggle for neurodiverse people. A lot of the time, the want and desire to be organised is there but it always seems to fall apart. Here are some suggestions to help support your young person at home with studying (and school in general):

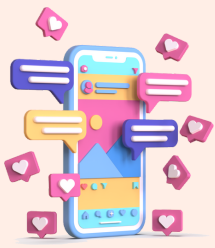
Have a distinct folder for each subject and colour code different types of information. Or use different coloured paper for different information such as tables on yellow paper, notes on green and mind maps on pink.

If saving electronic revision notes or flashcards, use distinct file names to reflect your progress and changes such as Electoral systems Aug 2022, Electoral Systems Oct 2022 and Electoral Systems January 2022.

Set aside time to review and organise your materials at a regular basis.

Visual study timetable- colour code time block sessions for studying, breaks, sports etc.

At the end of each session, cross out what you have achieved & write Top 3 tasks to do in the next session. This helps with task initiation.



# REDUCE DIGITAL DISTRACTION



Mobile phones and digital devices can be a help and a hinderance for neurodiverse people. However, there are ways to reduce digital distractions whilst still accessing supportive apps and supports.

FOCUS MODE- on all electronic devices, it is possible to set up focus modes that limit notifications and access to apps.

iPad: Go to **SETTINGS** then **FOCUS**. Option to use "work focus" or create your own. It can be scheduled to turn on automatically.

Android: Go to **SETTINGS** then **DIGITAL WELLBEING** then **FOCUS MODE**. Again, it is possible to set up your own personal settings in terms of only access to certain apps and duration.

GREY SCALE: Turning a mobile to grey scale can make it less stimulating for ADHD minds and reduce the distractibility of the screen.

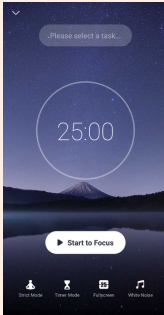
iPad: Go to **SETTINGS** then **ACCESSIBILITY** and onto **DISPLAY & TEXT SIZE**. In this option, choose **COLOUR FILTERS** and turn on **GREY SCALE**.

Android: Go to **SETTINGS** then **ACCESSIBILITY** and onto **VISIBILITY ENHANCEMENTS**. Opt for **COLOUR ADJUSTMENTS** and choose **GREY SCALE**.

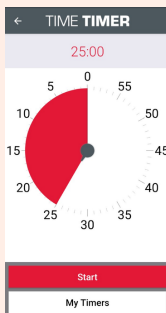


# MOBILE APPS TO HELP FOCUS

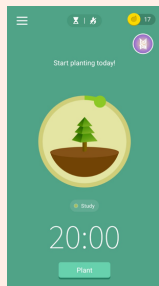
There are several free apps that can help with focus and supporting study time.



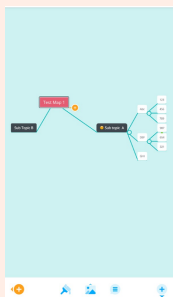
Focus To-Do (Android): support students with the Pomodoro method of studying. User can adjust the length of time that they study for as well as the length of breaks in-between. They can set daily tasks to complete each day. Options for alarm sounds at the end of study periods as well as an option for background noise such as white noise, library and cafe.



Time Timer: A basic visual timer that allows users to easily see how much time is left. Can use options to set different timers, change colour and alarm sound.



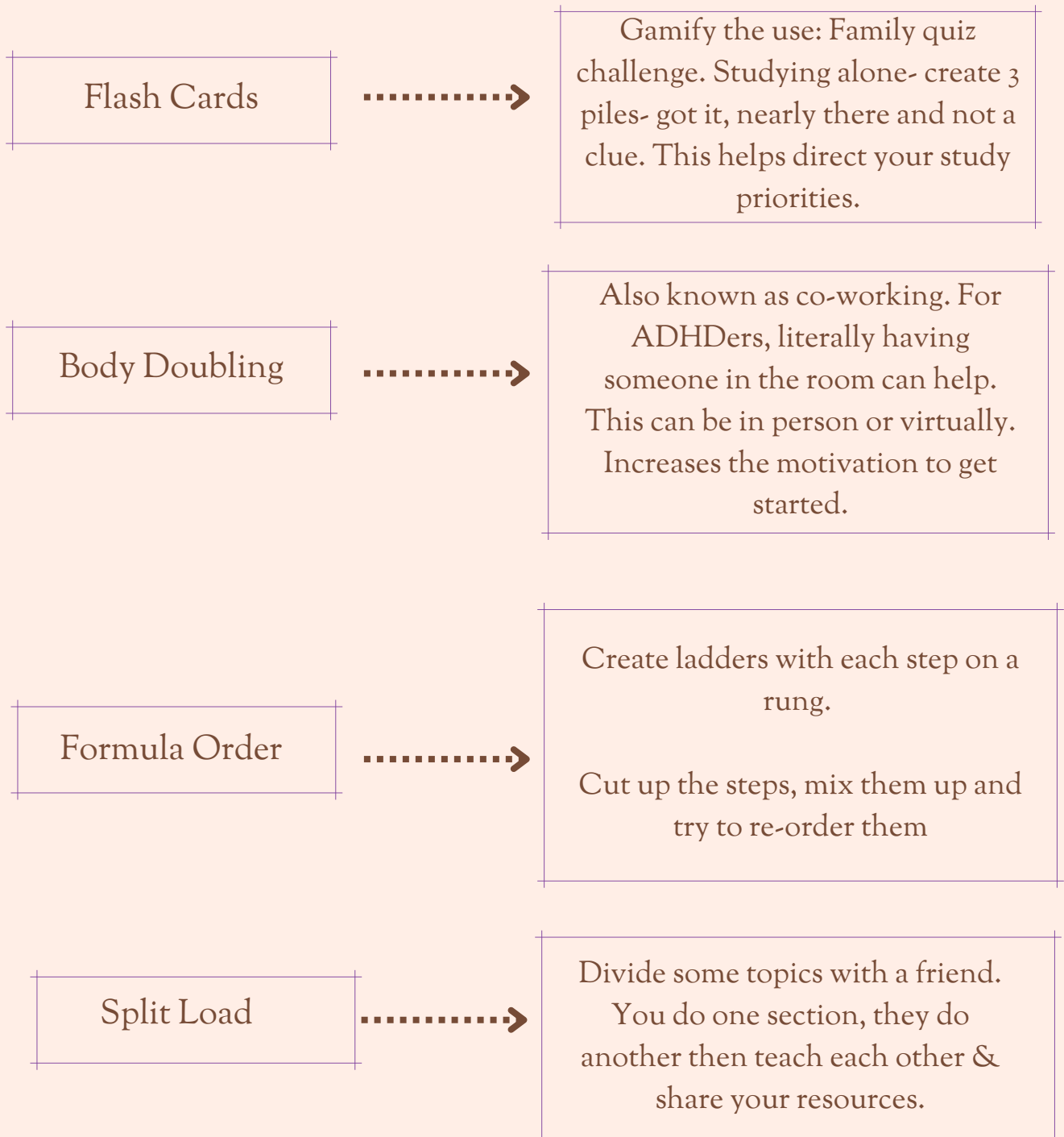
Forest (Android): A timed app that allows users to grow their own forest of trees. Can alternate between being a timer and a stopwatch.



Mind Meister: Free mind mapping app that can allow students to create digital mindmaps. They can be exported as PDFs to be printed out.

# STUDY TECHNIQUES & TWISTS

Many study techniques are equally appropriate for neurodiverse students as neurotypical students. However, there are some adaptations and alterations that can be made to help.



## Multi-Sensory



Multi-sensory methods of learning tap into the neurodiverse brain. Look at the table below for some ideas.

SEE	HEAR	DO
Movies Flashcards Pictures Charts Colours Mind Maps Videos Diagrams	Music Songs Poems Explanations Discussions Podcasts Radio Read Aloud/Text-to-Speak	Dance Role Play Move Get out & about Demonstrate Games Make something Visit Quiz

## Assistive Technology



Make full use of text-to-speech to allow you to focus on understanding and critical thinking of what is being read rather than the reading. Make use of apps like Quizlet to use electronic flashcards. Use dictation to type your notes rather than focus on spelling.