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# HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL AT UMASS AMHERST

*Tips, tricks, and strategies on how to be the best of your ability with a learning disability.*

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Final Summative Assessment

UMASS  
AMHERST



## WELCOME, NEW STUDENT.

Welcome to the University of Massachusetts! Congratulations on taking the first step towards the road to success in college, and in life. For most students adjusting to university life can initially be extremely stressful and overwhelming. For other students who do not adapt as quickly or easily due to a learning disability, emotional, or other personal problems, it can be one of the toughest transitions of ones' life. However, it is also one of the most gratifying if you are willing to make the commitment. Although this guide is universal and can be used to ensure the success of all students and learners, it is a particularly helpful tool for those struggling with a learning disability such as ADD or ADHD. With this guide, I hope you will begin to manage your way of learning to your advantage rather than feeling at a disadvantage.

### **ADHD/ADD may affect academics by interfering with Executive Functions such as:**

***Activation:*** organizing, activating, and prioritizing work

***Focus:*** focusing, sustaining, and shifting attention between tasks

***Effort:*** maintaining alertness, sustaining effort, and processing speed

***Emotion:*** managing frustration and regulating emotions

***Memory:*** utilizing working memory and processing recall

***Action:*** self-regulating and self-monitoring behaviors

## KEYS TO SUCCESS



- Self-Awareness
  - What is your learning style?
  - What interests/motivates you?
- Finding your motivation
- Organization
- Consistency/Daily routine
- Good study habits
- Developing Relationships
  - Peers and Professors
  - “Study Buddies”
- Effective Time Management
- Managing Stress & Anxiety
- Utilizing Resources
  - Knowing when/who to ask for help

## ADHD PROBLEM #1:

Lack of motivation, avoidance of sustained mental effort

⇒ **Solutions: Finding your intrinsic motivation(s);**

Finding your specific interests, passions, or hobbies that interest/motivate ***you!***

### The Intrinsic Motivation RAMP

#### Relatedness

Type : Socialiser

Needs : Social Status, Social Connections, Belonging

#### Autonomy

Type : Free Spirit

Needs : Creativity, Choice, Freedom, Responsibility

#### Mastery

Type : Achiever

Needs : Learning, Personal Development, Levels

#### Purpose

Type : Philanthropist

Needs : Altruism, Meaning, A Reason Why



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- Be in control of your learning by finding meaning or relevance in every subject.
  - Ask yourself: “*How does this relate to me?*” or “*How can this be useful for me to know in the future?*”
- If you are interested in what you are learning about, you are more likely to pay attention.
- If you enjoy what you are doing, then it will be easier to find “flow” and maintain focus!

## **ADHD Problem #2:**

**Not retaining information; difficulty following directions; difficulties in working memory and retrieval**

### **⇒ Solutions:**

Take a Learning Style Inventory

By figuring out which learning method is most effective, you will be able to study more efficiently and save time in trying to figure it out through trial and error.

- This will make studying less frustrating and learning time more meaningful and relevant.
- You will feel more in control of your learning, which will increase your intrinsic motivation.
- Efficient studying will allow information to be stored into your working memory more easily.
- By thinking about how you study and retain information best, you are already using higher cognitive processes (metacognition), thus enhancing your learning even more.
- Studying at shorter, more consistent intervals (“chunking”) increases chances for transfer of information rather than when it is crammed.
  - Studying in the same or similar environment where the test will be given can stimulate memory.



# **LEARNING STYLES**

### **ADHD Problem #3:**

**Poor Time Management Skills; “Losing Track of Time”;  
Never Being on time in general**

#### **⇒ Solution:**

Use a timer for all tasks as needed.

Being on time for class puts you in control and sets you up for success, whereas being late has the opposite effect.

- Using a timer throughout your day for important tasks (“I must leave the house by \_\_\_ time in order to make it to class or work on time”) to smaller tasks (“I am going to read this entire chapter for 30 minutes without getting up”) is helpful for staying on task.
- A timer also allows you to focus *on one task at a time* and stay in the moment.
- Also gives you more of a concept of time instead of “losing track” of it.



**TIME MANAGEMENT= LIFE MANAGEMENT**

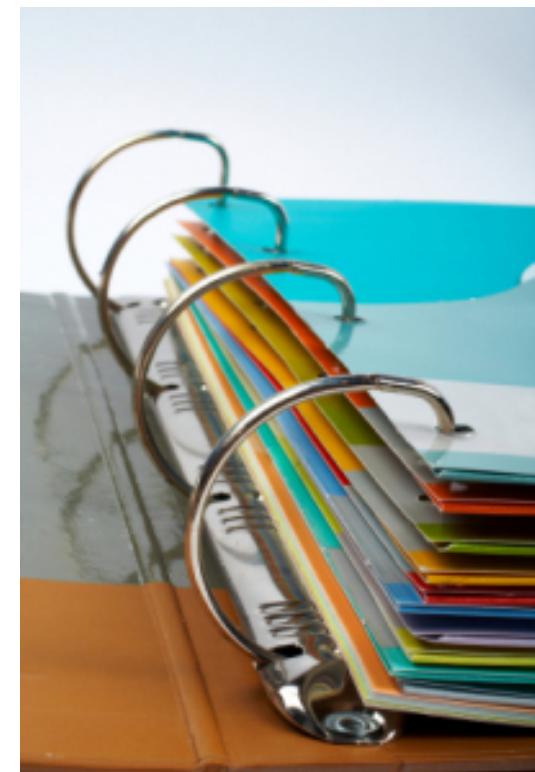
## ADHD Problem #4:

Disorganized; “Scattered”; Forgetful

⇒ **Solution:**  
Organization, Consistency

Being in a cluttered or messy place can be a huge environmental distraction; simply being in a tidy, organized environment can help you feel, think, and be more organized.

- Keep all areas in your life free of clutter (workspace, desk, dorm/bedroom, and bathroom).
- Put an item back after using, and in the same place *every time* (everything has a “home”)
- Bring a daily planner or agenda with you at *all* times.
  - list all homework assignments, deadlines, and projects ahead of time (usually in syllabus on first day of class) in your planner so you can plan accordingly.
- Keep a visible calendar or whiteboard somewhere in your room or workspace for a visual environmental cue.

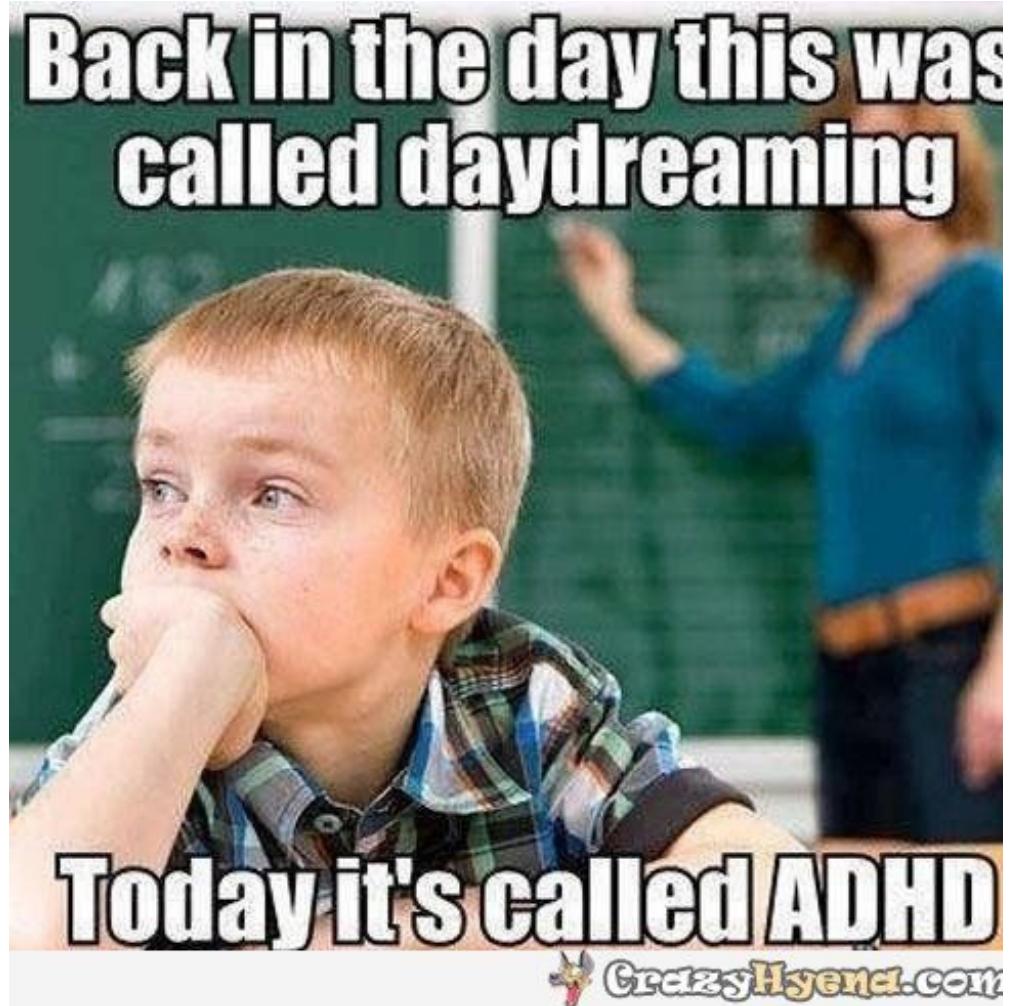


## **ADHD Problem #5:**

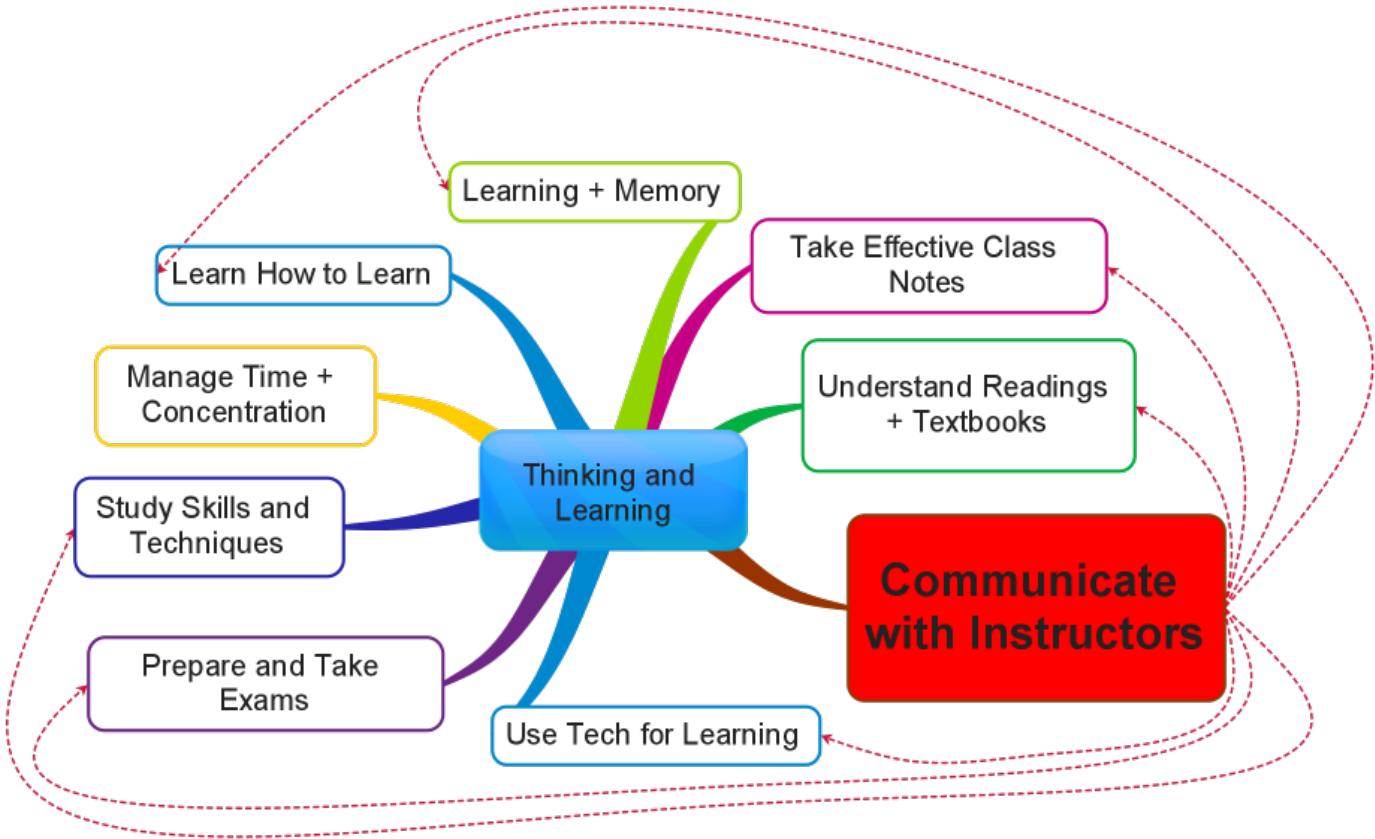
Not paying attention in class; “daydreaming”, easily distracted; not present

### **⇒ Solutions:**

- Sit in the front of the class, especially at large auditorium style classrooms; this minimizes distractions and allows you to focus on your learning instead of what other people are doing.
- Allows you to become actively engaged in the lesson, thus putting you more in control of your learning.
- Take classes that interest you and increase your chances at success.
  - Especially important your first semester when you are adjusting to new environmental stimuli.



## ADHD Problem #6: Poor Communication



### ⇒ Solutions:

- Grab a “study-buddy”, or make friends with at least one person in your class to bounce ideas off of
  - Studying with a classmate is a good social support and also enhances intrinsic motivation and reinforces your own learning.
- Know when and who to ask for help
  - Communicate any problems or uncertainties to your instructor and/or TA ASAP.
  - Never hesitate to ask questions or for extra instruction!
- Reach out to outside sources (friends, family members, or any campus resources)
  - **Utilize your on-campus resources, help is available at your disposal for a reason!**

## ADHD Problem #7

### Poor Emotional Control

ADHD is often accompanied by a coexisting mood disorder such as depression, anxiety, OCD, or other emotional dysfunctions.

- Don't beat yourself up or internalize mistakes; mistakes are an integral part of the learning experience.
- Keep a personal journal or daily log to use as an outlet for your innermost thoughts and as a way to relieve stress.
  - useful for pinpointing what events and actions took place that day as a way to reference what did and did not work, or what you could do differently next time for a better outcome.
- Exercise regularly for overall physiological health;
  - exercise increases dopamine and serotonin levels, while alleviating negative emotions associated with stress and anxiety.

	<b>Self</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Awareness</b>	<b>Self-Awareness</b> <i>What are you feeling? How did these feelings arise? What information do they carry?</i>	<b>Social Awareness</b> <i>What are they feeling? How did those feelings arise?</i>
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Self-Management</b> <i>How do you want to feel? What do you need to do in order to feel that way?</i>	<b>Relationship Management</b> <i>How do you want them to feel? What do you need to do in order for them to feel that way?</i>

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## ON-CAMPUS RESOURCES

University Health Services

**(413) 577-5000**

Center for Counseling and  
Psychological Health

**(413) 545-2337**

Disability Services

**(413) 545-0892**

Psychological Services Center

**(413) 545-0041**

Center for Health Promotion

**(413) 577-5181**

- An integral part of success is balancing work and play; better time and self-management techniques will allow opportunity for extracurricular activities or other (healthy) social outlets.
- Eating healthy and exercising regularly is a great choice for anyone, but people with ADHD are particularly sensitive to artificial flavors, colors, and preservatives. The cleaner you eat, the clearer you think!
- Don't feel victimized by your learning differences.
  - Find success in overcoming challenges.
- Don't compare yourself to your peers; only strive to be *your* personal best.

**“Success isn’t how far you’ve gotten, but the distance you traveled from where you started.”**