



Emergency Checklist

Homework Crisis Prevention for Autism & ADHD

5 Concrete Strategies That Work

Why This Checklist Matters

Homework with neurodivergent children isn't just difficult – it's neurologically challenging. This checklist gives you immediate strategies to prevent crises before they start, based on research and real family experience.



Strategy 1: Time Limits, Not Task Completion



Set a Fixed Timer

Homework ends after 15-20 minutes – regardless of completion. After a full school day, the cognitive battery is empty.



Communicate with Teacher

Send a note: "We worked for 20 minutes, then stopped." Teachers need to understand your child's limits.



Use Visual Timer

Visual countdown helps your child see time passing. Digital timers work better than "5 more minutes."



Quick Win

Start with 10 minutes. Success builds confidence. You can gradually increase – but never force.



Strategy 2: Recognize Warning Signs Early



Watch Body Language

Fidgeting, tensing up, eyes glazing over – these signal overload is coming.



Listen for Voice Changes

Higher pitch, faster speech, or going quiet – all signs your child needs a break NOW.



Notice Withdrawal Signals

Pulling away, avoiding eye contact, heading toward their room – respect the need for space.



Critical Rule

When you see these signs: STOP immediately. Don't push "just one more problem."

The meltdown is coming, and forcing it won't help learning – it will harm your relationship.



Strategy 3: Break Tasks into Micro-Steps



Chunk Everything

"Read chapter 3" becomes: (1) Read page 1, (2) Take 2-min break, (3) Read page 2, repeat.



Celebrate Each Step

Finished one math problem? That's a win. Check it off. Build momentum through small victories.



Make Steps Visible

Write steps on sticky notes. Physically remove them as completed. Visual progress = motivation.



ADHD Specific

For ADHD brains, starting is harder than continuing. Make the first step ridiculously easy: "Open book to page 12." That's it. Step one done.



Strategy 4: Environment Setup Matters



Reduce Sensory Input (Autism)

Quiet space, dimmed lights, comfortable temperature. Noise-cancelling headphones if needed.



Remove Distractions (ADHD)

No phone, no toys visible, no interesting posters. One task, one tool, one focus.



Body Doubling Works

You don't need to help – just be present. Your calm presence provides external regulation.



Strategy 5: Meet Basic Needs First



Check the Basics

Hungry? Thirsty? Need bathroom? Tired? Address these BEFORE starting homework.



Transition Time Needed

Don't start homework immediately after school. Give 30-60 minutes for decompression.



Movement Break First

10 minutes outside, jumping jacks, dancing – physical activity resets the nervous system.



Remember

A child who just spent 6-7 hours masking, focusing, and regulating at school has NOTHING left. Homework isn't academic – it's asking an empty battery to power on.



If Crisis Happens Anyway

Despite your best efforts, meltdowns happen. Here's what to do:

1

STOP homework immediately – remove all demands

2

Ensure physical safety (remove breakables, create space)

3

Stay calm and quiet – don't lecture or explain

4

Wait it out – brains need 20-45 minutes to reset

5

After calm: no homework that day. Period.

Relationship > Homework. Always.

Want More Strategies?

Complete homework emergency plans available with step-by-step protocols, visual tools, and school communication templates.

Paul & Katharina Rawe © 2025

This checklist is for educational purposes. Always consult professionals for individual guidance.