title: **I absolutely suck at time tracking**
id: jh3lxw
url: <u>here</u>: https://www.reddit.com/r/ADHD_Programmers/comments/jh3lxw/i_absolutely_suck_at_time_tracking/
num_comments: 18
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Post Text

So the type of work I do I guess you could call "agency work", meaning that we build things for a very large number of different clients, and thus we bill hourly. It's very important that we keep accurate time records of what project we're working on and when because essentially, that's how we get paid. Here's the problem: I suck at it. Badly. I always forget to do it, go too long, wind up at the end of the week with an empty timesheet, have way too much time in one project and not enough in another, and so on. It's not like I'm not working; in fact I think I'm working *more* than is expected of me. But of course, it's remote, and literally all they have to go off of is the timesheet they get at the end of the week. I've never been "reprimanded" per se, but I have gotten the odd, "can you please make sure this is done properly?" talk, to which I always reply, "yes, I know, I'm trying to be better about it." And then a week goes by, I get caught up in a project, become hyperfocused on solving an issue, and it all goes to hell. I don't miss deadlines or anything, it's just... my timesheet is f****ked. This has actually been kind of a problem in the past; it was once cited as a reason I was being let go from a previous job (after some other discussions with other people who got let go at the same time, we determined there was... let's just say, more to the story involving certain goings on at the home office, but I still had timesheet PTSD after that). I've tried a number of things: RescueTime, keeping timers running (if I can remember), daily reminders, etc. They've all *sort o*f helped. I guess I feel like I'm not living up to expectations and terrified that this could become a huge issue again. I'm starting to feel like I just can't operate on this kind of paradigm. I guess my question is to developers with ADHD who have to keep accurate time records: What methods have you used to help, if anything?

Comments

Commenter_2
ID: g9v5s4q, Upvotes: 17
Was joking about this problem with a colleague a couple of years ago. We had both forgotten to do our timesheets for a week and couldn't remember what we had been doing. He jokingly said wouldn't it be great if we had something recording everything we do that we could go back and look at... It stuck with me. I wrote a really simple script that snaps a screenshot and saved it somewhere with a timestamped filename, and scheduled it to run every 5 minutes. Now when I'm doing my timesheets I just go through all of the screenshots to remember what I was working on.

Commenter_3
ID: g9vad6v, Upvotes: 7
This is fabulous!

Commenter_4
ID: g9vkywm, Upvotes: 3
Lol that's exactly what I did. I believe there are some apps available to download with fancy features, but mine was literally just two buttons to start/stop the screenshot process.

Commenter_5
ID: g9yd304, Upvotes: 2
What if I don't want to be reminded of all my time spent on reddit?

Commenter_6
ID: g9v9x1m, Upvotes: 7
Have you tried the pomodoro technique? It works pretty well for me.

25 min work, the timer rings, 5 minutes mandatory break, the timer rings, ect.

I made a little bash script that time my cycles and notify me when it's break time or work time. It also saves on a log the list of all cycles achieved that day.

Commenter_7
ID: g9v2ax3, Upvotes: 5
I've been fired from 2 different jobs for this :/

Commenter_8
ID: g9vd01u, Upvotes: 5
I use Toggl, because you can set it to automatically pick up what you're doing so if you forget to press start, you can go back and manually look at what you were doing on your computer and add work. Depends how caught up on privacy you are though!

Commenter_9
ID: g9v09ry, Upvotes: 3
I would like to know the answer to this too. I was fired from a job for not managing to keep a timesheet in college and have always been horrible about things like this despite my best efforts.

Commenter_4
ID: g9vnoqq, Upvotes: 3
This was my eternal issue working from home, goofing off regularly and fudging the numbers usually against me (e.g. watch netflix for 40 minutes but punish myself the full hour)

I do a few things:

* Maintain an **Excel sheet** with a couple of fields: date, start time, end time, task description, total hours (calculated from start/end time). When I start to work I update the start time, but of course you have to remember to put the end time, and to add a new row when you switch tasks.
* If the work is mostly web-based then I used the **Improved History addon** in Firefox. This helps me identify what I was looking at at the time. It doesn't take into account time not spent in the browser though i.e. writing code in the IDE.
* I wrote a small and simple **program to take screenshots** of my two screens at a set interval, like every 10 or 15 minutes. It literally consisted of a start and stop button, so at the beginning of the day I would hit start and stop when I'm finished working for the day or it's time for bed. I could identify what was on my screens at the time, even if it was an app, game, netflix, chat window, or whatever. There are plenty of downloadable options on the internet, but it really is very easy to write and I wrote my own so there'd be no safety concerns. Note: I no longer use this program and I'd have to dig up the code on my old hdd's, but you could literally write this yourself in under 30 minutes.
* For a non-tech solution keep a **notepad** next to you, and have an alarm go off every 30-60 minutes if you really can't remember to fill it in.

Commenter_10
ID: g9v9jzc, Upvotes: 2
TopTracker looks pretty good as a windows/mac tool. It auto records your app usage.

Commenter_11
ID: ga3bgmn, Upvotes: 2

I developed a time tracking app that works by asking what you are working on. This way you do not have to manually switch tasks or toggle timers. I always forgot to do that, resulting in inaccurate timesheets (or no timesheets at all). Probably does not help you completely but perhaps it's better than what you've tried so far? You can find more information on
dailytimetracking.com.

Hope you find a way to (better) deal with this 🙂.

Commenter_12
ID: g9vu6qc, Upvotes: 1
I use the timetracker app on a nextcloud install. It's got some rough edges but it's simple and I just leave it open in a pinned browser on one of my screens. When I start something, I go to it and enter a title, click play and assign it to a project, when I finish I go back and stop it and add some details about what I did. It's got a reporting feature that exports to CSV, so it's entirely useful.

I must say though, have you considered that it might not be the *how* that you suffer, but rather the *why*? Before this, I was using a spreadsheet to record the same information. Switching to this software just made what I was already doing easier. Initially, I started tracking my time as a form of self-encouragement. Being undiagnosed and "self-employed" (i.e. usually unpaid bootstrapping), I often felt unproductive and that nobody cared how much time I spent on anything. By recording and charting it, I could see a tangible measure of the work I put in. I felt good about that, so I kept doing it for myself...and then one day I had to defend my time, and this log told me everything I needed to know. It also became super handy when I started invoicing. It's become an integrated part of my process, now, and it's saved me several times.

So if you suck at time tracking, and you don't want to, what is it about time-tracking that you actually find interesting? What makes you feel good about it, as opposed to avoiding feeling bad? With ADHD, if you want to your brain to do the heavy lifting to build new habits, you have to really identify what about the new habit makes you *feel* good.

Commenter_13
ID: g9wtxss, Upvotes: 1
I actually wrote my own web application for a company I worked for that obsessed over billable time. It had projects, which had sections, which had tasks. You go to a task and hit Go and a modal pops up with a timer and a stop button. When you hit stop it shows elapsed time and allows you to edit it (in case you forgot to stop). You could also just add time to a task manually. It had a report page that you could print for a specific time period listing all the projects and tasks and time totals. Some other features as time went on (estimated time to completion, miscellaneous tasks, etc). Helped immensely.

Commenter_14
ID: g9wvmzh, Upvotes: 1
I have totally sucked at this, and I think it's from being so in the moment, which really is fantastic in the grand scheme of things! I don't really have any tips not already posted. Seems like multiple timers i can start and stop would be my choice. I have a timer running right now so i don't leave the water running in a trough out in the field for 12 hours like i did last night :-{\]

Commenter_15
ID: g9x7qjt, Upvotes: 1
Try to find a way to include time tracking in a workflow, so it's never an extra step.
I use Trello and time report to harvest (or toggle) per task. So the flow is
- chose task, open the card as a "background" when working. There I have all info, links, comments etc I need for the task. Then I activate time reporting from the card.
When I switch task I open up a new card and start from there, then the old entry is stopped and the new added so I only need to remember it when I start a task.

I get motivated by data as well, so I have a dashboard where I can see how I spend my time (and it's saved my ass many times if someone have questions of what I do "do you want to know per minute, hours or days?" 🙂)

This way of working has been so successful we now have implemented it for the whole company. :)

Commenter_16
ID: g9x9pez, Upvotes: 1
I have an Apple Watch and created alarms that go off every day, beginning at 9am and running through 9pm. They are set at the top of the hour and every half hour. It's helped me a ton in general because I get a gentle reminder every thirty minutes which helps me note how long I've been doing something! If I've been procrastinating or hyperfocusing on something I can try and change what I'm doing, and I'm able to learn how long tasks actually take me. In your case, you may be able to just tally how many alarms have gone off since you began working on a specific task!

Anything that I have to set manually (like a Pomodoro timer) just fails for me, so the repeated daily alarms are a godsend. It's honestly my biggest ADHD hack ever, and I wish more people would try it!

Commenter_17
ID: g9ydv91, Upvotes: 1
Modify the Pomodoro. Keep an egg timer, and a sheet with all your projects on it by however your sort it by your timesheet. When the timer goes, reset it and put a mark next to the project you were working on. Boom, 20 minute increments for each project on a non-scheduled timesheet.