

HEARN CONSULTING

Executive Functioning Guide

ACADEMIC SKILLS GUIDE

A practical toolkit for building the systems, habits, and self-awareness that keep your academic and personal life on track.

STUDENT GUIDE

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WHAT'S INSIDE

- What Executive Functioning Is - The eight core skills explained and why they matter
- Self-Assessment: Where Do You Stand? - A detailed inventory of your strengths and gaps
- Time Management & Planning - Building systems that reduce daily decisions
- Organization Systems - Physical spaces, digital workflows, and academic materials
- Task Initiation & Follow-Through - Overcoming procrastination and building momentum
- Working Memory & Attention - Focus strategies, minimizing distractions, and memory aids
- Emotional Regulation & Flexibility - Managing frustration, setbacks, and unexpected change
- Study Skills & Academic Strategies - Note-taking systems, active recall, and spaced repetition
- Building Sustainable Habits - Habit tracking, accountability systems, and preventing relapse
- Your Executive Functioning Action Plan - 30, 60, and 90-day implementation roadmap

01

What Executive Functioning Is

Executive functioning is the set of mental processes that help you plan, organize, manage time, sustain attention, regulate emotions, and follow through on intentions. It is the management system of your brain - the CEO behind the scenes making sure things get done.

These skills are not fixed personality traits. They develop throughout adolescence and into your mid-twenties. If you are struggling with organization, time management, or follow-through, it does not mean you are lazy or incapable - it means your systems need to be stronger than they currently are.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Students with strong executive functioning skills outperform students who are smarter but less organized. Executive function is a better predictor of academic success than IQ. The good news: these are learnable skills that improve with intentional practice and better systems.

THE EIGHT CORE EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS

Executive functioning is not monolithic. It consists of eight distinct but interconnected skills. Understanding each one helps you identify where your challenges lie and what to target.

Skill	Definition
Time Management	The ability to track passing time, estimate how long tasks take, and plan across hours, days, and weeks.
Planning & Prioritization	Breaking goals into steps, deciding what matters most, and sequencing tasks in logical order.
Task Initiation	Overcoming inertia and getting started on tasks, especially unpleasant or ambiguous ones.
Organization	Creating systems to store information, materials, and tasks so you can find them when needed.
Working Memory	Holding multiple pieces of information in mind simultaneously while processing information.
Attention & Focus	Sustaining concentration on a task despite distractions and internal mental drift.
Emotional Regulation	Managing emotional responses to frustration, disappointment, anxiety, and stress.

Flexibility

Adapting plans when circumstances change and recovering from setbacks without shutdown.

Notice that these skills are interconnected. Strong time management supports better prioritization. Better task initiation requires working memory to hold the first step in mind. Organization directly impacts the amount of mental energy you waste searching for things. When you improve one skill, you often see improvements in others.

02

Self-Assessment: Where Do You Stand?

Before you build a plan, you need honest data about where you are. This section asks you to rate yourself across all eight skills and identify your biggest growth areas. Be specific and truthful. This inventory is for you - no one else needs to see it.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS INVENTORY

Rate yourself on each skill using this scale: 1 = Major struggle (significantly impacts school/life), 2 = Moderate struggle (causes problems regularly), 3 = Getting by (inconsistent), 4 = Pretty strong (usually works), 5 = Consistent strength (rarely an issue).

Skill	Rating (1-5)	Biggest Challenge
Time management - tracking time and planning		
Planning & prioritization - breaking down big goals		
Task initiation - getting started, overcoming inertia		
Organization - physical & digital systems		
Working memory - holding info in mind		
Attention & focus - sustaining concentration		
Emotional regulation - managing frustration		
Flexibility - adapting to change		

Look at your ratings. Which three skills scored lowest?

When did each of those challenges first appear? (Elementary? Middle school? High school? College?)

How much does each low-rated skill impact your academic performance? Your personal relationships? Your wellbeing?

IDENTIFYING YOUR PATTERN

Executive functioning challenges often follow patterns. Some people struggle with initiation across the board. Others have strong time management but poor emotional regulation. Understanding your pattern helps you target solutions effectively.

Pattern Type	What This Looks Like
Initiation Delays	You know what to do but struggle to start. You have ideas but rarely execute. You work best under deadline pressure.
Planning Weakness	You manage day-to-day tasks but struggle with longer time horizons. Big projects feel overwhelming. You miss deadlines.
Organization Chaos	You know where you want things but cannot maintain systems. Your files, notes, and space become disorganized quickly.
Attention Difficulty	You struggle to focus even on things you care about. Distractions pull your attention constantly. You lose time to phone/social media.
Emotional Overwhelm	Small frustrations trigger big reactions. You ruminate on mistakes. You struggle to recover from setbacks.

Which pattern(s) sound like you? Describe a recent situation where this pattern showed up.

03

Time Management & Planning

Time management is not about cramming more into your day. It is about knowing what your time actually goes to, deciding what it should go to, and building habits that close that gap. Without time awareness, all other executive functioning skills are undermined.

THE TIME AUDIT

You cannot manage what you do not measure. Before you can improve, you need to see where your time actually goes. Track your time for 3 consecutive days using 2-hour blocks. Write down everything: classes, work, studying, scrolling, eating, exercising, sleeping. Be specific.

Time Block	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
7-9 AM			
9-11 AM			
11 AM-1 PM			
1-3 PM			
3-5 PM			
5-7 PM			
7-9 PM			
9-11 PM			

After tracking, what surprised you? What takes more time than you thought? What takes less?

How much time is actually available for studying? For rest and recovery? Calculate the totals.

Where is the biggest gap between how you spend your time and how you want to spend it?

BUILDING A WEEKLY SCHEDULE

A weekly schedule is not a rigid cage. It is a framework that reduces daily decisions and creates consistency. Your brain performs better when study happens at the same time and place, when sleep is consistent, when meals are regular. Here is how to build a sustainable schedule:

- Start with non-negotiable fixed commitments: classes, work, athletic practice, mandatory meetings. Block these first.
- Add consistent sleep and meals: 7-8 hours of sleep starting at the same time. Three meals at consistent times. These are not luxuries - they are performance requirements.
- Add intentional study blocks: treat them like classes. Same time, same place when possible. Quality beats quantity; 90 minutes of focused studying beats 4 hours of distracted work.
- Include transition time: 10-15 minutes between commitments. You need time to physically move and mentally shift focus.
- Protect buffer time: leave gaps for unexpected demands, illness, or just needing a break. Over-scheduling leads to collapse.
- Schedule downtime and breaks: your brain needs rest. Schedule it intentionally - do not just collapse when you burn out.
- Review every Sunday evening: look at the week ahead. What is the plan? Where are the bottlenecks? What needs to shift?

TIME ESTIMATION & PLANNING BACKWARD

Most students underestimate how long tasks take. A 10-page paper is not 10 hours - it is research (5 hours), writing (8 hours), editing (3 hours) = 16 hours minimum. Plan backward from your deadline:

Assignment: _____ **Due Date:** _____ **Days until deadline:** _____

How many hours total will this task actually take? (Be realistic. Add 25% buffer.)

Work backward: if I have _____ hours and _____ days, I need to start _____ days from now.

04

Organization Systems

Organization is not about being neat or color-coding everything. It is about building systems so you can find what you need when you need it without wasting mental energy searching. A messy but functional system beats a beautiful system you never maintain.

DESIGNING YOUR PHYSICAL STUDY SPACE

- Designate one primary study location. Your brain associates places with activities. Studying in the same spot consistently (or at least the same type of location) primes your brain for focus.
- Keep your study surface clear of everything except the current task. Clutter creates cognitive load and decision fatigue.
- Use a simple filing system: one folder/drawer for Active Projects, one for To Review, one for Completed/Archive. When you finish something, move it. This keeps active items visible and manageable.
- Create a supplies zone: pens, paper, sticky notes, highlighters all in one place. Spend 2 minutes setting up, not 10 searching.
- Minimize visual distractions: phone in another room, email closed, social media sites blocked. Your willpower is a limited resource.
- Use your desk walls: a small whiteboard for this week's priorities, a calendar showing deadlines, a motivational quote. Make your environment work for you.
- Set a 5-minute end-of-day cleanup ritual: put things away, clear the desk, identify what you will work on tomorrow. This transitions you out of work mode and prepares tomorrow's space.

DIGITAL ORGANIZATION

Digital clutter creates the same cognitive load as physical clutter. You waste mental energy searching, you duplicate files, you open the wrong version.

- Use ONE task management tool and commit to it. (Todoist, Outlook, Apple Reminders, Google Tasks - the tool matters less than consistency.)
- Establish a file naming convention and use it every time: [Course]_[Assignment]_[Date] or [Date]_[Topic]_[Version]. Example: PSYCH101_Essay_2024-03-15_v3. Future you will thank present you.
- Create a logical folder structure: a main School folder, subfolders for each course, subfolders for assignments within each course. Be consistent about where things go.
- Keep your desktop clean. Only current projects should be visible. Everything else lives in folders. A cluttered desktop creates decision fatigue each time you open your computer.

- Use cloud backup: Google Drive, OneDrive, Dropbox. Non-negotiable. Losing work is not an option.
- Establish an email inbox system: archive (do not delete) old emails, use folders for different courses/projects, set up filters to automatically sort by-class emails. A full inbox is mental clutter.
- Use your calendar as your system of record: every deadline, every commitment, every planned study session goes in your calendar immediately. Not in a note. In the calendar.

ACADEMIC ORGANIZATION: THE SYLLABUS TRANSFER

The first day of each class, you should transfer every single deadline from the syllabus into your calendar. This is non-negotiable.

What To Transfer	How To Enter It
All assignment due dates	Calendar entry with the assignment name and due date
All test/exam dates	Calendar entry at least one week before, and again three days before
Office hours & tutoring times	Add them weekly so you see them coming up
Final project deadlines	Transfer the deadline AND set reminders to start 2 weeks before and 1 week before

Choose one area (physical, digital, or academic) that is most chaotic right now. What is one change you will make this week?

What tool or system could help prevent this chaos from returning? How will you maintain it?

05

Task Initiation & Follow-Through

Procrastination is not a character flaw. It is not laziness. It is a response to something specific about the task: it feels overwhelming, boring, ambiguous, or emotionally loaded. Understanding why you procrastinate is the first step to addressing it.

THE PROCRASTINATION DIAGNOSIS

When you catch yourself procrastinating, pause and diagnose which type:

Type	What's Happening & How to Fix It
Overwhelm	The task feels too big. Solution: Break it into pieces so small they feel almost silly. Then commit to just the first one. A 20-page paper becomes: (1) Read three sources, (2) Create outline, (3) Write intro. Each piece feels doable.
Boredom	The task is tedious or uninteresting. Solution: Change your environment or pair the task with something you enjoy. Work at a coffee shop. Play music. Study with a friend nearby. Make it less boring.
Ambiguity	You do not know where to start. Solution: Spend 5-10 minutes clarifying just the first step. Not the whole project. Just step one. Write a quick outline. Read the instructions twice. Just enough clarity to begin.
Emotional Avoidance	The task triggers anxiety, perfectionism, fear of failure, or shame. Solution: Name the feeling out loud. I am anxious about this because I have never done something like this before. Just naming it reduces its intensity. Then commit to 15 minutes of work despite the feeling.

GETTING STARTED: STRATEGIES THAT WORK

- **The 5-Minute Rule:** Tell yourself you will work on it for just 5 minutes. Not the full task. Not even 25 minutes. Five. Starting is the hardest part. Momentum almost always takes over after the first 5 minutes.
- **Body Doubling:** Work alongside someone else, even if you are working on different things. Their presence creates accountability and makes starting feel less lonely. (This is why libraries are so effective.)
- **Environment Design:** Put your phone in another room. Close unnecessary browser tabs. Open the document before you need to. Remove friction between you and starting. Make not starting harder than starting.
- **Pomodoro Technique:** 25 minutes of focused work, 5-minute break, repeat. Four rounds, then a longer 15-20 minute break. Simple, effective, prevents burnout.
- **Start with the Easiest Part:** Not every task needs to start at the beginning. Start where you have the most energy and clarity. If the intro feels hard, start with a section you understand better. You can rearrange later.
- **Use a Start Ritual:** The same sequence every time you begin work. Make tea, open your workspace, put on the same music, take three deep breaths. Rituals reduce friction and put your brain in work mode.

ON PERFECTIONISM

Perfectionism disguises itself as high standards, but it is really a fear of being judged. It causes more procrastination than laziness ever has. Perfectionists start late (to reduce revision time) and work frantically (and ineffectively). Done is better than perfect. You can revise something that exists - but you cannot revise something that does not exist. Submit the good version, not the perfect version.

What is a task you have been avoiding? Which type of procrastination is it (overwhelm, boredom, ambiguity, emotional)?

What is the absolute first tiny step you could take right now? (Not research. Not planning the whole thing. Just one step.)

Which strategy above are you most likely to actually use? How will you remind yourself to use it?

06

Working Memory & Attention

Working memory is your ability to hold multiple pieces of information in mind while processing. Attention is your ability to sustain focus despite distractions. Both are critical to academic performance - and both can be improved with the right strategies.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR WORKING MEMORY LIMITS

Your working memory can hold about 3-5 pieces of information simultaneously. When you try to hold more, something falls out. This is why trying to remember the problem while reading the solution does not work. This is why you lose your train of thought when interrupted.

You cannot expand your working memory capacity significantly. But you can externalize that load. You can write things down. You can create visual systems. You can reduce competing demands.

- Write everything down: If you try to remember assignments, deadlines, and ideas in your head, your working memory overloads. Write them down immediately. Your brain can then focus on processing, not storage.
- Use visual systems: Timelines, mind maps, outlines, study guides. Seeing information visually reduces the load on working memory.
- Reduce competing demands: Close email while studying. Put your phone in another room. Silence notifications. Every background demand consumes working memory capacity.
- Take breaks: Working memory fatigue is real. After 45-90 minutes of intense focus, take a real break (10+ minutes, away from screens). Your working memory needs to reset.
- Use memory aids: Acronyms, rhymes, analogies, color-coding. Mnemonics help you encode information more solidly. You are less likely to forget something that is attached to a story or image.

BUILDING ATTENTION & MANAGING DISTRACTIONS

Attention is like a muscle. It can be trained. But it is also constantly under attack from notification pings, social media, and task-switching. The students with the strongest attention are not superhuman - they have just removed distractions and built strong habits.

Strategy	What This Means
Environment Design	Study in the same place. Remove distractions before you start, not during. Phone in another room. Laptop in single-window mode. Doors closed. Your

	environment should support focus, not battle it.
Time Blocking	Your brain focuses better when you have a defined time window. I am studying from 3-4 PM creates urgency and focus. Open-ended studying leads to drift and distraction.
Single-Tasking	Your brain is not actually multitasking - it is rapidly task-switching, which is exhausting and ineffective. Work on one thing for a defined period (25-90 minutes). Then switch. Do not have multiple projects open.
Strategic Breaks	A 10-minute break every 45 minutes is better than 2 hours straight. Breaks restore attention, not deplete it. But breaks mean stepping away from screens. Walk. Stretch. Get water. Let your eyes rest.
Attention Tracking	Notice when your attention drifts. What is causing it? External (notification, noise) or internal (hunger, anxiety, boredom)? Identifying the pattern helps you design better systems.

When you sit down to study, how long before you lose focus? What usually pulls your attention away?

What distractions could you eliminate right now? What would make your study environment support focus better?

07

Emotional Regulation & Flexibility

Academic life is full of frustration, setbacks, unexpected changes, and emotional triggers. Your ability to manage emotional responses - not suppress them, but manage them - directly impacts your performance and wellbeing. Emotional regulation is the skill of staying operational even when you are upset.

COMMON ACADEMIC TRIGGERS

- Getting a grade lower than expected or that feels unfair
- Falling behind on assignments because of other commitments
- Conflict with a roommate, friend, study partner, or group member
- Plans changing unexpectedly (canceled class, shifted deadline)
- Comparing yourself to peers who seem to be doing better
- Feeling overwhelmed by the sheer volume of work
- Receiving critical feedback on work you put effort into
- Struggling with a concept everyone else seems to understand

THE EMOTIONAL REGULATION TOOLBOX

When triggered, you have several options. They work better in sequence:

Tool	What This Does
Name the feeling	Frustration. Disappointment. Anxiety. Shame. Anger. Naming your emotion reduces its intensity and activates your thinking brain.
Take a physical break	Do 10 push-ups. Take a walk. Drink water. Do jumping jacks. Movement processes emotion physically. Do not stay stuck in your chair.
Pause before reacting	Do not send the email. Do not post the comment. Wait 24 hours. Most regretted actions happen when you are emotionally activated.
Separate event from story	A bad grade is an event. I am stupid and going to fail out is a story. Question the story. Replace it with a factual assessment.
Focus on what you control	You cannot control the grade you got. You can

control: what you do next, whether you ask for help, how you study differently.

Reach out

Talk to a friend, advisor, counselor, or parent. Talking literally reduces the intensity of emotion. Isolation intensifies it.

COGNITIVE FLEXIBILITY: ADAPTING WHEN PLANS FALL APART

Flexibility is the ability to adapt when things do not go as planned without collapsing. College is full of surprises - canceled classes, shifted deadlines, failed exams, changed interests, unexpected illness. The students who thrive are not the ones who never encounter setbacks. They are the ones who can adjust without shutdown.

Flexibility requires: (1) accepting that change is normal, (2) separating the disappointment from shame, (3) generating alternative plans quickly, (4) moving forward without dwelling.

What is a recent situation where things did not go as planned? What was your initial emotional reaction?

How did you handle it? What could you have done differently? What did you learn about your flexibility?

What is one thing you are dreading that might not happen? How could you practice accepting uncertainty?

08

Study Skills & Academic Strategies

Strong study skills are not just about effort. They are about using evidence-based techniques that actually build long-term learning. Highlighting your notes and re-reading are not effective. Active recall and spaced repetition are. Understanding what works - and what just feels like work - is critical.

EFFECTIVE NOTE-TAKING SYSTEMS

How you take notes directly affects what you remember and how well you perform. The goal of notes is not a beautiful artifact - it is capturing the information you need to study from later.

System	How It Works
Cornell System	Divide your page: 2 inches on left (cue), 6 inches on right (notes). During class, write notes on the right. Later, write questions on the left that the notes answer. Forces active thinking.
Outline Method	Use hierarchical structure with main ideas and sub-points. Fast and logical. Works well for lectures with clear structure. Requires good listening to catch the hierarchy.
Mind Maps	Visual, non-linear. Start with central idea, branch out. Forces you to see relationships. Good for your brain, harder to search. Use for synthesis, not during lectures.
The Feynman Technique	Write concepts in simple language as if explaining to someone else. If you get stuck, you have found what you do not understand. Use this for review, not during class.

ACTIVE RECALL: THE EVIDENCE-BASED LEARNING STRATEGY

Active recall means retrieving information from memory, not just seeing it on a page. This is the single most effective study technique for long-term retention. Not highlighting. Not re-reading. Testing yourself.

- Use flashcards: Digital (Anki, Quizlet) or paper. The act of pulling up the answer from memory strengthens it. Review regularly following the spacing effect (next day, 3 days, week, month).

- Practice problems: For math and science, more problems means better learning. Do not watch someone else solve them. Solve them yourself. Get stuck. Then check the answer.
- Teach it out loud: Explain a concept to another person (or even to your stuffed animal). You will quickly discover what you understand and what you have only memorized.
- Create your own quiz: Write 5 questions about today's material. Test yourself tomorrow. This forces you to identify what is important and retrieve it from memory.
- Predict exam questions: What would a professor ask about this material? Write the question and answer. This forces processing from a higher level.

SPACED REPETITION: OPTIMAL REVIEW SCHEDULE

Your memory is strongest right after learning, then fades. Reviewing at strategic intervals rebuilds and strengthens memory. This is why cramming does not work - you have no intervals.

Review material at these intervals: After 1 day, after 3 days, after 1 week, after 2 weeks, after 1 month. You will remember it for much longer than if you cram once.

Which note-taking system are you currently using? Is it working? Would a different system serve you better?

How do you currently study for exams? Does your method involve active recall and spaced repetition, or more passive review?

09

Building Sustainable Habits

Sustainable change does not come from motivation. Motivation is temporary. It comes from building habits so automatic they do not require willpower. A habit is a behavior so routine you do it without thinking. That is where your power lies.

THE HABIT LOOP: CUE -> ROUTINE -> REWARD

Every habit has three components. To build new habits, you need to understand each one:

Component	Explanation
Cue	The trigger that starts the behavior. (Time of day, location, emotion, preceding action.) Example: Morning coffee (cue) -> Check calendar (routine) -> Peace of mind (reward).
Routine	The behavior itself. What you actually do. Should be as small and specific as possible, not vague. Not study math but solve 5 practice problems.
Reward	The benefit you feel. Should be immediate. The reward is what makes you want to repeat the behavior. Example: Solving problems -> feeling competent.

BUILDING NEW HABITS: THE STARTING TEMPLATE

Use this template to build a specific new habit. Vague intentions do not work. Specific, small behaviors do.

Element	Your New Habit
What is the specific behavior?	(Not study more. Not get organized. Something you can do in <20 minutes. Example: Spend 10 minutes filing papers or Solve 3 practice problems.)
What is the cue?	(When and where? Every morning after breakfast? Monday/Wednesday/Friday at 3 PM? The cue should be consistent and automatic.)

What is the reward?

(What do you feel immediately after? Check it off a list? Get a coffee? Feel progress? The reward should be immediate, not distant.)

When will you start?

(Commit to a specific date. Not sometime soon. A date. This week.)

How will you track it?

(Habit tracker app? Calendar checkmarks? Accountability text with a friend? Tracking keeps the behavior visible.)

ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS: MAKING HABITS STICK

The most powerful habit accelerator is not willpower or motivation. It is accountability. Someone checking on you. Research shows accountability increases follow-through by 65%.

- Find an accountability partner: A friend also building a habit. You text each other after you do the behavior. Simple, powerful, free.
- Use a habit-tracking app: Streaks, Habitica, Done, or just a spreadsheet. Seeing your streak grow is visually motivating.
- Use public commitment: Tell someone your goal. Write it down. Make it public. You are more likely to follow through when others know.
- Create consequences: If you miss the habit, you do something mildly unpleasant. Donate to a political opponent campaign. Give a friend. This makes the cost real.
- Track the behavior, not perfection: Missing one day does not mean you failed. Missing three does. Aim for 80% compliance, not 100%. Systems that allow for human imperfection last longer.

PREVENTING RELAPSE: WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU MISS

You will miss days. Life happens. What matters is what you do next. Research on habit-building shows: missing once is an accident. Missing twice is the start of a new pattern. Get back within 48 hours.

Which habit will you commit to building first? (Start with one. Not five. One.)

When will you start? What is the specific cue, routine, and reward? How will you track it? Who will hold you accountable?

10

Your Executive Functioning Action Plan

The goal is not to become a perfectly organized person overnight. It is to build a system that is sustainable - one you will actually use, even on bad days. Start small. Add complexity only when the basics are solid. This final section is your implementation roadmap.

CHOOSE YOUR STARTING HABITS: THE NON-NEGOTIABLE THREE

If you only do three things consistently, research shows these three have the highest impact:

- Check your calendar and to-do list every morning (takes 3 minutes). This keeps you aligned with your day and prevents surprises.
- Write down every new commitment and deadline immediately (takes 1 minute per item). This ensures nothing falls through the cracks.
- Spend 15 minutes every Sunday planning the week ahead (takes 15 minutes once per week). This prevents chaos and creates intentionality.

30-DAY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Week 1-2: Establish the Non-Negotiable Three

- Set a phone reminder for every morning: Check calendar and to-do list.
- Set a phone reminder for Sunday evening: Weekly planning session, 15 minutes.
- Test your system: Make a commitment, write it down, add it to your calendar. Does it show up when you check?

Week 3-4: Add your strongest growth habit

Choose one skill from your self-assessment that scored lowest. Pick one micro-habit to address it.

If you struggle with...	Start this micro-habit
Task initiation	Use the 5-minute rule. When avoiding a task, commit to 5 minutes. Track this daily.
Organization	Spend 10 minutes organizing one space (desk, folder, or email inbox). Same time daily.

Time awareness

Use a timer when studying. Notice if you have overestimated or underestimated time. Track it.

Attention

Find one distraction source and eliminate it. Phone in another room? Specific music? Try it for a week.

30-Day Check-In Date: _____ | **Date completed:** _____

Which of the Non-Negotiable Three have stuck? Which ones still need work?

Did you add your fourth habit successfully? Is it getting easier?

What has gotten easier over the last 30 days? What is still hard?

60-DAY PLAN: REINFORCEMENT & ADDITION

By day 60, your first habit should feel automatic. Use the cognitive space you have freed up to add a second growth habit. Do not overwhelm yourself. One new habit at a time, in this sequence of leverage:

- Time management (without this, everything is reactive)
- Task initiation (without this, plans do not happen)
- Organization (without this, you waste time searching)
- Attention (builds on the systems above)
- Emotional regulation (easiest to add last, once other systems are solid)

90-DAY REVIEW: BUILDING YOUR SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM

At 90 days, you have laid the foundation. You are checking your calendar automatically. You are writing things down immediately. You are blocking your week intentionally. You have added at least two growth habits. You have momentum.

Now: Review what is working and what is not. Adjust. Do not add complexity for its own sake. Your system should feel sustainable - something you could maintain even during a stressful semester.

90-Day Review Date: _____

Rate your executive functioning now (1-5) in each skill. How have you improved since the beginning?

Which habits have truly stuck? Which ones are still effortful?

What is the next 30 days going to focus on? What is the one skill you want to improve next?

RELATED RESOURCES & NEXT STEPS

Before You Go - Life skills and preparation for academic transitions The SAT / ACT / GRE Playbooks - Structured study plans that build on these executive functioning skills info@hearn.consulting - For executive functioning coaching and personalized support