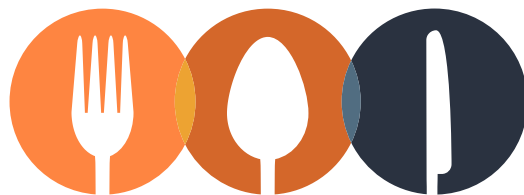




Take Control ADHD



ADHD-Friendly Meal Planning







Meal Planning

Congratulations!

You've taken the first step in making life easier. Meal planning is one of those ideas that sounds great, but when it comes down to doing it, it's not so easy—especially if you have ADHD. It takes time and mental energy... and it means grocery shopping (personally, one of my least favorite activities).



What happens when we don't meal plan:

-  We get stressed and anxious around 5pm because we have no idea what's for dinner.
-  We eat out more, which means more spending, more calories, and not always the best food for our bodies.
-  We lose time because we walk aimlessly around the grocery store, taking twice as long to get out of there than it would if we had a plan.
-  We lose money buying things we don't need or don't get eaten and rot in the refrigerator (I hope I'm not the only one!).

What makes meal planning so hard?

Meal planning is a topic that comes up often because there is a strong desire for the planning to work; we just aren't sure how to do it. We don't think of meal planning as an organizing system, but it really needs to have a system in order to know how to meal plan and how to do it on a regular basis.

When planning anything, especially meal planning, we need our [executive functions](#) to be in working order because decisions have to be made and grocery lists need to be written.

There are several steps to creating a meal planning system. In this guide, we hope you find what you need to find a system that works for you. It takes a little time up-front, but it does get easier with practice, and can become a weekly habit that will save you money but most importantly ease the dinner time anxiety we feel around 5pm.



Choose a Meal Plan System

Make a decision on where you want to keep your recipes and meal planning notes.

Digital Systems

If you already use an app for other parts of your day, it makes sense to add in one more to tackle meal planning. There are a ton of great meal planning apps available, with many of them free to download.

The biggest benefit of many of these apps is the ability to keep everything together in one place. Meal plans, recipes, shopping lists, tracking nutritional information—these can all be done under one app on your devices. How great would it be to never forget your grocery list at home because it's always on your phone!

You can also create multiple users under the same account. This allows you to share your meal plans and shopping lists with the other people who cook and eat with you.

Paper Systems

Not everyone feels comfortable completing these tasks digitally. That's ok. Ultimately, you need to find what works for you.

Make sure you always keep your meal plan calendar in plain view, like on the refrigerator.

Don't forget to make and take that grocery list!

Steps To Build Your System

1 Build Your Master List of Meals

The first step is to come up with a list of your favorite meals. To get started, fill out the master list worksheet below. Consider this a rough draft. If you think of something later you can always add it.

This master list is important when setting up a meal planning system. Your next step is to figure out what that system will look like.

2 Choose a Meal Planning System

Review your options and decide on what you want to do moving forward.

3 Build the System

If you have chosen a digital app, take the time to learn how to use it and start with adding a few of your favorite recipes including this week's meal plan. Don't feel the need to enter everything in all at once, this is too overwhelming and time consuming. Each meal can be entered as you eat it.

If you have chosen to go the paper route, decide on what calendar you will be putting the meal plan on and where you want to store your favorite meals list. This visual is such a big part of making meal planning easy, because then you don't have to rely on your memory.

On a side note:



You may be in situation where you want to use an app but you also have several cookbooks and recipes laying around and wonder how to incorporate them into your app.

You can find the recipe online and many apps will auto-fill the recipe into the app itself. If it's a family recipe, you will need to enter it by hand.

You can also be creative and add a favorite recipe in your app, but the directions is to look at the cookbook where the recipe is in. This includes the recipe in the app but without having to enter it in.



When should meal planning happen?

We recommend a once-a-week or twice-a-week option. It's really a matter of individual preference.

Once a week

Pick a day where you have time to do your meal planning. It could be on Sunday morning and then do your grocery shopping on Sunday afternoons. Some prefer to do their planning on Saturdays and then do the shopping on Sunday. It really doesn't matter as long as you are consistent—that's the key. If you miss your scheduled time, it usually means a lot of take-out that week.

Twice a week

Planning twice a week can work because you are planning for less meals at once. You end up planning for three meals at a time rather than six or seven. For example, on Sunday, you plan for Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday meals. Wednesday is leftovers. On Thursday, you plan for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, and knowing one of those nights will be take out, you really only have two meals to plan.

Meal Planning Tips:

1

Check Your Schedule

Review your calendar before making your meal plan for the week, this will help to ensure that you are making meals that are realistic to your schedule. If you aren't coming home until 7pm, a crockpot option might be a better choice than trying out a new recipe.

2

Shop Your Freezer and Pantry

To eliminate food waste, check your freezer and pantry to help make decisions. You may find you only need to buy 2 or 3 ingredients to complete the meal.

3

Turn One Meal Into Two

Choose recipes that will allow a different meal for the leftovers. For example, a pot roast can be french dip sandwiches the next evening. A baked ham can become an egg omelet the next day.

4

Keep It Simple

If you don't really care much about variety, decide on ten meals and have them on rotation every two weeks. This takes into account that during those two weeks you will have two days for leftovers and two days for take out.

5

Get The Family Involved

Get the family involved in meal planning. Let each family member can choose one meal from the list. This is a great idea, especially for families who have picky eaters. Plus it takes the pressure off the person always making the meal decisions.

On a side note: + ?

I have seen more success with staying consistent when you wrap meal planning around something you already do.

For example, if every Sunday morning, you enjoy a nice breakfast with your family, after the meal, do your meal planning. Or if every Monday, you go over your budget, after you're done, do your meal planning.

So before you begin to plan your meals, take some time to decide when you are going to plan them. Then you can move on to the following steps to be successful.



Grocery Shopping

The last step is to put together your grocery list and go shopping. The advantage to using a digital app is many of them will automatically create a grocery list based on the ingredients of your recipes. However, there is still something to be said about having a list in hand and checking it off as you go.

The Benefits of Online Grocery Shopping

Recently, I learned about the benefits of online grocery shopping, and now I can't see myself getting groceries any other way:

- ✓ Only buy what you need; less likely to impulse shop.
- ✓ Easier to plan when to shop; no need to leave the house.
- ✓ Less chance of forgetting something; you can't forget your list if you didn't leave the house.
- ✓ Much faster than shopping in-store; no crowds, no lines, less distractions.

On a side note:



When you make a trip to the grocery store to get the items on your newly created grocery list, consider errand stacking to save time.

Errand stacking is really about getting the most out of your trip. Use the time while you are out to take care of a few other errands that may be close to your grocery store.

Is there a gas station next to the store? Why not fill up before you head home.


Do you have a box that needs sent to your local donation center? Load the back seat and drop it off before you go shopping.





Meal Delivery Services:


Sometimes planning to prep and cook 5+ meals a week is too much. Maybe your schedule doesn't always allow the time to roast a chicken or do the prep work needed to cook a meal. You could be cooking for yourself and find the idea of all that cooking and cleaning to create a meal for one person is too much. That's ok. But, it's also important that you still have a plan in place for nutritious meals.

Meal delivery services may be the right option for you. There are so many different places offering meal delivery, there's something out there for everyone. The suggestions below come recommended by others in the Take Control ADHD community:

 **HelloFresh**
When you like to cook, but hate grocery shopping and prepwork.

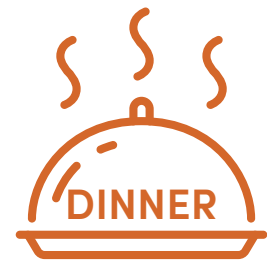
 **Green Chef**
When cooking becomes more difficult due to diet restrictions and/or allergies.

 **Freshly**
When you want a home-cooked meal but don't have time to cook.

 **Every Plate**
When you want meals delivered, but you don't want to break the bank.



Meal Planning **MASTER LIST**



Use this form to catalog your family's favorite meals, sides, and desserts. It's much easier to plan your meals each week with a robust list of meals at hand that you know have been a hit in the past!

MAIN DISHES	
DINNER	

SIDE DISHES	



Thank You!

Thank you for downloading our ADHD-Friendly Meal Planning Guide. We hope you find the information inside to be useful and a great addition to the other strategies you use to manage your life with ADHD. It is our mission to provide valuable content and services to the ADHD community. If you are looking for other tools or services to add to your ADHD Toolbox, take a look below at the other services we offer at Take Control ADHD.

Thank you for your time and attention,

- The TCA Team

Take Control of your ADHD with services at TCA

Click each icon to learn more.



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for adults**



**ADHD Coaching
for college students**



Group Coaching



**Guided Planning Sessions (GPS)
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