

4 ways to get things done

(Compiled by Arnika Van Den Berg - Ara: Disability mental health and wellbeing lead).

1) Increase baseline dopamine level

- Medication (stimulants or non-stimulants)
- Good sleep, eating, lifestyle balance etc
- Exercise before starting your task
- Choose the best time of day for you when dopamine is highest

2) Dopamine stacking (The 'NIC' in the NICE Model)

- Introducing more dopamine into the system

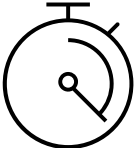
	Ideas (highlight your favs, add your own)
Novel 	Location – park, café, bathtub, the beach Position – lying down, sitting on the floor, pacing Method – reading, audio, flashcards, quiz, draw Watch youtube videos about the topic Analogue (pen + paper) vs digital (computer)
Interesting 	Mindmaps – brainstorm with colour Podcasts – listen to your subject/topic Use NotebookLM to create 'deep dive conversation' from your notes Food – snacks, gum while you work Listen to high tempo music like EDM or K-Pop Have fidget items on hand for stimulation Body doubling – have someone sit near you
Challenging 	Use Notebook LM to create a quiz or flash cards Pair up – write quiz questions and ask each other Pair up - see who can write more words in 1 hour, loser buys the winner a snack/coffee. Explain your topic to your friend, pet, or plant Boil it down – could you explain it to a 5yr old? Write a to-do list and see how many you can tick off in a day – try the Finch app or Goblin Tools to track it. Track your activity, continue your daily streak. Practice quiz questions, beat your high score.

3) Reduce the Executive Function demand (amount of dopamine needed)

- Break down the task into small steps (can use GoblinTools to help)
- Do an easier/simpler version of the task (e.g. bullet points instead of full sentences)
- Say you will do the task for 'just 5 mins' (keep going after the 5 mins if you are on a roll)
- Focus on one small area rather than the whole task
- Get someone to help you or body double with you
- Ask learning support to help break down what you need to do
- Reduce your stress levels,

4) Create urgency and accountability (the 'E' in the NICE model, increases noradrenaline not dopamine)

- Set a fixed goal and tell someone about it
- Set a fixed time someone will check your progress on that goal
- Make sure that person won't let you back out! Your brain needs to know that check in is 'real'.

Urgency 	Set your study time to 1 hour before an appointment you can't move, a bus you can't miss, a phonecall you must answer etc. Use timers and countdowns to set a limit Pomodoro technique Set deadlines for tasks not just the final result. Don't start too early if you know that doesn't work for you – clear your schedule for later. Reframe your stress as 'deadline energy'.
Accountability 	Tell your tutor you will submit a draft X days before the due date - you can't reschedule it. Pair up: you will email your drafts to each other at X time/day. Requires BOTH to commit. Show your progress to someone at the end of the day. Can be your flatmate, family etc. Try online body doubling videos or Deepwrk.

The more of these we can use, the more likely we will get our executive function up and running.

Example combination: Writing an essay

- 1) Good night sleep, 15 min stretch, then start writing at 9.30am
- 2) Sit outside, fidgets, scented candle, snacks, music ready to go
- 3) Goblin Tools to give ideas on where to start, mindmap to plan out the main things to cover, bullet points and brain dumping
- 4) Have set up with flatmate that I will show them my word count at 12pm today, and again at 12pm tomorrow. Set word target for each check in, penalty if I don't reach that goal - I'll do their flat chore if I don't reach the target (no cheating!). Reward if I meet the goal – we both go out for lunch/coffee.

Fill in what works for you and refer back to it before you start your task:

	What works for me
1) Increasing baseline dopamine	
2) Dopamine stacking/NICE	
3) Reducing EF demands/make it easier	
4) Create urgency and accountability	