

# Task Paralysis in ADHD Teens

♥ A simple guide for parents ♥



## 1 What is task paralysis?



Task paralysis is when a teen wants or needs to do something, but feels mentally stuck and cannot begin. It is not the same as laziness or not caring. It is often a freeze response caused by overwhelm.

## 2 Why it happens



The task feels too big or unclear



They do not know where to start



Too many thoughts compete at once



Fear of getting it wrong adds pressure



Low motivation and brain overwhelm make starting harder

## 3 What it can look like



Staring at homework but not beginning



Avoiding the task and doing something else instead



Saying: "I know I need to do it, but I just can't start"



Getting upset, shutting down, or seeming defiant



Starting tiny unrelated jobs instead of the main task

## 4 What helps



Break the task into very small first steps



Give one instruction at a time



Use a timer for a short starting point, like 5 minutes



Sit nearby or start it together (body doubling)



Use checklists or visual prompts



Praise effort, not just completion

## What not to say



- ✗ Just do it
- ✗ You are being lazy
- ✗ It is easy, why are you making this hard?
- ✗ You have no excuse

## What to say instead



- ✓ Let's work out the first step together
- ✓ You seem stuck — how can I help you start?
- ✓ We only need to do the first small part
- ✓ I can see this feels overwhelming

## Most important message

Task paralysis is usually a sign of overwhelm, not unwillingness. Understanding, structure, and calm support can help your teen get moving.

