Classroom idea with printables · ADHD

Visible Time

making time something students can see



Elementary school | Middle school | High school

Helpful for ADHD, good for the whole class

What you need

- Printer and scissors
- Laminating pouches or a laminator
- A dry-erase marker
- A sand timer, an analog clock or a timer for the desk
- Magnets or tape for the board



How to prepare

1. Page 3: cut out and laminate the announcement cards
2. Page 4: cut out and laminate the desk cards
3. Page 5: print the time log for middle and high school

Step by step

1. Put an analog clock, a sand timer or a timer on the desk, not tucked away in a menu.
2. Name the task and the time together, for example: “Ten minutes for problem 1.”
3. Start the clock once the student can see it.
4. At the end, briefly show how far the task got. Don't grade it.

Tip: The announcement cards replace loud signals. Quietly hold up the right card, tape it to the board or set it on the desk, without interrupting the work.

Why it helps

With ADHD, the sense of time can swing wildly, so a task feels too short or endless. A visible clock makes the time left easier to grasp and helps the student manage it on their own. Timers as an external support are described in the sources on this site.

How to adapt it

- **Elementary school:** A sand timer, or a timer with a colored disk that shrinks. Short stretches of five to ten minutes.
- **Middle school:** A timer on the desk or at the board, with the time and task written together on the board.
- **High school:** The student estimates the time beforehand and compares afterward, building the planning skills they'll need for exams.

AI tip

An AI tool can break a task into smaller steps and suggest how long each one should take; you then write task plus time on the board or desk card. High school students can compare the AI's time estimate with their own. The suggestions are only rough guides, since you know your class best.

Last checked: November 2026. AI changes quickly, so this tip may soon be out of date. It works with ChatGPT, Gemini and Claude; use whatever your school allows. Never enter student data or student tests, not even anonymized.



Keep in mind

- The clock should support, not rush. Loud signals can be stressful.
- At the end, don't judge how much got done. Look together at how far the task got.
- On tests with extended time, a visible clock makes the extra time easier to grasp.

How you know it's working

You hear “How much longer?” less often, and students spread their time out better.

Cut out and laminate. Hold them up quietly, tape them to the board or set them on the desk.

The clock is running

Start with the first step.



10 minutes left

Take a quick look at where you are.

5 minutes left

Finish the step you're on.

2 minutes left

Finish the sentence or problem you're on.

Time is up

Pencils down. Let's see how far the task got.

Pause

The clock is paused. We'll keep going in a moment.

Your own announcement, like “15 minutes left”, in dry-erase marker

Your own announcement, in dry-erase marker

Cut out and laminate. Update them daily with a dry-erase marker and put them next to the clock.

Task and time

Task: _____

My time: _____

Start time: _____

End time: _____

How far I got: _____

Task and time

Task: _____

My time: _____

Start time: _____

End time: _____

How far I got: _____

Task and time

Task: _____

My time: _____

Start time: _____

End time: _____

How far I got: _____

Task and time

Task: _____

My time: _____

Start time: _____

End time: _____

How far I got: _____

Task and time

Task: _____

My time: _____

Start time: _____

End time: _____

How far I got: _____

Task and time

Task: _____

My time: _____

Start time: _____

End time: _____

How far I got: _____

Task and time

Task: _____

My time: _____

Start time: _____

End time: _____

How far I got: _____

For middle school and high school

Estimate and compare



Estimate how long a task will take, then compare afterward. That's how you learn to manage your time on exams.

Name: _____

Subject: _____

Date	Task	Estimated	Actual time	Difference	What I'll plan differently next time
11/14	*Problems 1 to 3, page 42*	*15 min.*	*25 min.*	*plus 10 min.*	*Allow time to read the directions*

The gray row is an example.

After five entries

- Do tasks usually take longer or shorter than you thought?
- Which kind of task are you furthest off on?
- Plan a bit more time for those tasks on the next exam.