

10 ADHD-Friendly Strategies for Packing Without the Panic

1. Use a Packing Checklist

Start with a comprehensive list organized by categories (clothing, toiletries, tech, etc.). Whether it's on paper or in your Notes app, check items off as you pack them—and keep adding to it as things come to mind. Don't rely on memory!

2. Start Early

Instead of waiting until the last minute, start a few days or even a week before your trip.

3. Schedule It Like a Real Task

Block dedicated time on your calendar for packing. Treat it like an appointment, not an afterthought. Try a 45-minute focused sprint, then reward yourself with a break.

4. Check Your Inventory Early

A few days before packing, make sure you have everything you need—travel-size toiletries, chargers, adapters, etc. This gives you time to replace or refill without panic-buying at the last minute.

5. Use the 5-Minute Rule to Get Started

Trouble getting started? Tell yourself you only have to pack for five minutes. That tiny step often builds enough momentum to keep going.

6. Use a “Staging Zone”

Designate a clear surface—your bed, a table, or a corner of the floor—where you can lay everything out before it goes into the suitcase. This helps you track what's packed and prevents overpacking duplicates.

7. Pack by Category to Stay Focused

Instead of bouncing between items, pack one category at a time (e.g., first clothes, then accessories, then toiletries). This keeps your brain from getting overwhelmed and helps you see progress.

8. **Plan Full Outfits Ahead of Time**

Pull complete outfits—including undergarments, shoes, and accessories—and lay them out in the staging area. You'll reduce last-minute outfit anxiety and avoid packing a bunch of random pieces that don't work together.

9. **Do a Final Outfit Edit**

Once you've chosen your outfits, re-evaluate them and remove anything unnecessary. Simplifying now will reduce decision fatigue during your trip and leave more room in your suitcase.

10. **Only Pack What You Know How to Use**

Skip the gadgets you've never tested. If you haven't already figured out how to use that travel steamer or fancy adapter, leave it behind. You don't need extra frustration on the road.

Pro tip - Make a Post-Trip Debrief List

During or after your trip, jot down what you didn't use and what you wish you'd brought. Store that list somewhere handy for future trips—it'll make your next packing experience so much smoother.

Final words - Packing doesn't have to be overwhelming—it can even be a little fun if you let it. Turn on some music, make it a game, do it with a glass of whatever you enjoy, and envision what it will feel like once you are at your destination. Give yourself grace, celebrate the progress you make along the way, and remember: you don't have to do it all perfectly for it to be good enough.

"Success is a journey, not a destination" ~Arthur Ashe