

POTTS Dyspraxia DCD Ireland

Executive Functioning

Study Resource



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Week 1 - Profile Building

The first week of this program will focus primarily on establishing a therapeutic relationship with the student and identifying key areas of growth to focus on over the coming weeks.

Goals

- Build rapport with the student
- Gather information related to the study profile.
(See template attached below)
- Gather information related to routines, roles and interests.
- Outline the coordinator's role and the plan for the intervention.
- Identify areas of challenge to inform goal setting.

Tasks to complete

- Populate study profile
- Establish goals

Study Info Template

Name:	
DOB:	
Pronouns:	
Class year:	
Write or type?	
Interests (activity, music, friends)	
Favourite team/movie/food/ game	
Best qualities	
Interesting fact	
Strengths	
Challenges	
Current Subjects (Levels)	
Favourite subjects	
Least favourite subjects	
Other subjects	
Hardest- Easiest subjects	
Things I am good at in school	
Things I find hard at school	
Learning style if known	

Study strategies used	
Study strategies that don't work	
The best way to learn/ complete school tasks	
Where do I study?	
Study routine (general and exams)	
Dream job? Why?	
Bucket list goals	
Is anything else important?	
What do you want to achieve from this?	

- The majority of the information for this form can be collected in session 1 through semi-structured interviews with the student.
- Information can be gathered across several sessions, with the profile to be treated as an active document.
- All questions should be considered throughout the process and updated as necessary, or if more in-depth information is gathered.
- Use this time to build a therapeutic relationship with the students and understand them as a person.

Week 2 - Regulation and Comprehending Keywords

This week focuses on preparing to learn, including regulation and identifying keywords in questions to assist with comprehension. The Occupational Therapist/educator should focus primarily on identifying previously effective strategies used for regulation as a basis and implementing new strategies to build upon this.

Goals

- Continue building rapport with the student.
- Introduce regulation strategies in line with students' needs.
- Build strategies into daily routine, e.g. attaching regulation to another activity. "After I walk home from school and have a snack, I will complete 5 minutes of regulation exercises before beginning my homework".
- Further build on the study profile by exploring previously implemented strategies – why they did or did not work.
- Introduce strategies for understanding keywords in questions.

Tasks to complete

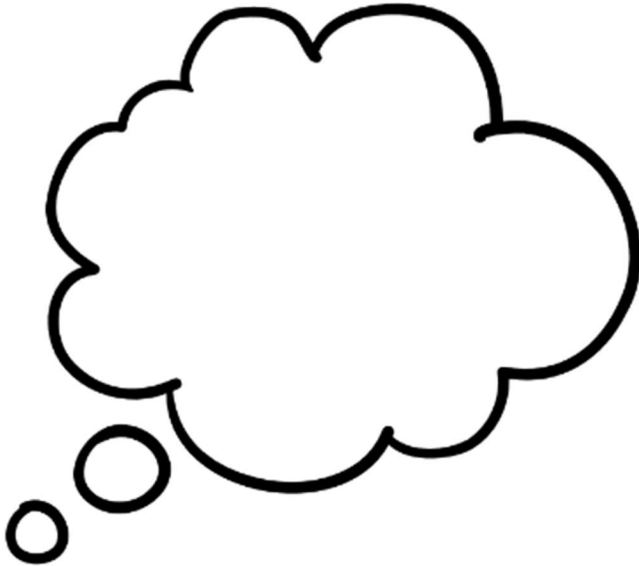
- Establish strategies to support individuals with regulation
- Trial new strategies
- Trial brain dump activity
- Discuss keyword comprehension
- Review keywords in a sample exam paper

Regulation

- Regulation relates to a person's readiness to complete a task.
- Regulation can be physical, sensory and/or emotional.
- Personal and environmental factors can influence a student's regulatory state (e.g. room is too bright, loud, cold or warm), leading to suboptimal ability to study.
- Optimising the environment to suit the student's preferred regulatory state requires consultation with the student to understand their needs and preferences.
- Sensory and emotional regulation also requires a more in-depth understanding of the student's needs prior to introducing strategies to facilitate regulation. This may involve support from other professionals.
- Regulation requires continuous feedback and check-ins throughout the process to fully understand what works and what doesn't work.

Templates:

Brain Dump



- You can use this template between finishing school and before starting homework/study.
- Brain dumps help us to clear our brains of “clutter”, for example. Things we are thinking about, things we must do later, things we forgot to do and something funny that happened today.
- Brain dumps are useful when there is a lot on our minds, especially before we begin a study task.

How to use:

- Set a timer for however long you choose. For example, 5 minutes.
- In that time, write down anything that is on your mind that you want to put on paper.


5-4-3-2-1 Technique


- Look around you
- Mentally, name:
 - 5 things you can see
 - 4 things you can touch
 - 3 things you can hear
 - 2 things you can smell
 - 1 thing you can taste


5 4 3 2 1


SLOW DOWN & CALM DOWN


FIRST- TAKE 3 SLOW BELLY BREATHS!

5 List 5 things you can SEE 

4 List 4 things you can FEEL 

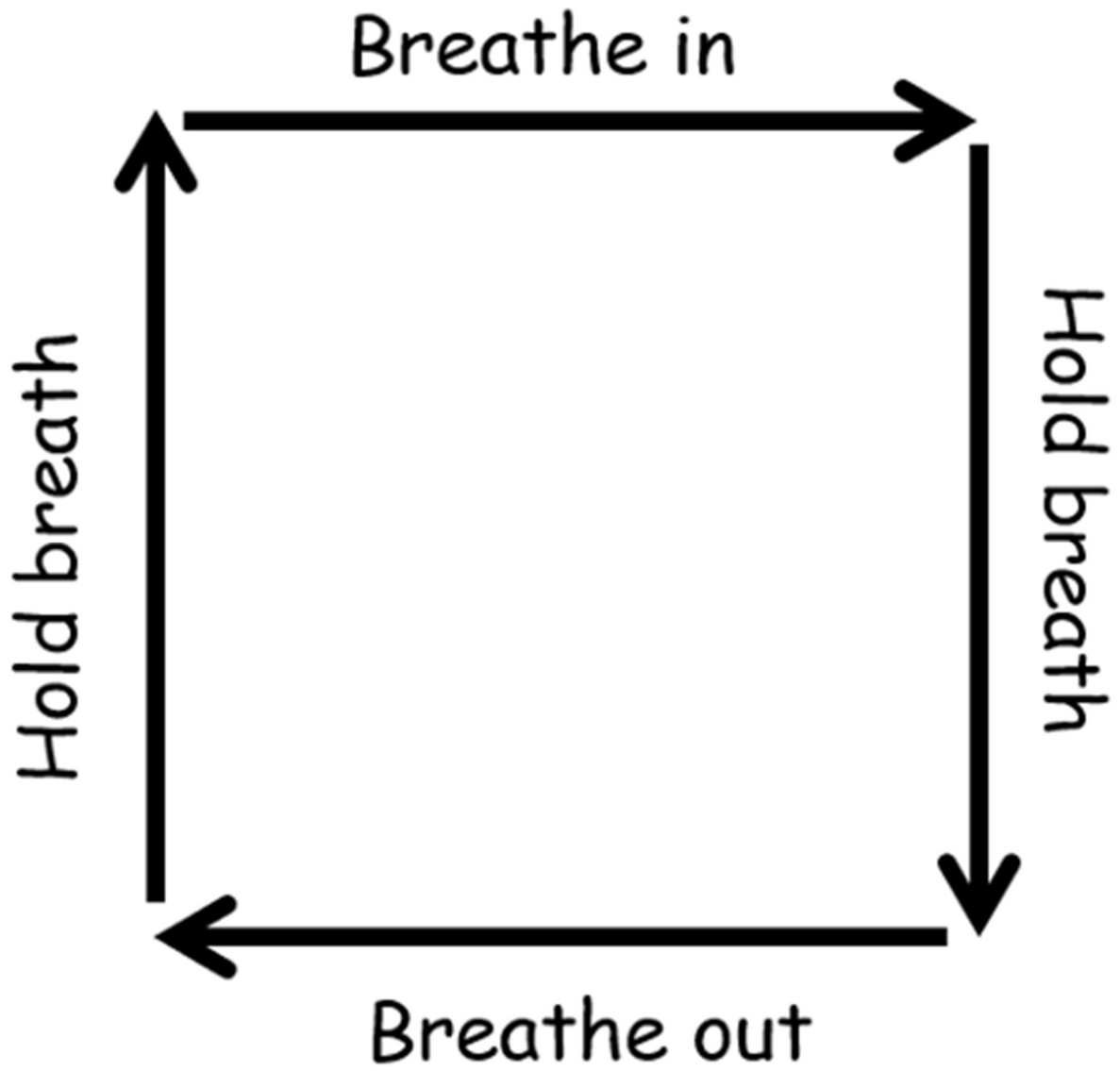
3 List 3 things you can HEAR 

2 List 2 things you can SMELL 

1 List something you like to TASTE 

FINISHED? - TAKE ANOTHER 3 SLOW BELLY BREATHS

Box Breathing



How to use:

1. Trace your finger along the sides of the shape in a clockwise motion.
 2. Breathe in for 4 seconds
 3. Hold your breath for 4 seconds
 4. Breathe out for 4 seconds
 5. Hold your breath for 4 seconds
- Repeat as needed. Demonstration of these activities during sessions aims to show the student how to complete the activity through multiple mediums and increase engagement outside of sessions.
 - The activities can be guided by the therapist when first introduced and then graded up to allow the student to lead the activity later in the intervention period.

Hand Breathing

CALM DOWN WITH TAKE 5 BREATHING



How do you feel now?
Are you calm or would you like to take another 5 breaths?

1. Stretch your hand out like a star.
2. Get the pointer finger of your other hand ready to trace your fingers up and down.
3. Slide up each finger slowly ~ slide down the other side.
4. Breathe in through your nose ~ out through your mouth.
5. Put it together and breathe in as you slide up and breathe out as you slide down.

Keep going until you have finished tracing your hand.

- Demonstration of this activity during sessions aims to show the student how to complete the activity through multiple mediums and increase engagement in this activity outside of sessions.
- This activity can be guided by the therapist when first introduced and then graded up to allow the student to lead the activity later in the intervention period.

Key Words in Questions and What They Are Asking

List

- Bullet point answers
- Shorter, not full sentences (can be one word)

Compare

- Relate 2 or more items or points to one another

Discuss

- More broad, general themes
- Deliver all facts and perspectives on a subject

Describe

- Provide a more in-depth analysis of information on a topic

Explain

- State clearly the reasons why something is a certain way
- Consider a cause-and-effect relationship

Evaluate/estimate

- Evaluate the information you've been given
- Give an opinion based on this information

Outline

- Provide broader sequential information

Show

- An answer is given to you; justify why that answer is the correct one

Resource:

[Exam Questions, Keywords and What They Really Mean – Revise Wise](#)

- This resource helps to further explain each keyword in exam questions.

Week 3 - Comprehension of Questions and Planning Answers

This week should focus primarily on examination questions, including understanding what is being asked and how to answer the questions. Exploring the nature of any challenges with answering questions is required at this stage.

Some potential areas of challenge may include:

- Interpreting the question being asked.
- Writing too much or too little in answers.
- Not planning the answer before beginning writing.
- Not gathering all the information needed to answer the question before beginning to write.
- Confusion about where to start writing the answer.

Goals

- Introduce strategies to comprehend exam questions, building on the understanding of keywords from the previous session.
- Introduce strategies for planning exam question answers.
- Evaluate engagement with regulation techniques and provide alternative techniques or coaching to help facilitate engagement.

Tasks to complete:

- Review the 'how to plan answers' checklist.
- Practice using essay templates on a topic of the student's choice.
- Review past exam papers to ensure comprehension of questions.

How to plan answers:

Have I read the question at least twice?	
Have I identified what the question is asking me? E.g. explain, evaluate, compare...	
Have I highlighted or underlined the keywords?	
Have I checked that I understand the keywords?	
Have I gathered all the information that I need to answer the question?	
Have I checked the number of marks being awarded for the question?	
Have I made a plan of my answer? *	

Adapted table from (McNicholas, 2020)

McNicholas, A.-M. (2020). *The dyslexia, ADHD and DCD-Friendly Study Skills Guide: Tips and strategies for exam success*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

- Sample versions of this template can be completed with the student for specific exam questions to learn how to effectively use it.
- Consideration of physical or digital copies of the document is preferred for the student who aims to enhance engagement after discharge.

*See essay / answer planning template below

Essay planning template



The image shows a 'Studyclix Essay Planner' template. It is a light blue rectangular form with rounded corners. At the top right, the 'studyclix' logo is visible. The form is divided into several sections: a 'Title of essay:' field at the top left; an 'Introduction' section with three horizontal lines; three 'Paragraph' sections (Paragraph 1, Paragraph 2, Paragraph 3), each with three horizontal lines; and a 'Conclusion' section with three horizontal lines. On the right side of the form, there is a 'Remember!' section with three bullet points: '→ Keep referring back to the question', '→ Make a point then be sure to explain it', and '→ Make your paragraphs clear and coherent'. A small blue robot character is next to these points. At the bottom right of the form, the text 'Essay Planner' is written.

Studyclix (2022) [Available: <https://www.studyclix.ie/posts/66605/essay-planner.>]

- This template can be used as a guide to structure answers for study / in exams.
- Completing samples with the student to begin with, aims to show them how to independently complete the activity for future use in study/exam situations.
- See [State Examination Commission - Exam Material Archive](#) for samples of past examination papers and marking schemes.

Week 4 - Note Writing and Expanding Answers/Writing

- This week, various note-taking methods should be trialled with the student to evaluate which is most effective for their own learning across different subjects. Various methods are outlined below.

Goals:

- Continue building rapport with the student.
- Evaluate the success of previously implemented strategies and modify them as needed.
- Understand different note-taking strategies, including the advantages and disadvantages of their use.
- Evaluate which strategies may work best and implement them into daily routines. e.g. writing out notes on a given subject to examine the effectiveness.

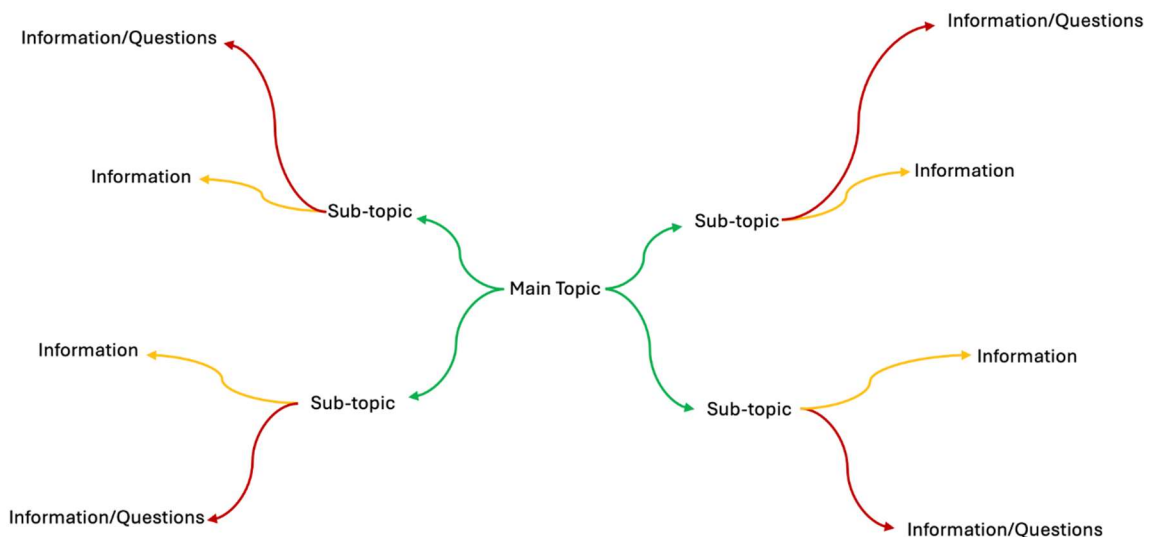
Tasks to complete:

- Review of previous strategies.
- Trial of note-writing strategies to grasp which works best for the student.

Note-writing strategies

Mapping method

- Put the primary/main topic at the centre of the page.
- Record each sub-topic as a branch.
- Record each component of information as an additional branch from the sub-topic.
- Have the student apply this method to a topic of their choice and provide a demonstration.



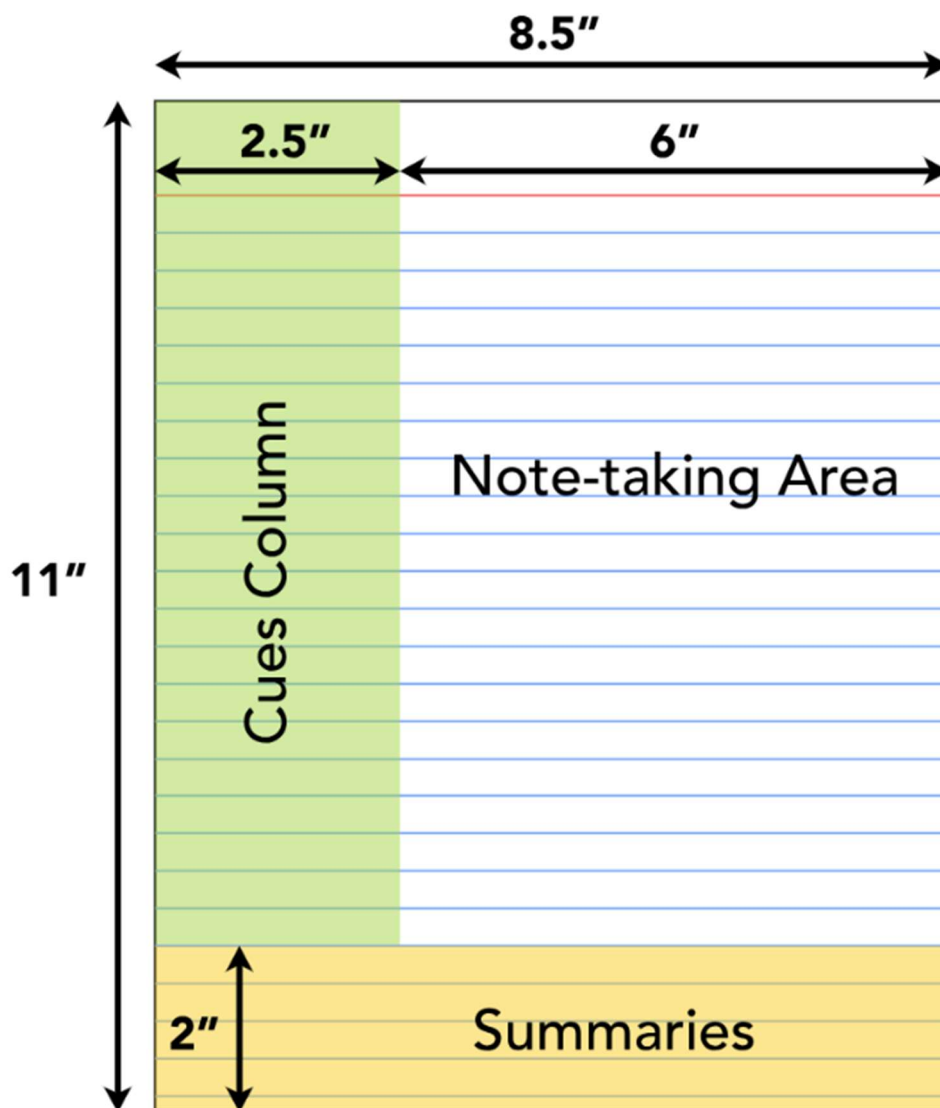
University of Auckland (2013)

Blurting method

- Try to vocally recite everything you can about a topic, then review notes for what you're missing.
- This can be completed by writing out on paper everything that you can remember and then reviewing it as well.

Cornell method

- Start by writing out lecture notes in as complete detail as possible in the largest area of the page.
- After the lecture, write out cues for memorisation of content in the margins.
- Write out a summary of the notes in the bottom area.



How to expand answers

Review this tool with the student and have them check the boxes as they go through each stage, first collaboratively, then independently.

Have I read the question at least twice?	
Have I identified what the question is asking me? E.g. explain, evaluate, compare...	
Have I highlighted or underlined the keywords?	
Have I checked that I understand the keywords?	
Have I gathered all the information that I need to answer the question?	
Have I checked the number of marks being awarded for the question?	
Have I made a plan of my answer?	

Adapted table from McNichols et al (2020).

Week 5 - Exam Strategies, Managing Exam Stress, and Prioritisation

The goal of this week is to practice strategies that can assist in the exam, applying much of what was previously covered in a real-world, higher-pressure context. The focus should be on managing stressors during exams, understanding what to do when the stress arises, and how to employ appropriate techniques for prioritising when studying.

Goals:

- Continue to build rapport with students.
- Evaluate work from previous weeks.
- Develop strategies to manage exam stress within sessions.
- Develop prioritisation strategies to ensure appropriate preparation.

Tasks to complete:

- Review of previous strategies for managing exam stress.
- Practice application of differing strategies.

Exam strategies

- Check out the exam room beforehand
 - Study in that room if possible
- Review past exams
- Schedule backwards from the time of the exam
 - Consistently review previous material, even if just briefly
- Time completion of previous exams
 - Allocate time amounts per section
- Look over every question before you begin
 - This can be a quick skim of the questions if time is tight

Prioritization

- Review these techniques with the student and practice completion to assess which works best for the student.
- Spend 2 minutes at the start of each study session to create a list of priorities.
 - Select 6 tasks to do
 - Tick them off on completion
- Create a 'done' list instead (write out tasks that have been completed rather than tasks that need doing).
- Create a plan for the full week using a blank schedule.
- Allow space for changes depending on how the week goes but try to stick to your plan as much as possible.

Strategies for prioritisation:

- Eisenhower matrix
 - Draw a square with 4 boxes.
 - X axis = urgency (when do I need to complete this task by?)
 - Y axis = importance (how important is it that I complete this task?)
 - Separate tasks into these boxes
 - The top right corner is most urgent and important, and the lower left corner is neither urgent nor important.

Example:

More important	Essay worth 20% due in 3 weeks	Essay worth 20% due on Friday
Less important	Reflection worth 5% due next week	Reflection worth 5% due tomorrow
	Less urgent	More urgent

Blank template

More important		
Less important		
	Less urgent	More urgent

- Impact/effort matrix
 - Draw a square/rectangle with 4 boxes inside it.
 - X axis = impact (how much of an impact will completing this task have?)
 - Y axis = effort (how hard is it to complete the task?)
 - Separate tasks into these boxes

Example:

More effort	Read 1 textbook chapter	Review/revise all notes for 1 subject
Less effort	Organize desk	Outline essay
	Less impactful	More impactful

Blank template:

More effort		
Less effort		
	Less impactful	More impactful

Relaxation techniques in the exam

- Ensure you have eaten within an appropriate time before beginning
- Have water or a drink with you
- 54321 method (*see page 10*)
- Square breathing (*See page 11*)
- Pause if you need to, there's no rush
- Give yourself a tight hug
- Go for a bathroom break if needed
- If you find caffeine calms you down, have some caffeine before the test begins
 - Common among neurodivergent people
- Tap fingertips on the leg
- Use fidgets such as pens if beneficial for regulation
- Pause and evaluate where you're at in the exam, check what's left to do, and re-prioritise
- Perfection is a myth, sometimes 'good enough' IS enough

Week 6 - Recap, Planning and Timetabling

Goals

- Recap all of the strategies introduced to date and provide coaching for the continued implementation of these post-discharge.
- Provide resources for planning to study.
- Provide resources for timetabling that incorporates introduced strategies, desired occupations and study.

The goal of this week is to summarise all the interventions as a whole and address any outstanding issues before finishing the programme. Timetabling is introduced at this stage of the intervention with the aim of facilitating future use of strategies to enhance engagement in their study.

Daily/weekly planners

- Daily and weekly planners should be co-designed with the student.
- Planners aim to incorporate study, desired occupations and time for implemented strategies.
- Students should be taught and encouraged to design their own planner for use post-discharge.

Weekly planner template



The image shows a weekly planner template from studyclix. It features a grid with columns for the days of the week (Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu, Fri, Sat, Sun) and a row for 'Time'. The grid is empty, ready for use. The studyclix logo is in the top right corner. In the bottom left corner, there is a small robot icon with a speech bubble that says 'You got this!'. In the bottom right corner, it says 'Weekly Study Planner'.

Studyclix (2022) Available: [<https://blob-static.studyclix.ie/cms/media/e5xnnzka/weekly-planner.pdf>]

- Study planners aim to facilitate organisation and aim to ensure work gets completed in a set time.
- Timetables can be colour-coded to aid the organisation.
- There is no one-size-fits-all for study timetabling.
- This process involves trial, error, and refinement of study patterns to find what best suits the student.

Daily planner template

Daily planner

Time	Task	Complete
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>


Date: _____

Main goal:

Subjects covered today:

What I will cover tomorrow:

Doodles/Notes/Reminders



Water


Study


Mood


studyclix

Studyclix (2022) Available: [<https://www.studyclix.ie/blog/study-planners-and-notes-templates>]

Acknowledgements

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Bibliography

- McNicholas, A.-M. (2020). *The dyslexia, ADHD and DCD-Friendly Study Skills Guide: Tips and strategies for exam success*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
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