

ADULT ADHD IN DAILY LIFE · 8.10

Productivity Apps for ADHD: The Honest Verdict

The ADHD app market is a mix of useful tools and digital wellness shops. No specific app has the kind of evidence base behind it that stimulant medication does. The strongest indirect support is for the underlying practices, not the individual products.

FOR

Adults with ADHD

AUDIENCE AGE

18+

REVIEWED

17 May 2026

PART OF

The NeuroFX resource library

IN SUMMARY

Productivity Apps for ADHD: The Honest Verdict

What the evidence supports

- **No app is medication.** The Faraone consensus statement and NICE NG87 both note that pharmacological treatment is the most-evidenced intervention for adult ADHD. Behavioural and environmental support sits alongside but does not replace it.
- **General task managers and calendars have the strongest indirect evidence.** They support the externalised working memory that ADHD requires. The evidence is not for a specific app; it is for the underlying practice of getting tasks and time out of your head and into a system both you and others can see.
- **Body doubling and focus apps have face-valid utility.** Supported by the broader literature on social facilitation and scaffolded executive function, with limited specific trials. Brain training apps have weak evidence; AI-flavoured assistants are too new to evaluate.

What is worth using

- **Pick one task manager and one calendar, and stop switching.** Switching between four apps every six months is a recognisable ADHD pattern that costs more than it gives. The most useful feature for ADHD is quick capture from anywhere. The least useful is complex tagging that turns the tool into a hobby.
- **Native calendars are usually sufficient.** Apple and Google calendars cover most adults with ADHD. Paid time-blocking apps add value for some, particularly with many meetings. Most people do not need them.
- **Focus apps and distraction blockers help.** Pomodoro timers, Forest, Cold Turkey, Freedom. The single most useful intervention is removing notifications from your phone and computer entirely. That is a configuration change, not a subscription.
- **Body doubling: the platform is a convenience, the practice is what matters.** Focusmate, Caveday and similar are widely used. A real friend on a video call is also fine. The structure (opening, block, closing) does the work.

What is mostly marketing

- **Brain training apps.** The evidence does not support the marketing. There is no consistent transfer from playing brain training games to real-world cognitive performance in ADHD. Spending the money elsewhere is a better return.
- **ADHD-branded coaching apps are mixed.** Some deliver structured coaching with clinical input and are useful. Others are subscription products with ADHD branding and limited substance. Ask who designed it, what supervision is in place, what the evidence base is. If those are not transparent, the product probably is not either.
- **Marketing patterns to recognise.** 'Designed by adults with ADHD' without clinical input. Claims of 'rewiring' the ADHD brain. Subscription pricing locking basic features behind a paywall. TikTok-driven hype cycles. Influencer affiliate codes. Vague neuroscience without citations. None of these on their own means the product is useless. The cluster of them is a warning.

WHEN TO SPEAK TO A PROFESSIONAL

Apps do not replace clinical assessment or treatment. Speak to your GP if work or daily life is being significantly affected and ADHD has not been formally assessed. Private adult ADHD assessment with a CQC-registered provider is a legitimate parallel route where the NHS wait is not workable. For structured ADHD coaching with clinical input, Access to Work is the usual UK funding route. Seek urgent help via 111, 999 or A&E for any acute mental health crisis or significant safety concern.

SOURCES

Faraone consensus 2021; NICE NG87; Lakhan and Kirchgessner 2012; MHRA software guidance; ADHD UK

NEXT STEPS**Speak to NeuroFX**

Private ADHD and autism assessment for adults and children aged 6 and upwards.
CQC-registered. Bedford Consulting Rooms, 4 Goldington Road, Bedford MK40 3NF.

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