Handout 3-C: Break This Down

Session 3 · about 25 minutes

Big tasks feel scary because they look like one giant step. This handout turns one real task into a sequence of small, dated steps, names the first physical action, and gives you an if–then plan for the step you're most likely to avoid. Pick a real assignment or task, not a made-up one.

Task and deadline: …

#	Step	Checkpoint date	Done signal
1	…	…	…
2	…	…	…
3	…	…	…
4	…	…	…
5	…	…	…

Add rows if the task needs more steps. Add a checkpoint date and a visible "done" signal to at least two steps.

My next physical action: …

If–then start plan:
"If it's ___ (time or place), then I will ___."

The feeling I expect, and what I'll tell myself: …

Notes

- **Be kind.** If you start late, restart. The next moment is a new chance to use the plan.
- **When it's more than procrastination.** If you're stuck on many tasks for weeks, or avoidance comes with persistent low mood, anxiety, or trouble focusing, talk with a counselor, doctor, or disability support office. Module 4 covers how to find those supports, and the Get Help page on the site lists places to start.

Options

Written, spreadsheet, or index cards in a row.

Worked example

Task and deadline: 5-page psychology paper, due Friday the 20th.

#	Step	Checkpoint date	Done signal
1	Pick a topic and write one question	Mon 9th	The question is typed at the top of a blank document
2	Find 4 sources	Wed 11th	Four links saved in one list
3	Write a one-page outline	Thu 12th	Outline saved, with a topic sentence for each section
4	Write a rough draft	Mon 16th	Five rough pages, even if they're messy
5	Revise, read aloud once, and submit	Thu 19th	Submitted, with a day to spare

My next physical action: Open a blank document and type my question.

If–then start plan

"If it's Monday at 7 p.m. at the kitchen table, then I will open a blank document and write one sentence."

The feeling I expect, and what I'll tell myself

"I'll feel anxious about picking the wrong topic. I'll tell myself it's only a first draft of a question, and I can change it."