

Evening Wind-Down Checklist

Your brain's low on dopamine and your circadian rhythm is running late. That's why "just go to bed" doesn't work. This is a short sequence you can actually do. Print it. Stick it somewhere visible. Follow it in order.

1

Set your screen cutoff alarm

Pick a time 60 minutes before your target bedtime. Set a daily alarm. When it rings, phone goes to another room to charge. Non-negotiable.

Screen cutoff: _____ Target bedtime: _____

2

Dim the lights

Switch off overheads. Use lamps, warm-toned bulbs, or candles. Bright light at night suppresses melatonin, which you already don't have enough of.

3

Pick one wind-down activity

Something low-stimulation but still enjoyable. ADHD brains need a replacement for the phone, not just its removal. Tick the ones you'd actually do tonight.

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|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Audiobook or comfort re-watch | <input type="checkbox"/> Jigsaw, crossword, or puzzle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stretching or gentle yoga | <input type="checkbox"/> Warm shower or bath |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading (fiction, for pleasure) | <input type="checkbox"/> Drawing, colouring, or crafting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brown noise + phone face down | <input type="checkbox"/> Cuppa + staring out the window |

4

Brain dump

Before lights out, write everything on your mind. Tasks, worries, ideas, random thoughts. Unfiltered. This tells your brain "captured, you can stop holding it."

5

Accept the "good enough" bedtime

If your brain isn't ready for sleep at your target, don't lie in bed awake for two hours. That creates anxiety and negative sleep associations. Aim for within 30 minutes of target. That counts as a win.

The two things that actually shift this

1. A consistent wake time (seven days a week, even weekends). Your circadian rhythm responds to morning light more than evening willpower.
2. Bright light within 30 minutes of waking. Sunlight is free. A 10,000 lux therapy lamp works when sun doesn't.