

## WHAT IT IS

Body doubling is a focus strategy where you work on a task while another person is physically or virtually present, not to help or supervise, but simply to provide structure and accountability. The quiet presence of someone else helps reduce inertia, distractibility, and avoidance, making it easier to start and stay engaged with a task.

## WHO TO USE IT WITH

Body doubling works best for students whose challenges are less about ability or motivation and more about starting, sustaining, or organizing effort.

- Students with ADHD or executive-function challenges
- Neurodivergent students who benefit from structure and predictable routines.
- Students with anxiety or overwhelm where avoidance kicks in
- Students in transition periods (first-year, transfer, returning from leave)
- Students with depression who have trouble getting started alone.
- Students managing mild trauma responses
- Students juggling many responsibilities (work, caregiving, athletics)

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

1. “When you’re stuck, is it harder to start, to stay focused, or both?” This helps identify whether body doubling will support initiation, sustained attention, or both.
2. “Do you work better when someone else is nearby, or does that make you more anxious?” This screens for whether presence is regulating or pressure-inducing.
3. “Would you prefer working quietly alongside someone, or having short check-ins before and after?” This clarifies structure without turning it into social time.
4. “What kind of task would you want to try this with first?” Keeps the trial low-stakes and concrete, increasing the chance of success.

## TEACHING INSIGHTS

Body doubling works best when it stays simple and structured. If it feels awkward, keep it parallel rather than collaborative: sit near someone, name your first step once, and work quietly. If it turns into social time, add light structure with a short timer and no talking until the break. When schedules don’t line up, virtual body doubling or working in a visible public space can offer the same sense of presence and accountability.

If body doubling creates pressure or stops working, lower the bar and change the setup. Start with a tiny task just to get moving, switch to low-demand work if anxiety spikes, and rotate locations, partners, or times of day to keep it fresh. If you notice you’re relying on it too much, use it as a jump-start, then end with a short solo work sprint so it supports independence rather than replacing it.