

Adult everyday support toolkit

A printable companion for work, study and home

Choose a real task, try one change and notice what helps. You can use this pack on your own or with a tutor, colleague or someone you trust. A diagnosis is not needed to try the activities.

Start with one situation

Reading (page 2), spoken instructions (page 3), writing (page 4), interruptions (page 5), getting started (page 6), or learning new words (page 7). Each page has steps, a support request and a short practice prompt.

Look at the setting as well as the task

Consider the instructions, noise, time available, layout and support around you. Also notice what already works for you. A useful change might be to the information or the environment.

Make a meaningful connection

Grouping works best when the groups mean something to you. For example, group meeting information under prepare, attend and follow up, rather than into three equal blocks of text.

Try and review

Use the plan on page 8. Keep what helps, change one part or ask for support. Completed examples are on pages 9-10. Optional AI prompts are on pages 11-12. Visual guides are on pages 13-14. You do not need to use everything in this pack.

How this uses the handbook

This pack adapts selected themes from The Dyslexia Guild Supporting Adults Toolkit (May 2020). DTC created the scenarios, scripts and worksheets. It is not a reproduction, diagnostic tool or validated programme. The source guide on page 15 explains the connections and limits.

One task I would like to make easier

Read a long email or document

Reading | Choose one real task to practise

The idea behind the strategy

Group information by meaning. A heading such as "what I need to do" connects details to a purpose; simply cutting text into equal pieces does not create that connection.

Three steps to try

1. Write one question: what do I need to find out?
2. Read one section. Note its main point in your own words.
3. Put any action and its deadline on a separate list.

An everyday example

For a long email about a meeting, look for three things: what to prepare, where to attend and when it starts.

Support I could ask for

Could you put the main request and deadline at the top, with the background information underneath? That helps me respond accurately.

Try it on my own task

Choose a real email. Write its main request, the deadline and one detail that explains why it matters.

After trying

Can I explain the main point and find the next action without rereading everything?

If this does not help: Try a shorter section, or ask someone to explain the main point and check your understanding.

Remember spoken instructions

Memory | Choose one real task to practise

The idea behind the strategy

A sequence involves both the actions and their order. Group related actions under meaningful headings, and check why each group comes before the next.

Three steps to try

1. Ask for a pause after each part of the instructions.
2. Write a numbered list, grouping related actions together.
3. Read the list back and check the order before you start.

An everyday example

For a new work process, use headings such as prepare, complete and check, with the relevant steps underneath.

Support I could ask for

Could we write down the steps and agree which one comes first? I would like to check that I have understood before I begin.

Try it on my own task

Choose a familiar routine. List its steps under prepare, do and check. Explain why the order matters.

After trying

Could I follow the sequence and pick up my place after a pause?

If this does not help: Ask to see just the first step demonstrated, then try it with the list beside you.

Get ideas into writing

Writing | Choose one real task to practise

The idea behind the strategy

Planning ideas, writing sentences and checking accuracy place different demands on attention. Use a visible structure to keep your place while working on one part.

Three steps to try

1. Write who this is for and what they need to know.
2. Make three headings: main point, useful detail and next step.
3. Add rough notes under each. Turn them into sentences, then check the finished message.

An everyday example

For a work update: what is complete, what needs attention and what happens next.

Support I could ask for

Could you show me an example and tell me the essential points to cover? It helps me organise my response.

Try it on my own task

Draft a three-line update: what is complete, what needs attention and what happens next. Check it against an example or ask for specific feedback.

After trying

Does my reader have the main point and a clear next step?

If this does not help: Say one idea aloud first, then write a short note. Try a list if a diagram feels unhelpful.

Pick up a task after interruptions

Focus | Choose one real task to practise

The idea behind the strategy

Switching attention can make it harder to keep track of the task. A written return point makes the current step visible, while changes to the setting can reduce interruptions.

Three steps to try

1. Choose one small part of the task to work on.
2. Before switching away, note: I have done... Next I will...
3. When you return, read that note and do the next action.

An everyday example

I have checked rows 1-8. Next I will check row 9 against the original document.

Support I could ask for

Could we agree a short uninterrupted period for this task? If something changes, a written note would help me pick it up afterwards.

Try it on my own task

Before your next pause, write what you have finished and the exact action to resume. After returning, note whether it helped.

After trying

Did the note help me restart without repeating work?

If this does not help: Make the next action smaller and keep the note beside the exact place you need to restart.

Start something that feels too big

Getting started | Choose one real task to practise

The idea behind the strategy

Choose a goal that matters to you and review the method you tried. Useful feedback identifies a specific change you can make; it does not judge your worth or compare you with someone else.

Three steps to try

1. Name one result you want and why it matters to you.
2. Choose a first action you can see yourself completing.
3. Try it, then note what helped and what you will change next time.

An everyday example

Instead of "sort all my paperwork", start with "find the letter I need and put it beside my notebook".

Support I could ask for

Could we agree what a useful first draft needs to do? Feedback on that part would help me decide my next step.

Try it on my own task

Name a task you care about, one small first action and how you will recognise progress. After trying it, record one thing to keep or change.

After trying

Did I take a useful step, and do I know what to do next?

If this does not help: Reduce the first action again, or work through it alongside someone you trust.

Learn unfamiliar words or a process

Learning | Choose one real task to practise

The idea behind the strategy

New words need meaning and context. Connect a term with familiar knowledge, use it in your own example, then check and revisit it rather than only repeating its definition.

Three steps to try

1. Choose one useful word or step from a real task.
2. Explain it in everyday language and link it to something you already know.
3. Use it in your own example. Check the meaning and revisit it another day.

An everyday example

For "compare", identify what two things have in common and where they differ before writing your answer.

Support I could ask for

Could you explain that term using an example from this task? I will try an example back to check I have understood.

Try it on my own task

Choose a term from work or study. Write its everyday meaning, your own example and a familiar idea it connects with. Check the meaning with a reliable source or someone who knows the subject.

After trying

Can I explain it in my own words and use it in a new example?

If this does not help: Try a different example, a demonstration or a simple drawing, depending on what helps you.

My next step plan

Use alongside any strategy page. Print another copy when you want to try a new task.

The task I want to do

Something that already helps me

One action I will try

One change to the setting or support I will ask for

When I will try it and review it

After trying what helped and what I will change

Worked examples

Illustrative plans to adapt. These are not real people's outcomes.

Read a long email or document

Task: Find what I need to prepare for a meeting.

Next step: Read the email once for the request. My note: bring the draft agenda; send it by Thursday at 3 pm; meeting Friday at 10 am.

Support: Ask the organiser to separate the preparation deadline from the meeting time.

Review: Compare my note with the email. Have I kept the two dates separate?

Remember spoken instructions

Task: Learn the routine for closing a shared workspace.

Next step: Group the written instructions: prepare (collect the checklist), do (complete each agreed step), check (review the list with a colleague).

Support: Ask a colleague to demonstrate the routine and confirm the order.

Review: Could I follow the agreed sequence using my list? Which step needs a clearer description?

Get ideas into writing

Task: Send a short update on a piece of work.

Next step: Draft three lines: the first section is complete; I need the missing figures; I will confirm the next date once I have them.

Support: Ask which figures are essential before I promise a finishing date.

Review: Does the reader know what is complete, what I need and what happens next?

Worked examples

Illustrative plans to adapt. These are not real people's outcomes.

Pick up a task after interruptions

Task: Resume checking a document after a phone call.

Next step: Leave a note: checked paragraphs 1 to 3; next compare the date in paragraph 4 with the original.

Support: Agree a quiet period for the remaining checks.

Review: Did I restart at paragraph 4 without repeating the first three?

Start something that feels too big

Task: Begin sorting a pile of paperwork.

Next step: Find just the letter I need for tomorrow and put it beside my notebook.

Support: Ask someone to sit with me while I choose the first item.

Review: Did I find that letter? If not, would choosing a smaller pile help?

Learn unfamiliar words or a process

Task: Understand the instruction to compare two options.

Next step: Write: compare means look for similarities and differences. Example: two travel routes share the same destination but differ in journey time.

Support: Ask my tutor whether my example fits the task.

Review: Can I compare a different pair of options without copying the example?

Using AI for everyday tasks

Optional prompts | Getting started

Optional: copy a prompt into an AI chat tool you already use. Replace the words in square brackets with your own information. Nothing is sent to an AI service by this toolkit.

Leave out personal, financial, health and confidential work information. Use made-up examples or placeholders instead. Follow your workplace or course rules before using AI.

AI can miss details or invent information. Compare the answer with the original, especially names, numbers, dates and deadlines. Check new explanations with a reliable source or someone who knows the subject.

Understand an email

Summarise this email in plain English. Use three headings: what I need to do, deadlines, and anything unclear. Keep all dates and numbers exactly as written. If something is missing, say it is missing. Do not guess. Email: [paste a non-sensitive example]

Check the answer: Can you match every action and deadline to the original email? Check that no important condition has been left out.

Find a first step

Help me start this task: [describe the task without private details]. Ask one question if you need more information. Suggest one small first action and what finishing that action looks like. Wait before giving me another step.

Check the answer: Is the first action realistic for your time, energy and situation? Change it if it is too big.

These AI prompts are a new DTC addition. They are not taken from the 2020 Dyslexia Guild handbook.

AI privacy guidance: NCSC, ChatGPT and large language models - what is the risk?

Using AI for everyday tasks

Optional prompts | Writing and learning

Turn notes into a clear message

Turn these notes into a short, clear email. Keep my meaning and do not invent facts, commitments or deadlines. Use placeholders for anything missing. Ask me about anything unclear. Notes: [paste non-sensitive notes]

Check the answer: Does it still say what you mean? Remove any promise or detail you did not intend before sending it yourself.

Understand an unfamiliar word

Explain this word in the context below using plain English and one everyday example. Say if you are unsure. Then ask me to explain it in my own words and wait for my answer. Word and context: [add a non-sensitive example]

Check the answer: Check the explanation against your course materials, a reliable reference or someone who understands the subject.

If the answer feels overwhelming

That is too much information. Give me one short step in plain English, then wait for me.

One task I could try this with

These AI prompts are a new DTC addition. They are not taken from the 2020 Dyslexia Guild handbook.

AI privacy guidance: NCSC, ChatGPT and large language models - what is the risk?

See the steps

Choose, try, review. Start with one task and return to what helps.

01 CHOOSE

One task that matters to you.

02 TRY

One small action, with support if useful.

03 REVIEW

Keep what helps. Change what does not.

From a busy message to clear actions

A made-up example. Check the details against the original.

"Our meeting is on Friday at 10 am in Room 2. Please email your draft agenda by Thursday at 3 pm so everyone can read it first. Bring a copy to the meeting."

THE ACTIONS

Send: draft agenda - Thursday, 3 pm.

Attend: meeting - Friday, 10 am, Room 2.

Bring: a copy of the agenda.

Why send it early? So everyone can read it first.

A plan you can picture

An illustrative plan for the meeting example. Adapt it to your own situation.

1 MY TASK

Prepare for Friday's meeting.

Name one real situation.

2 MY NEXT STEP

Open a document and write three agenda headings.

Choose an action you can begin.

3 SUPPORT I CAN ASK FOR

Ask the organiser which topics to include.

Identify what would make it easier.

4 WHEN I WILL REVIEW

Thursday at 2 pm: check the draft before sending it by 3 pm.

Choose a review time before the deadline.

Make it yours

Use the blank plan on page 8. Start with a single box if that feels enough. After trying it, note what helped and what you would change.

How this pack uses the handbook

Optional source guide. You do not need the original handbook to use this pack.

Source: The Dyslexia Guild Supporting Adults Toolkit, May 2020, 59 pages, copyright Dyslexia Guild 2020. Page numbers below refer to that handbook, not this companion.

The person and their environment

Handbook pages 7-9

The handbook discusses how personal factors and the operating environment interact. Our support requests and planning prompts apply this idea to everyday tasks.

Meaningful grouping and understanding

Handbook pages 35-39

The handbook explains chunking through meaningful connections with existing knowledge. Our reading and instruction activities use categories with a purpose, rather than treating chunking as simply making smaller pieces.

Attention switching and task prompts

Handbook pages 39-42

The handbook discusses attention shifting, monitoring and task structure prompts. The return note and separate writing stages are our practical examples of these themes.

Goals practice and feedback

Handbook pages 48-53

The handbook emphasises the adult learner's own experience, goals, structured practice and feedback about the process. Our first-step and review prompts apply these principles; the exact exercises are newly written.

Language in context

Handbook pages 54-57

The handbook explores active work with vocabulary, examples and self-checking. Our word-learning prompt uses a term from the reader's own task and asks them to check and reuse its meaning.

Scope and limits

The handbook was written for practitioners and includes awareness and informal assessment activities. This companion covers selected support themes only. Its symbol, visual-span and copying tasks are not presented here as self-tests. We have not independently re-evaluated the research cited in the 2020 handbook. The Guild has not endorsed this resource. AI prompts are a separate DTC addition; their privacy guidance draws on the NCSC resource linked on the AI pages.