



Building Independence: Small Steps, Big Changes

A Practical Guide for Participants

Prepared by Your Story Community Supports

Independence doesn't mean doing everything alone. It means having the skills, confidence, and support to make choices about your own life.

This guide is full of practical ideas for building independence — one small step at a time. Pick what feels right for you. There's no rush.

Independence at Home

Cooking & Meals

Getting started

- Learn to make one simple meal (e.g., toast with eggs, a sandwich, pasta)
- Help with meal prep — washing vegetables, setting the table
- Choose what you want to eat for dinner

Building up

- Follow a simple recipe with support
- Make a weekly meal plan with your support worker
- Cook a full meal independently

Tips: Start with meals you actually like eating · Visual recipe cards (with pictures) can help · It's okay to make mistakes — that's how you learn

Household Tasks

Getting started

- Make your bed each morning
- Put dirty clothes in the laundry basket
- Wipe down the kitchen bench after meals

Building up

- Do your own laundry (washing, drying, folding)
- Vacuum or mop your room
- Keep your bathroom clean



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Tips: Set a simple routine — same tasks, same time each day · Use a checklist on your wall so you can tick things off · Music makes chores better

Personal Care

Getting started

- Choose your own clothes each day
- Brush your teeth independently
- Shower with less support over time

Building up

- Manage your own grooming routine
- Keep track of when you need haircuts, dental visits, etc.
- Pack your own bag when going out

Independence in the Community

Getting Around

Getting started

- Walk to a nearby shop with your support worker
- Learn the route to one regular destination (e.g., the local café)
- Practice crossing roads safely

Building up

- Catch public transport with support
- Learn to read a bus or train timetable
- Travel a familiar route independently

Tips: Google Maps can help with directions and transport times · Practice the same route multiple times before going solo · Carry a phone with emergency contacts saved

Shopping

Getting started

- Help write a shopping list
- Find items in the store with support
- Pay at the checkout (tap and go makes this easier)



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Building up

- Write your own shopping list
- Compare prices and make choices
- Shop independently for basic items

Tips: Start with small shops before big supermarkets · Self-checkout can feel less stressful · Bring a list so you don't forget anything

Social & Community Activities

Getting started

- Attend a group activity with your support worker
- Say hello to someone new
- Try one new activity (a class, a group, a community event)

Building up

- Attend activities with less support
- Make plans with a friend or acquaintance
- Join a regular group (art, sport, music, gardening)

Tips: It's okay to feel nervous — everyone does at first · You don't have to talk a lot; just being there counts · Find activities you genuinely enjoy, not just what's available

Independence with Money

Getting started

- Know how much money you have (check your bank balance with support)
- Understand the difference between needs and wants
- Use tap and go for simple purchases

Building up

- Set a weekly budget for spending money
- Save toward something you want
- Pay a bill with support (electricity, phone)

Tips: A simple budgeting app can help · Ask your support worker to practise with you · Start small — even saving \$5 a week is a win



Independence with Health

Getting started

- Know the names of your medications and what they're for
- Attend appointments with your support worker
- Tell someone when you're not feeling well

Building up

- Take your medication independently (with reminders if needed)
- Book your own appointments (GP, dentist, specialist)
- Describe your symptoms to a doctor in your own words

Tips: A pill organiser helps you keep track · Write down questions before appointments so you don't forget · Your health is your business — you have the right to understand it

Independence with Communication

Getting started

- Tell your support worker what you want (even small things — “I'd like tea, not coffee”)
- Practice saying “no” when something doesn't feel right
- Ask for help when you need it

Building up

- Make a phone call (to a friend, to book an appointment)
- Express your feelings using words, pictures, or a communication device
- Speak up in a meeting about your goals or support

Tips: It's okay to take your time · Practice with people you trust first · Your voice matters — even if it's quiet

Independence with Technology

Getting started

- Unlock and use a phone or tablet
- Make a phone call and send a text message
- Take a photo



Building up

- Use apps for transport, weather, or reminders
- Video call a family member or friend
- Search for information online

Tips: Ask your support worker to show you one new thing at a time · Repetition is key — practice the same skill until it feels natural · There are accessibility settings on every device that can help

A Note About Setbacks

Some days you'll nail it. Other days you'll struggle with something you could do last week. That's not failure — that's life.

Independence isn't a destination. It's a direction. Every small step counts, even the ones that feel invisible.

Your support team is here to walk beside you — not in front of you. You set the pace.

My Independence Goals

Pick 3 things from this guide you'd like to work on:

#	I want to...	By when?	Who can help?
1			
2			
3			

Your story. Your way.