



# Developing Independent Living Skills for The Individuals that We Support



Social distancing/isolation can be a difficult time for many of the people we support, especially when usual routines or plans are no longer happening. Although challenging, a positive we can draw from this is the time and opportunity to develop independent living skills practice.

In order to ensure the individual is fully supported with this, we need to identify what steps are involved with each task, what the person can do for themselves, and where we will or may need to continue to support.

Please be aware that we all have our own strengths and weaknesses. For example, person may be able to make a cup of tea, but still may need full support to make a snack.

A task analysis is a way to help break activities down into smaller, more manageable steps, to help to identify areas that may be more challenging for an individual because of cognitive and/or physical challenges. This then can then provide structure and focus to steps that can be developed to increase independence.

1. First we need to identify what steps are involved in the chosen task. For example: Making a cup of tea

## Task Steps:

1. Open the cupboard door
2. Select cup or mug
3. Pick up the mug
4. Place the mug on the counter or table
5. Lift up the kettle
6. Carry the kettle to the sink
7. Take off the lid of the kettle
8. Turn on the tap
9. Fill up the kettle with water
10. Turn the tap off
11. Turn on the kettle
12. Get tea bag
13. Place tea bag in the cup
14. Pour water into mug
15. Pause for tea to brew
16. Open drawer
17. Select teaspoon from drawer
18. Take teabag out of mug and put in the bin
19. Get milk out of the fridge
20. Open milk and pour into the mug
21. Stir milk with spoon

2. Next, we then need to identify which steps of the activity the person currently needs support with, and what type of support. Clear details can help all staff to accurately know what the person can and can't do:

Task Steps	Support Requirements
1. Open the cupboard door	Can open cupboard without any help, but will need verbal prompts to start the process e.g. 'let's get a mug out'.
2. Select cup or mug	Once prompted, can look for the mug that they like to use (usually the blue or green one).
3. Pick up the mug	If tremors increased, then may need some hand over hand for support so it doesn't drop. If tremors are reduced, then they can do this independently.
4. Place the mug on the counter or table	Will need verbal prompts to place it on the counter
5. Lift up the kettle	Can do this independently.
6. Carry the kettle to the sink	Can do this independently. when mobility (walking) is at baseline.
7. Take off the lid of the kettle	Sometimes the lid can get stuck so will need help if struggling to do this, hand over hand support.
8. Turn on the tap	Need verbal prompts to remind them to turn the tap on.
9. Fill up the kettle with water	Needs verbal prompts to help stop flow of water before too much in the kettle.
10. Turn the tap off	Needs prompting to put kettle on counter before turning tap off as unable to do this whilst also holding kettle.
11. Turn on the kettle	Sometimes requires verbal prompt to check plug switch is turned on also.
12. Get tea bag	Hand over hand support required.
(Steps Continued)	

3. To develop skills in different tasks, it is then helpful to consider ways to practice and to safely reduce/ or grade down the level of support to increase their independence. Please refer to the next 2 tables as examples.

Task Steps	Support Requirements	How to grade support levels down
1. Open the cupboard door	Can open cupboard without any help, but will need verbal prompts to start the process e.g. 'let's get a mug out'.	A picture card with all the required items for this task can be used to help identify and initiate this process.
2. Select cup or mug	Once prompted, can look for the mug that they like to use (usually the blue or green one).	Make sure that the preferred items are easily accessible before starting, they may need moving closer to the front of the shelf.
3. Pick up the mug	If tremors increased, then may need some hand over hand for support so it doesn't drop. If tremors are reduced, then they can do this independently.	If increased tremors, plastic cups or large grips can be used instead or mugs can be placed on the counter before starting to remove difficulty or access issues.
4. Place the mug on the counter or table	Will need verbal prompts to place it on the counter.	Pause for support before offering verbal prompts to encourage the person to trial independently.
5. Lift up the kettle	Can do this independently.	
6. Carry the kettle to the sink	Can do this independently. when mobility (walking) is at baseline.	If mobility is reduced, try and move kettle and plug in closer to the sink to reduce distance to carry item.
7. Take off the lid of the kettle	Sometimes the lid can get stuck so will need help if struggling to do this, hand over hand support.	If persistent issue, consider purchasing a kettle with a push button to open lid of kettle.
8. Turn on the tap	Need verbal prompts to remind them to turn the tap on.	Picture reference cards can be used to prompt and remind the individual what they need to do at each stage.
9. Fill up the kettle with water	Needs verbal prompts to help stop flow of water before too much in the kettle.	Supervision needed to support. Prompts before task to remind to gently fill the kettle and to pay attention to when it is nearly full.
10. Turn the tap off	Needs prompting to put kettle on counter before turning tap off as unable to do this whilst also holding kettle.	Picture reference cards can be used to prompt and remind the individual what they need to do at each stage.

11. Turn on the kettle	Sometimes requires verbal prompt to check plug switch is turned on also.	Picture reference cards can be used to prompt and remind the individual what they need to do at each stage.
12. Get tea bag	Hand over hand support required.	Used pot with easy access lid or large grip to reduce level of assistance required.
(Steps Continued)		

4. Now we are going to look at how to develop skills for independence in making different breakfasts.

When using this guide please consider:

**Eating and drinking guidelines**

**Allergies/ food intolerances**

**Risk assessment**

**Hygiene guidelines**

**Healthy eating**

**Preferences**

Typical breakfast options have been included this included however the list is not comprehensive.

The following 3 tables have example breakfast options and the task analysis (task steps) completed, you can complete these tables with the individual in mind. Consider which steps of the activity the individual currently needs support with, what type of support and what could be put in place in order to safely reduce support.

The last table is blank, you may use this page to complete the task steps, support requirements and how to grade support levels down for the individual for any activity that the individual may need to develop their skills in.

# Toast with butter and jam

Task Steps	Support Requirements	How to grade support levels down
1. Open the fridge		
2. Select the bread		
3. Walk to toaster		
4. Select 2 slices of bread		
5. Put bread in toaster		
6. Push down button on toaster		
7. Wait for toaster to finish		
8. Walk to fridge		
9. Open the fridge door		
10. Select the butter and jam		
11. Place butter and jam on counter or table		
12. Pick up toast		

# Toast with butter and jam

Task Steps	Support Requirements	How to grade support levels down
13. Place toast on plate		
14. Open drawer		
15. Select a knife		
16. Open butter		
17. Spread butter on toast		
18. Open jam		
19. Spread jam on toast		



# Fruit smoothie with yogurt

Task Steps	Support Requirements	How to grade support levels down
1. Open the fridge		
2. Select fruits and yogurt		
3. Place the fruit and yogurt on the counter or table		
4. Open blender		
5. Place fruits in blender		
7. Close blender		
8. Switch blender on		
9. Check smoothie is ready		
10. Pour smoothie into cup		

For this example the fruits have been prepared before the activity began. You may want to prepare the fruit with the service user , this may involve peeling, and chopping fruit.



# Beans on toast

Task Steps	Support Requirements	How to grade support levels down
1. Gather items needed to counter/table Plate, can of beans, can opener, wooden spoon, saucepan, butter, bread and toaster		
2. Open can of beans		
3. Pour beans in saucepan		
4. Turn hob on		
5. Place saucepan on hob to and gently heat beans		
6. Stir beans		
7. Put bread in toaster and wait till it pops		
8. Remove toast from toaster		
9. Place bread on to plate		
10. Spread butter		
11. Turn off hob		
12. Pour beans on toast		

When supporting individuals with their skill development there are a few principles that are really crucial:

**Repetition** – By repeating activities often, we build up the experience and learning to remember how we do certain parts of the tasks and become familiar as to what is expected of us. It gives us the opportunity to practice elements that we find difficult.

**Start small** – Do not try to be really ambitious with what you are doing, as this may scare the individual or lead them to feel like they are unable to do this. By ensuring that you are offering manageable activities, they will build their confidence and self esteem.

**Consistency** – we all have our own ways of doing things, how one person makes a cup of tea will vary to how the next person does, even in a small way. Therefore, finding out what is usual to the person you support is really important and then sticking to it. Accurate Task Analysis and up to date care plans play an important part of this to ensure that the steps are personal to the individual and that all staff have the same plan to follow. Changes in even 1 step can be overwhelming or confusing to individuals.

United Response have developed an informative, helpful resource on Active Support, and how to grade activity to support the person to be successful in what they are doing.

Please see the link for more information: <https://www.unitedresponse.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=9bb3bcc6-1352-4bd2-b0ed-10f8df02bd0c>

Specific information on graded assistance can be found on page 5.