

The Guide

Planning, Organisation, and Flexibility

About the Guide:

The guide helps you get organised, figure out what needs to be done, and take the first step. They help you think ahead, work out the best order to do things, and keep track of where you're up to. They are also great at noticing when a plan isn't working – and coming up with a new one. That means being flexible, changing what you're doing, or trying a different way when things don't go to plan. The guide doesn't do the thinking for you – they just help you use your thinking in a clear and organised way. They are the brain's to-do list, timekeeper and coach all rolled into one

When your Guide is lost

If your Guide needs some help, you might:

- Find it hard to get started, even when you know what to do
- Get stuck partway through a task because you didn't plan ahead
- Do steps in the wrong order, or miss some out
- Start lots of things at once but not finish any of them
- Forget what you need to bring, do, or hand in
- Get overwhelmed by big tasks that feel like “too much”
- Keep trying the same thing even when it's not working
- Find it hard to change plans or your routine, even if you weren't expecting it
- Feel like your brain is full of ideas, but you don't know where to begin

What you can do to help your Guide

- Stop, take a breath, and think before you start.
- Break down big tasks down into small steps (you can ask for help with this)
- Use checklists, planners or picture schedules to help you keep track of what you have to do. You can then tick off things you've done!
- Try saying your plan out loud or writing it down before you start
- Ask someone to help you plan your time, or make a plan together
- If a plan isn't working, stop. Think: “is there another way to do this?”
- Keep things in the same place if you can. That way, you know where things are
- Remember: getting started is often the hardest bit. Once you begin, it often gets easier
- Give yourself credit for starting, not just finishing.
- Make an 'emergency plan'. This is a backup plan of what to do that works, no matter what happens - even an elephant falling from the sky! For example, it might be a list three people you can call for help if plans change and you don't know what to do

Make sure the person is ready to learn these strategies. Remember, not every strategy works for everyone. When unsure, focus on what **you** can do to support the person

What other people can do to help your Guide

Planning

- Make sure people know **how** they ask for help. Remember – this might not be with words
- Help them break down tasks. Give them only one step at a time if needed
- Model planning out loud: “First, I’m going to,... then I’ll..., and after that I’ll...”
- Try asking questions to help guide them through planning. “What’s the goal?” “what do you need to do first?”, “then what?”, “what could you do if you get stuck on that step?”
- If ordering tasks or steps of a task is tricky, try writing them down on cards and moving them around. This makes it easier to test out and see what might work.
- Try backwards chaining. Start with a task you’ve almost finished, and ask them to work out the last step to finish it. Once they can do that, start with a task two steps away from finishing, and so on.
- Build time to think after – ask them what worked well? What would they change next time?
- AI tools can help with planning, if you can teach them how to use it safely. Tools like <https://goblin.tools> has ‘magic to-do’ which great at breaking tasks down into smaller bits

Starting and flexibility

- Use visual (a sand timer) or auditory (Alexa giving 10, 5, 2, 1 minute warnings) countdowns to warn of transitions.
- Give them extra time for starting tasks, especially big or open ended tasks
- Show them what is happening now and next. This could be a written schedule or pictures
- Praise effort and flexible thinking – not just “being organised”
- Involve them in choice making where possible
- Offer controlled choices when plans change (e.g “you can go with x, or you can go with me”)
- Model (and prompt them to) think of two ways of solving a problem, not just the first idea
- Help them notice if they’re stuck in one way of doing something. Then gently suggest other ways they could try.
- Give advanced warning of changes that might happen

Organisation

- Use checklists, timers and visual schedules to help them learn what order to do things
- Build organisational systems with the person, and teach them how to follow them. For example, clearly labelled and colour coded folders for each subject at school, a checklist for what they need to pack in their bag every day, and a ‘launch zone’ where their school bag, folders and checklist are kept. Make it clear where things go, and what needs to happen.
- Build organisational systems into their daily routine. These systems often need time and effort to keep going (e.g putting stuff away in the right place). Make using them and maintaining them part of the routine, to help the system last.
- Use technology such as alarms, reminders, calendars and lists on phones to help. Teach them how to use these.
- Put reminders where they will be seen, and near where they’ll be used. For example, a picture on the front door of keys, phone, & wallet so they see it before they leave the house

Make sure the person is ready to learn these strategies. Remember, not every strategy works for everyone. When unsure, focus on what **you** can do to support the person