



Guide to Low-Tech Memory Aids for Daily Life

Simple, affordable tools to support memory and independence in individuals living with memory loss

Memory Support in Daily Life: Caring for a person with dementia often means coping with memory loss that disrupts everyday life. This forgetfulness can range from misplacing keys to missing appointments, and it's one of the most challenging symptoms for families. Memory changes can be frustrating and difficult to manage, but there are simple strategies to help a person stay independent for as long as possible.

One effective approach is using *low-tech memory aids* – uncomplicated, low-cost tools and “hacks” that provide helpful reminders or cues. Practical memory aids (like notes, calendars or pill organizers) can reduce daily forgetfulness and frustration, empowering individuals with early-stage dementia to maintain independence longer.

Just as importantly, these solutions are inexpensive and easy to use, making them accessible for caregivers with limited resources. A few simple tools can create a more reassuring, structured daily environment for your loved one.

Simple Low-Tech Memory Aids for Daily Life

• Sticky Notes and Signs

- Place notes on doors, mirrors, or the fridge for daily reminders (e.g., “Keys? Wallet?”).
- Use bold text and bright colors at eye level.
- Remove or update notes after tasks are done.
- For repeated needs, create permanent signs (e.g., “Bathroom” or “Phone”).

• Whiteboards and Calendars

- Use a whiteboard to list today's date and schedule each morning.
- Post it in a visible area like the kitchen.

- Write appointments, meals, or visitors (e.g., “Mary visits Sunday”).
- Use large-print calendars and cross off days to help track time.

• **Alarms and Timers**

- Set daily alarms for medications, meals, or routines.
- Use watches, kitchen timers, or phone apps.
- Keep messages short and clear (e.g., “Take pills”).
- Use the same times daily to build familiarity.

• **Medication Pill Organizers**

- Use weekly pill boxes labeled by day and time.
- Refill on the same day weekly to build habit.
- Ask pharmacies about free blister packs.
- Combine pill times with daily routines (e.g., after breakfast).

• **Labeled Photos and Memory Books**

- Create albums with names and captions under each photo.
- Display labeled photos around the home (e.g., “My husband, John”).
- Use positive, familiar images that prompt comfort and conversation.
- Review photos together to spark recognition and reduce anxiety.
- Create memory boxes: a collection of meaningful personal items (e.g., from a hobby or trip) can be a comforting and enjoyable activity to look through together.

Creating a Supportive Home Environment

A simplified, predictable, and safe home can significantly reduce confusion and anxiety. Small changes can promote independence and safety.

- **Labeling and Signage:** Use large-print labels, with pictures, on drawers and cupboards to help your loved one find things independently.
- **Use Colour Contrast:** Make important items stand out. A brightly coloured toilet seat, light switch, or plate can make them easier to see and use.
- **Simplify and De-clutter:** Remove tripping hazards like throw rugs and excess furniture. Clear surfaces help reduce overwhelming stimuli.

- **Improve Lighting:** Ensure all rooms and hallways are well-lit. Use motion-sensor night lights to improve safety at night.
- **Bathroom Safety:** You might consider adding grab bars near the toilet and in the shower, along with a non-slip bath mat or shower chair, to help reduce the risk of falls
- **Kitchen Safety:** Secure dangerous items like cleaning supplies and sharp knives. Consider simple timers for appliances to reduce fire risk.

When to Seek Help

Memory aids can make daily life easier, but they may not be enough as dementia progresses. If forgetfulness becomes unsafe—such as missed medications, wandering, or leaving appliances on—it's time to seek more support.

Start by talking to your family doctor. They can assess the situation and refer you to a memory clinic or dementia specialist. You can also contact your local Alzheimer Society for guidance and programs to connect families to education, resources, and support services.

You're not alone. Getting help is a smart, proactive step that ensures safety and better care for both you and your loved one.

Final Tips and Reassurance

• Trial and Error Is Normal:

Not every tool will work for every person. One person may prefer a calendar; another might respond better to a sticky note. If something doesn't work, try something else. Be flexible and notice what helps most.

• Keep It Simple and Consistent:

Start with just one or two memory aids, using clear words like "Take pills now." Keep reminders in the same spot, and use them at the same time daily. Familiar routines make tools easier to remember and use.

• Involve Your Loved One:

Whenever possible, include the person with dementia in setting up tools — like writing on the whiteboard or choosing photos for a memory book. This supports their independence and dignity, and may improve acceptance.

• Be Patient and Encouraging:

There will be days when notes are missed or alarms go ignored. That's part of the journey.

Gently remind without correcting. Praise successes — even small ones — and know that your steady support truly makes a difference.

This brochure is part of ClarityPath's commitment to supporting caregivers with compassionate, evidence-informed resources.

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