

TASK BREAKDOWN



Following are guidelines for using Task Breakdown for memory supports.

Task breakdown is used to support memory loss and promote independence for those living with dementia. It is a tool in a Montessori Prepared Environment and can be applied in a home or care setting. Task breakdowns are a simple set of instructions and/or pictures, in clear sequential steps, detailing how to complete a set of movements or actions for a task. Task breakdowns can be used to support people to independently complete tasks such as cleaning their teeth, dressing, and toileting.

Task breakdown may be of assistance for those who have difficulty with completing multi-stepped tasks, or when a person can do the task, but needs assistance with the sequencing. Some may benefit from written instructions, while others require pictures for memory support. Research finds that when external memory aids and prompts are used, those living with dementia display an increased level of engagement with their environment, spend less time sleeping, and use an enhanced level of communication (Bourgeois, 1990; Judge, Camp and Orsulic-Jeras, 2000; Orsulic-Jeras, Schneider).

To create a task breakdown, first identify the specific need for the person – both what task they may need support with, and how might the task breakdown be displayed for them to succeed in this. For example, with the latter, this may include determining whether it should be written instructions (and what font size they may need for this), or whether pictures may be more suited. This would also include considerations such as what specific words they may use personally for items or identifying the location of the items. For example, go through the task with the person to check as they may use the term “basin” or “sink”, or “tap” or “facet” when washing their hands. They may need a sign on a cupboard labelled “cups” to remind them where to get the cup from in a task breakdown on how to make a cup of tea or coffee.

Once their individual needs have been identified, create a sequenced flow chart or list breaking down each step of the task in simple terms. Use the first person in any instructions e.g. “Brushing my teeth” or for toilet instructions “pull down my pants”. For written instructions, use sentence case in black ink on white/yellow/cream paper that has been laminated for durability. It can be put up as a poster displayed prominently in the relevant area to cue their memory.

Once the task breakdown has been displayed, work with the individual to go through the instruction steps to ensure their understanding and monitor over a period of time to check that it is working for them. If not, review it with them to modify.

Examples of Task Breakdowns:

- Brushing teeth
- Toileting
- Getting dressed

- Washing hands
- Making a cup of tea/coffee
- Making a sandwich
- Using a microwave
- Making a telephone call

Montessori for Dementia, Disability and Ageing

Visit our website to find out more about supporting well-being through the four **Key Principles** of Montessori for Dementia, Disability and Ageing: Self-Esteem, Independence, Choice and Meaningful Engagement. Each **Key Principle** is outlined with **Essential Elements** and then has detailed **Guidelines** to assist with implementing these principles within home and care settings.



Website: Information and resource for [Guideline: Task Breakdown](#)