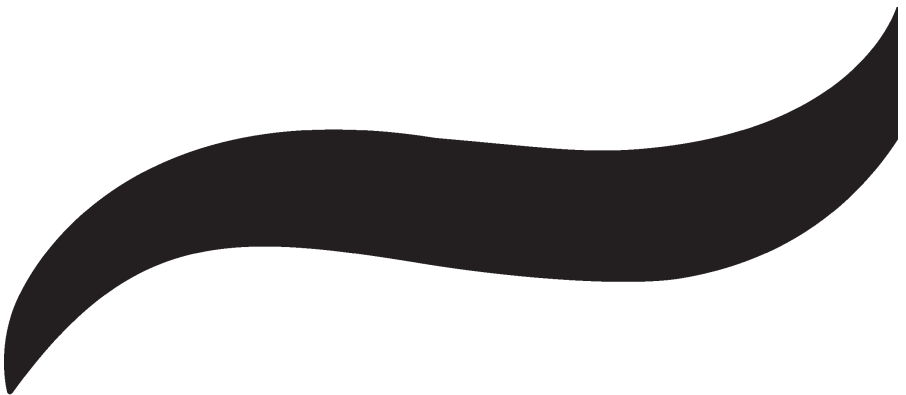




# Practical Tips to help my memory

Occupational Therapy



Practical tips to he



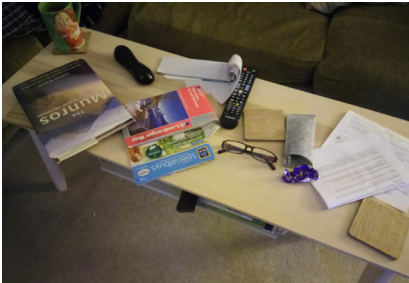
## INTRODUCTION

If you have a problem with your memory it can have an impact on your ability to do everyday tasks. Everyone is different and coping strategies will differ depending on a person's circumstances and personality. If you have always followed helpful habits and routines this may minimise the impact of your memory impairment.

This booklet is designed by Occupational Therapists to illustrate some practical strategies that you might find helpful. It is hoped that by using some of the techniques suggested you will be able to maintain your independence and reduce some of the frustrations memory difficulties can cause.

# YOUR HOME ENVIRONMENT

Having a safe home environment is important for everyone but even more so if you have memory difficulties. If you are naturally an organised and tidy person within your home this will be an advantage.



If areas are clutter free and organised it is generally easier to see what you are looking for, or what you need to do, such as finding the remote control.



It is helpful if rooms have adequate light to enable you to see things clearly. Having lights on a timer ensures lights are on if you return home when it is dark and also makes it look like someone is in the house.



People with memory problems can have the added complication of visual difficulties, so it is often helpful if there are colour contrasts. An example of this would be dinner plates that are a different colour to the table surface.

## COOKER



It is important to be careful in the kitchen particularly when using the cooker. Prompt signs positioned in a visible place are often all that is needed to remind us to turn the cooker off. Using a timer also alerts you to check items being cooked.

When food is cooked we are often so busy serving, it can be easy to forget to turn the cooker off. We then walk away from the cooker to eat our meal and may not return to the cooker at all. It is therefore essential to get into the habit of turning the cooker off before you lift the pan. A sign next to the cooker to this effect is a great way of developing this new habit.



Having a small sign at the kitchen door reminding you to check before you leave the room, will allow you to leave the room with confidence that the cooker is off and everything is safe.



# TIMERS



When cooking a timer can be used to remind us when the cooking time is complete. It can also be used to remind us to check items while they cook, for example stirring soup, as it is unlikely that you would remain in the kitchen while it cooks.

It is easy to become distracted by the television or starting another job. This may result in the food burning. Using a timer to remind you to return to the kitchen to check the pot and give the food a stir is helpful. If you are in another room it is a good idea to take the timer with you to ensure you can hear it.

Timers can also be used as a memory prompt when doing other jobs, for example, to remind you to check the tumble dryer or to take medication.

# MEDICATION



Using a pill box is a good way of organising medications, rather than using individual packets which can be confusing.



When tablets are put into a pill box, it is much easier to see whether or not they have been taken.



If you find it difficult to fill your pill box then your medications can be dispensed from the Pharmacy in a blister pack.



Some pill boxes also have a built in timer to remind you to take your medication. People of all ages use these as an effective way of taking their medication.



A prompt sign displayed in the right place to remind you to take your tablets can prove very useful, for example, beside the kettle in the morning or on your bedside table or at night.

# DAYS OF THE WEEK



For some people it is important to know what day of the week it is and they can become very frustrated if they can't recall.

There are various methods of finding out what day it is. Some people look at the TV in the morning, while others will use a phone, clock or digital device to obtain this information.

Prompt signs can also be used as suggested in the pictures.





# CALENDARS



A calendar is a visual reminder of your plans and what you need to do. It is important to refer to this on a daily basis, ideally before bed and in the morning to ensure you don't miss anything like early morning appointments. It is also helpful towards the end of the month to check what is happening at the beginning of the following month to ensure that you are organised, this could be to send a birthday card.

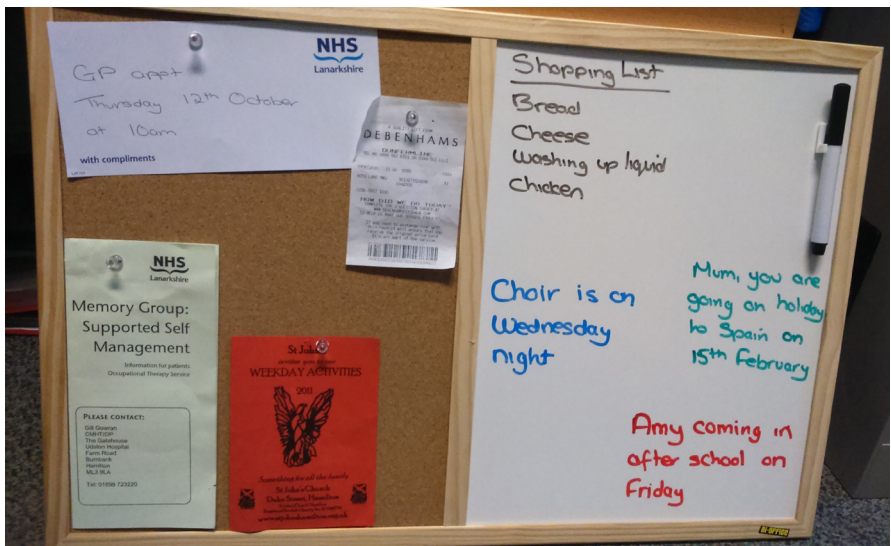


There are various styles of calendar available, some with helpful pockets to store relevant items such as appointment letters or tickets for events. Alternatively, this can be done by keeping a folder beside your calendar for such items. It is essential that the calendar has adequate space to write clearly, in order for it to be clearly read. In addition some people highlight important events such as birthdays and medical appointments.

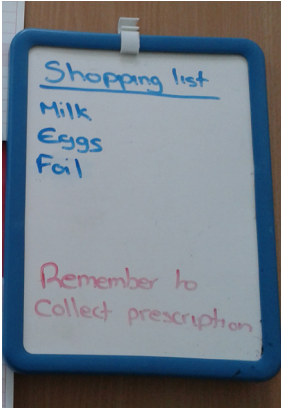
When trying to keep track of the day and date, it may be helpful to circle the date in the morning or score it off at bedtime.

# INFORMATION BOARDS

These come in various formats, such as pin boards or wipe boards. These are useful for keeping important information visual and therefore acting as a prompt. However, it is essential these are not overloaded as too much information can become a blur and therefore not the prompt it is intended to be. It is essential that these are regularly updated. Some people find attaching appointment letters, or shopping lists to these helpful.

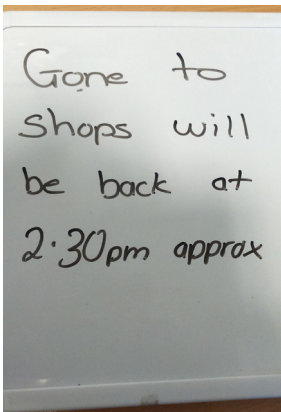


# WIPEBOARDS



These come in different sizes and can be fixed to a wall, or smaller ones can be left to be moved about to wherever they are required.

If using a larger board that has different information, it is better to use a different colour of pen for each item so they are more easily differentiated.



Some find this a good tool to note down what is happening in their home.



It is essential that when a task is done, or an event or outing has taken place, that this is removed from the board. Where possible the person with memory difficulties should be encouraged to do this themselves. so it becomes a **habit** and part of their normal **routine**.

# MANAGING CORRESPONDENCE

It is so important to have a system for organising correspondence to ensure that bills are paid, appointments are attended and so you can find documents that you need.

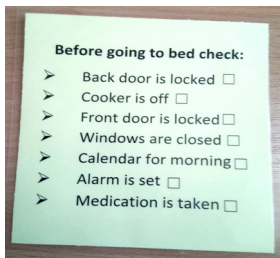
A clearly labelled plastic wallet will allow you to store documents and letters so that you can find them at a later date. You could use different coloured wallets to help organise information, such as household bills or medical appointment.



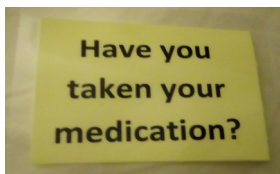
# NIGHTTIME



To help with orientation, keeping a light on during the night in the hallway or in the bathroom can be helpful; or you might prefer a nightlight with a soft glow.



To ensure your home is secure before going to bed, try and use a checklist to tick off tasks that you have done.



If you take medication at night you may find using a prompt sign helpful. If you place the sign on your pillow every morning when you make your bed it will be visible when you go to bed and can be placed on your bedside table until the morning.

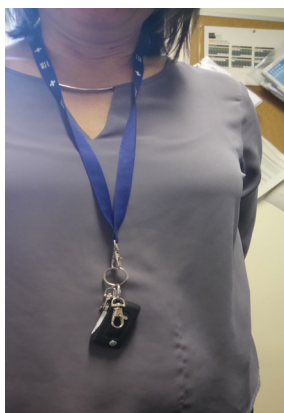
## KEYS



Misplacing keys is a common problem. It is important to have a designated place to keep these and to form a habit of returning them to this place.



Some people find keeping keys on a hook helpful while others prefer a specific drawer or dish.



Locating keys when out can be challenging but if they are attached to your bag or person they are much easier to locate.

## REMEMBERING ITEMS WHEN GOING OUT



If you need to remember to take something with you, make sure it is visible and accessible. Placing a bag on the door handle with what you need to remember is very effective. Leaving items on the floor by the door can be helpful but as they are not generally in your line of vision they can still be left behind.

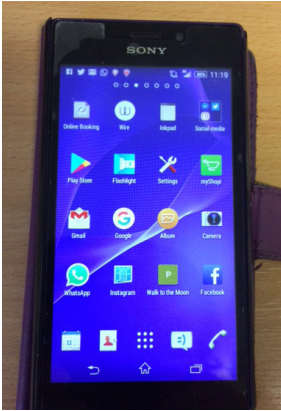


Putting a note on the door is also helpful if you need to remember to do something before leaving the house, such as remember to take tickets and passports, or turn the heater off.



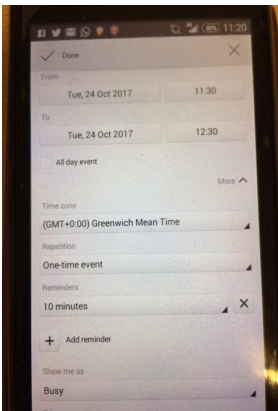
# TECHNOLOGY

There are many different devices available which can help us to live fulfilling and productive lives, for example, being able to access music we enjoy or staying in touch with family and friends by text message, email or video calling.

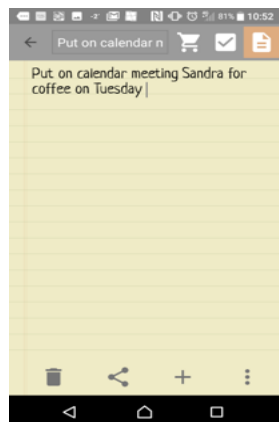
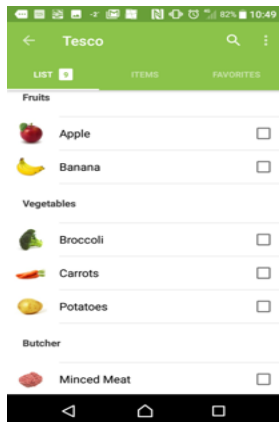
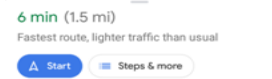
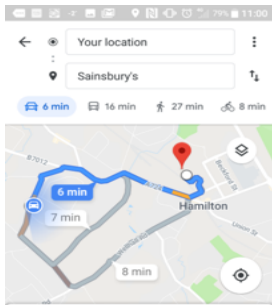


There are also technological devices which can help to compensate for or minimise the difficulties memory problems can cause for example:

- ❖ Reminders can be set on mobile phones, ipads or virtual assistants such as Alexa, Siri, Google now. This could be used for daily reminders such as a medication prompt or for a weekly reminder like going to the art class.
- ❖ Use the calendar function regularly.
- ❖ Taking photographs on your mobile phone can be a great way of keeping a record of a day out, but can also serve as a helpful reminder of where the car is parked in a large car park.
- ❖ The majority of devices display the day, date and time, which are great for staying orientated to time.







- ❖ Many devices have the option of route planners/maps to assist with orientation. However there are also devices which can be used as a GPS tracker, which would enable the person with the device to be located. Some people find this affords a sense of security knowing that they can be located if necessary.

- ❖ Helpful apps can be added for example a torch or shopping list

- ❖ Use the timer function to remind you to do something such as. empty the tumble dryer or check the cooker.

- ❖ Use a Notepad app for general reminders.

## INSTRUCTION GUIDES

Many people find using an unfamiliar appliance, or a new piece of technology challenging. It can be helpful to write down step by step instructions in your own words. If family are helping you to do this, it is essential they use your words for each step so it is easier for you to understand.

Using picture guides can make written instructions easier to understand. If using this method it is important to use a picture of the actual item that is being used and not something similar as this can be confusing. This can be simply done by taking a photo of the item and labelling the various relevant parts accordingly.

Similarly, having recipes written in a simple step by step guide, can assist you to continue to successfully prepare these dishes.

On the following pages are examples of some instruction guides.

## LENTIL SOUP

### Ingredients

- 1 cup of lentils
- 2 carrots, grated
- 1 leek, chopped
- 1 litre of water
- 2 stock cubes

### Method

- Peel and grate the carrots
- Chop the leeks and rinse
- Add all ingredients to a pot
- Bring to the boil
- Simmer for 1 hour until lentils are cooked

## TUMBLE DRIER

- Put wet washing in machine
- Close door



Turn dial to "cupboard"



Press "start"

## MOBILE PHONE GUIDE

A photograph of a silver flip phone. Four arrows point to different parts of the phone with corresponding instructions:

- An arrow points to the left side of the screen with the text: "To select item on left of screen"
- An arrow points to the right side of the screen with the text: "To select item on right of screen"
- An arrow points to the call button (green) with the text: "Press when making or answering a call"
- An arrow points to the power button (red) with the text: "Hold to switch mobile on and turn it off. This also ends a telephone call."

## USEFUL RESOURCES

[www.nhsinform.co.uk](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk)

[www.elament.org.uk](http://www.elament.org.uk)

[www.makinglifeeasier.org.uk](http://www.makinglifeeasier.org.uk)

[www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/hfsv-form.aspx](http://www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/hfsv-form.aspx)

[www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)

## ADOPTING NEW STRATEGIES

It is important to acknowledge that if you are changing the way you do something it will not happen immediately. Time and practice must be given for new habits and routines to be established. It is also helpful if only one new strategy is initiated at a time to give it the opportunity to be adopted.

### **What if I still have concerns after trying to make changes?**

If you continue to have concerns about your memory and ability to do familiar tasks you should consider consulting your GP to enquire if further investigation is required.

# CONFIDENTIALITY AND THE USE OF PATIENT INFORMATION

NHS Lanarkshire take care to ensure your personal information is only accessible to authorised people. Our staff have a legal and contractual duty to keep personal health information secure, and confidential. In order to find out more about current data protection legislation and how we process your information, please visit the Data Protection Notice on our website at [www.nhslanarkshire.scot](http://www.nhslanarkshire.scot) or ask a member of staff for a copy of our Data Protection Notice.

**NHS Lanarkshire** - for local services and the latest health news visit [www.nhslanarkshire.scot](http://www.nhslanarkshire.scot)

NHS Lanarkshire General Enquiry Line: 0300 30 30 243

**NHS inform** - The national health information service for Scotland.

[www.nhsinform.co.uk](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk)

Tel No: 0800 22 44 88

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact the NHS Lanarkshire General Enquiry Line on 0300 3030 243 or e-mail [info@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:info@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)



[www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk)

Pub. date:	Jan 2019
Review date:	Jan 2021
Issue No:	02
Department:	Occ Therapy

PIL.MEMORY.19\_03943.L