

Illustrated Card Sets

Four repeatable processes, each fully explained in plain language before a single card is shown to you, then a print-and-prop card sequence for the process. Each one gets its own pages — nothing is mixed together.

Document 3 of 6

Introduced on Weeks 2, 3, 9 and 10 of your Roadmap

Step-by-step, visual supports like these are formally recognised as an evidence-based practice for autistic children and young adults across a wide range of skills and settings^[1]. But a card set only works if the idea behind it is genuinely understood first — so before every set of cards in this document, we stop and explain, plainly, what the process means, why it helps, and what a real family like yours might experience using it.

USING A CARD SET WELL

1. **Read the explainer page first**, every time — even if the topic sounds familiar. It's short, and it makes the cards make sense.
2. **Work through all 7 cards once, alone or together**, in a calm moment.
3. **Each of these four is a method you'll reuse** — on a new routine, a new setting, a new hard day — not a single fix you use only once.

What Is a Friction Audit, and Why Do It on Repeat?

Before a single card, let's make sure this idea is completely clear — nothing here is assumed.



WHAT DOES THIS ACTUALLY MEAN?

A friction audit is a repeatable way of walking through any part of your home or your day, looking specifically for the small things that have quietly started working against you — a schedule card that slipped behind the fridge, a corner that filled up with laundry, a light that's too bright for a spot that's supposed to feel calm. It isn't a one-time deep clean. It's a habit you come back to, the same way a shopkeeper checks their own doorway isn't blocked, again and again, not just on opening day.



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF DOING THIS?

The purpose is to catch small drift early, before it turns into a bigger relapse. Most systems in a busy home don't fail with a bang — they fade quietly, one small piece at a time, until nobody remembers when it stopped working.



WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE?

We hope you build a genuine habit of looking at your own space with fresh eyes on a schedule, so nothing you've built has the chance to quietly stop working without you noticing for months.



HOW DOES THIS ACTUALLY HELP THE CHILD?

A consistent, predictable physical environment gives a child fewer small surprises to manage every day, which supports steadier daily functioning overall ^[1]

JOS, NIGERIA

A father assumed his son's visual schedule was still working fine, until a friction audit walkthrough showed him it had been displaying last term's school pickup time for three weeks. His son had been quietly confused every single afternoon, and nobody had noticed until they actually looked.

The Friction Audit Walkthrough — Cards 1–4



FRICION AUDIT WALKTHROUGH · STEP 1 OF 7

The Friction Audit Walkthrough

A repeatable way to notice what's quietly working against you, before it becomes a bigger problem.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



FRICION AUDIT WALKTHROUGH · STEP 2 OF 7

Pick one space or routine to walk through today, as if seeing it for the first time.

Why: Choosing one specific area keeps the audit manageable instead of overwhelming.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



FRICION AUDIT WALKTHROUGH · STEP 3 OF 7

Walk it slowly. Don't fix anything yet — just notice.

Why: Fixing while you're still noticing means you stop looking too soon.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



FRICION AUDIT WALKTHROUGH · STEP 4 OF 7

Ask yourself: would a stranger find this confusing, or find something in the way?

Why: A stranger's eyes catch what familiarity has trained you to stop seeing.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up

The Friction Audit Walkthrough — Cards 5–7



FRICTION AUDIT WALKTHROUGH · STEP 5 OF 7

Write down every small friction you spot, even tiny ones.

Why: Writing it down, rather than just noting it mentally, is what keeps it from being forgotten by tomorrow.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line, prop it up



FRICTION AUDIT WALKTHROUGH · STEP 6 OF 7

Pick the ONE easiest fix from your list, and do just that today.

Why: One small fix, actually completed, beats a long list that never gets touched.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line, prop it up



FRICTION AUDIT WALKTHROUGH · STEP 7 OF 7

Set a repeat reminder — this audit works best done again next month, not just once.

Why: Friction rebuilds quietly over time, so the habit of checking matters more than any single audit.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line, prop it up

What Is a Bad-Day Contingency Build?

Before a single card, let's make sure this idea is completely clear — nothing here is assumed.



WHAT DOES THIS ACTUALLY MEAN?

A bad-day contingency build is a specific, tiny, already-decided fallback plan for the day everything genuinely falls apart — not a general mindset of "staying positive," but an actual written plan, decided while you're calm, for exactly what you'll do when you're not.



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF DOING THIS?

The purpose is to remove the burden of deciding anything at all on the one day you have the least capacity to decide — the plan does the thinking in advance, so a tired, overwhelmed version of you can just follow it.



WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE?

We hope every caregiver in your home knows this same tiny plan, so it works no matter who's present on the day it's actually needed.



HOW DOES THIS ACTUALLY HELP THE CHILD?

Having a pre-decided, low-demand fallback plan reduces the pressure on caregivers during moments of high stress, which supports steadier caregiving overall ^[1]

KANO, NIGERIA

A mother's whole contingency plan is one sentence: "On a bad day, we skip everything except the bedtime story." She's used it four times this year, and every time it was enough.

The Bad-Day Contingency Build — Cards 1–4



BAD-DAY CONTINGENCY BUILD ·
STEP 1 OF 7

The Bad-Day Contingency Build

One tiny, pre-decided plan for the day
everything falls apart.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



BAD-DAY CONTINGENCY BUILD ·
STEP 2 OF 7

Remember one real hard day, honestly, without
judging yourself for it.

*Why: Naming a real day gives the plan something
concrete to be built for.*

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



BAD-DAY CONTINGENCY BUILD ·
STEP 3 OF 7

Choose ONE single smallest fallback action —
small enough for your worst day.

*Why: If it isn't small enough to do exhausted, it
isn't actually a usable plan.*

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



BAD-DAY CONTINGENCY BUILD ·
STEP 4 OF 7

Write it down physically, in your own plain
words.

*Why: A plan written on paper survives a foggy,
exhausted moment better than one only in your
head.*

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up

The Bad-Day Contingency Build — Cards 5–7



BAD-DAY CONTINGENCY BUILD · STEP 5 OF 7

Put it somewhere you'll actually see it on a hard day.

Why: A hidden plan might as well not exist.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



BAD-DAY CONTINGENCY BUILD · STEP 6 OF 7

Tell every other caregiver in the house exactly what the plan is.

Why: A plan only one person knows puts all the weight on that one person.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



BAD-DAY CONTINGENCY BUILD · STEP 7 OF 7

Two mistakes to avoid: making the plan too big, and never actually testing it.

Why: An untested plan might reveal it's harder to follow than it looked on paper.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up

What Is the Independence Fade Sequence?

Before a single card, let's make sure this idea is completely clear — nothing here is assumed.



WHAT DOES THIS ACTUALLY MEAN?

The Independence Fade Sequence is a repeatable method for reducing your own involvement in ANY routine your child already runs fairly reliably with your help — not a one-time trick for a single tool, a general method you can reuse on any routine for the rest of your time as a parent: full words, then fewer words, then a gesture, then just a pause.



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF DOING THIS?

The purpose is to hand real ownership of a routine to your child gradually, in layers small enough that nothing collapses, rather than trying to step back all at once.



WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE?

We hope this becomes a method you reach for again and again, on routine after routine, long after this program ends — not a single fix, but a repeatable skill.



HOW DOES THIS ACTUALLY HELP THE CHILD?

Systematically fading adult support as a child gains skill is a well-established, evidence-based approach to building lasting independence ^[1]

KIGALI, RWANDA

A father used to say the full instruction for every step of his son's evening routine. Once he started fading to just a point and a pause, his son began completing steps he'd never once done without being told.

The Independence Fade Sequence — Cards 1–4



INDEPENDENCE FADE
SEQUENCE · STEP 1 OF 7

The Independence Fade Sequence

A repeatable method for stepping back from
any routine you already run.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



INDEPENDENCE FADE
SEQUENCE · STEP 2 OF 7

Choose one well-practiced, stable routine to
start with.

*Why: Fading works best on something already
solid, not something still shaky.*

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



INDEPENDENCE FADE
SEQUENCE · STEP 3 OF 7

Shorten your words for one step of the routine.

*Why: Fewer words is the gentlest possible first
layer of fading.*

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



INDEPENDENCE FADE
SEQUENCE · STEP 4 OF 7

Replace the shortened words with just a
gesture or point.

*Why: A gesture asks your child to fill in the rest of
the meaning themselves.*

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up

The Independence Fade Sequence — Cards 5–7



INDEPENDENCE FADE SEQUENCE · STEP 5 OF 7

Add a longer pause before helping at all.

Why: A longer pause gives your child room to start the step on their own.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



INDEPENDENCE FADE SEQUENCE · STEP 6 OF 7

If it falls apart, go back one layer calmly —
that's normal, not failure.

*Why: Slowing down for a day is part of doing this
correctly, not a sign it isn't working.*

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



INDEPENDENCE FADE SEQUENCE · STEP 7 OF 7

Two mistakes to avoid: fading too fast, and
stepping in too soon when your child pauses to
think.

*Why: A pause to think is not the same as being
stuck.*

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up

What Is a Cross-Setting Generalization Map?

Before a single card, let's make sure this idea is completely clear — nothing here is assumed.



WHAT DOES THIS ACTUALLY MEAN?

A Cross-Setting Generalization Map is a deliberate method for testing whether a strategy that works at home actually works somewhere else too — school, a relative's house, the car — and adjusting it on purpose rather than assuming it will simply transfer on its own.



WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF DOING THIS?

The purpose is to make sure what you've built doesn't stay trapped inside your own four walls. A strategy that only works in one room of one house is fragile; the same idea, recognisable in a new place, is what makes support genuinely portable.



WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE?

We hope you finish this process with an honest, real map of which tools travel easily and which need adjusting, rather than a guess.



HOW DOES THIS ACTUALLY HELP THE CHILD?

Consistency of support across every setting a child spends real time in is a recurring theme in the strongest guidance on supporting autistic children and children with ADHD ^[4]

NAIROBI, KENYA

A mother tested her son's calm-corner object in the car first, expecting it to work exactly like at home. It didn't, quite — the moving car itself was part of what unsettled him. Testing it revealed that, and let her adjust before assuming the tool had simply failed.

The Cross-Setting Generalization Map — Cards 1–4



CROSS-SETTING
GENERALIZATION MAP · STEP 1
OF 7

The Cross-Setting Generalization Map

A method for testing any home strategy in a new setting, on purpose.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



CROSS-SETTING
GENERALIZATION MAP · STEP 2
OF 7

Pick one strategy that's genuinely solid at home.

Why: Testing a shaky strategy elsewhere just adds a second unstable variable.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



CROSS-SETTING
GENERALIZATION MAP · STEP 3
OF 7

Pick one setting outside home to test it in.

Why: One setting at a time keeps the test readable — you'll know exactly what changed.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up



CROSS-SETTING
GENERALIZATION MAP · STEP 4
OF 7

Build the smallest travel version of it.

Why: A small, portable version is realistic to actually bring along and use.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line,
prop it up

The Cross-Setting Generalization Map — Cards 5–7



CROSS-SETTING GENERALIZATION MAP · STEP 5 OF 7

Tell the relevant adult in that setting what it's for, in one sentence.

Why: A tool nobody else understands can accidentally be taken away or misread.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line, prop it up



CROSS-SETTING GENERALIZATION MAP · STEP 6 OF 7

Try it once, and notice honestly what's different there versus at home.

Why: Naming the real difference tells you exactly what to adjust next time.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line, prop it up



CROSS-SETTING GENERALIZATION MAP · STEP 7 OF 7

Two mistakes to avoid: testing in too many settings at once, and giving up after one imperfect try.

Why: A tool rarely works exactly the same away from home on the very first attempt.

Gentle Progress Family · Cut along the dashed line, prop it up

Sources for this guide: [4] NICE CG170 · [11] Steinbrenner et al. (2020). Full list of 10 references in Document 1 — Start Here.