



A FREE NEURODIVERGENT MINDS STARTER KIT · CALM VERSION

# Back on Track Starter Kit

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**A little, every day: a gentle daily system for when home education has stalled**

Five manageable tasks a day, set around your home ed goals, ticked off by your child and checked by you. Pieces build into tokens, tokens buy rewards you choose, and nothing is ever taken away. Built for children who push back against demands.

**Neurodivergent Minds**

[www.neurodivergentminds.com](http://www.neurodivergentminds.com)

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*Calm version: one soft colour, larger text and more space, for anyone who finds busy pages tiring or reads more easily this way. A practical tool, not a curriculum, therapy or legal advice.*

# Welcome

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This starter kit is the paper version of Back on Track, a daily system for home educating families whose learning has stalled. It is for the days when every request turns into a battle, when you have drifted into doing very little, and when you are not sure how to start again without a fight.

The idea is simple. **A little, consistently, beats a lot, occasionally.** Home education is usually one to one, so it needs far less time than school to make real progress. What it needs is a rhythm your child can actually live with.

**Start smaller than you think you need to. The goal of the first fortnight is not progress. It is a rhythm that holds.**

**You choose the work.** You know your child best. Back on Track does not set tasks or replace a curriculum. Use the books, workbooks, websites and apps you already have. The system gives that learning a shape, a routine and a reason to keep going.

**It won't solve everything.** Every child is different, and no system fits every need. It is designed to help, and to make a little progress, most days, more likely.

## 1

## How it works

### 5 manageable tasks a day

Each school day has five manageable tasks, set by you around your home ed goals. We call each task a **piece**. Ours are reading, maths, English, handwriting and a game played together, but you choose your own. Each piece has a small target, such as “read 3 pages” or “30 minutes of maths, in two halves with a break”.

### Your child ticks, you check

When a piece is done, your child ticks it off. You then check it. Checking matters: it keeps the tracker honest and gives you a natural, low-pressure moment to notice the effort.

### Five pieces make a token

Every five checked pieces make one token, **whenever they are earned**. Three pieces on Monday and two on Tuesday still make a token. A hard afternoon never cancels a good morning, and a bad day still moves your child forward.

### Tokens buy rewards you choose

You decide the rewards and what each one costs in tokens. As a guide, five tokens is about a week of full days. Your child picks one to work towards, can change their mind whenever they like, and can spend tokens as soon as they have enough or save them for something bigger.

## **Daily jobs too**

Add as many everyday jobs as you need, such as take vitamins, feed the pet or brush teeth. Your child ticks them off alongside their five tasks. Jobs don't change pieces or tokens, so the learning deal stays simple.

## **Nothing is ever taken away**

There are no deductions, penalties or lost tokens. The only consequence of not doing a piece is that the piece is not earned.

## 2

## Why it's designed this way

Every part of Back on Track was chosen to lower the feeling of being told what to do. It was built with PDA (pathological demand avoidance, often described as a persistent drive for autonomy) in mind, and it works for any child who pushes back against demands.

- **You choose the work, and your child chooses within it.** You decide what the day includes. Your child chooses the order, the book, the game and where to sit. Clear limits leave less to argue about, and real choice inside them often feels safer than total freedom.
- **No negotiation or bargaining.** The pieces, rules and reward prices are written down and stay the same every day. The tracker becomes the referee, so nobody has to argue the deal again.
- **Nothing is ever taken away.** For many demand-avoidant children, losing something already earned is the fastest way to end a reward system for good. A missed piece simply stays empty.
- **No red crosses, no streaks to break.** A blank day is not a failure, and tomorrow is a fresh start.
- **Every effort counts.** Pieces add up across days, so nothing is wasted.
- **Build stamina slowly, never the deep end.** If very little has been happening, a full timetable overnight usually ends in overwhelm and refusal. You start with what your child can do today and step up one thing at a time, only after it has been managed on most days.

- **Families are different.** We never assume who is in a child's life. Wherever a name is needed, you write the name your child actually uses, whether that is Mum, Dad, Grandad, Auntie Jo or a first name. This is a deliberate choice, because some children have lost someone important, and some live with different grown-ups.

**The aim is not a perfect day. It is a small, predictable one that your child can say yes to.**

## 3

## Setting it up together

### Start smaller than feels useful

If very little has been happening, begin with targets that feel almost too easy. For reading, three pages a day is a good start. The win in the first weeks is that the day happens at all.

### Use low-pressure language

- Say “here’s today” rather than “you have to do this”
- Say “shall we see what’s on?” rather than “go and do your work”
- Do the first few days alongside your child rather than sending them off alone
- Never use the tracker as a threat. It is a record of what went well

### Make it visible

Put the weekly tracker where your child will actually see it, not in a folder. The reward they are working towards should be on show too, so the goal is never a mystery.

## 4

## Rewards that do not backfire

- **Let your child pick a goal,** and let them change it whenever they like. Write it at the top of the token tracker
- **Price rewards honestly.** Small treats for five tokens, bigger outings for ten
- **Keep money out of it.** Tokens are tokens. Showing a cash value turns rewards into wages
- **Never take tokens back.** Not for behaviour, not for rudeness, not for anything

**A reward system only works if your child believes it will still be there tomorrow.**

## 5

## Building up slowly: never the deep end

This is the heart of Back on Track. When home education has stalled, the gap between what your child is doing now and what you hope they will do can feel huge. The temptation is to fix it all at once. For most children, and especially demand-avoidant children, that leads to overwhelm and refusal.

**Build stamina the way you would build fitness: start where you are, add a little, and let each step become easy before the next.**

### Start with what your child can manage today

Not what they should be doing, and not what school would expect. If ten minutes of maths is manageable, start there. If three pages of reading is manageable, start there.

### Write each task's steps, smallest first

Each of the five tasks has its own ladder of small steps, ending in the goal. For example:

- Reading: 3 pages, 4 pages, 5 pages ... up to 10 pages, then 15 minutes, building to 35 minutes
- Maths and English: 30 minutes (two halves with a break), then 35, 40 ... up to an hour
- Handwriting: an agreed paragraph, then two, then half a page ... up to a full page

## **Step up only when a step has been managed on most days**

A good rule is four of the last five school days. If not, stay where you are. Staying put is not failing; it is how stamina is built.

## **Change one thing at a time**

Step up one task, then give it a week to settle before stepping up another. Small changes are easier to say yes to.

## **Stepping back is fine**

After illness, a hard week or a big change, drop a step and build again. Progress is measured over weeks and months, not days.

## 6

## Example activities

Use the work you already have. These are only starting points.

### Reading

- A chapter of any book, comic or graphic novel they choose
- Reading aloud together, taking turns a page each
- A magazine article, recipe or set of instructions
- An audiobook while following the printed text

### Maths

- A lesson or session on a maths website or app you already use
- A page from a workbook at the right level
- Cooking: weighing, measuring and timing
- Shopping: adding up prices and working out change

### English

- Talk first, then write: say the answer out loud before writing it
- Sentence frames: "I think \_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_"
- Because / but / so: finish one starter sentence three ways
- Describe a picture in three sentences

## Handwriting

- Copy a short paragraph from a favourite book
- Copy a recipe, a list of favourites or a short poem

## Game

- Any board or card game together
- Word games: guess the person with yes/no questions, odd one out and why, or describe a word without saying it

# The sheets



**Print these and keep them where they will be seen. The weekly tracker is designed to be printed fresh every week.**

Sheet 1 Our five pieces

Sheet 2 This week's tracker

Sheet 3 Daily jobs

Sheet 4 Token tracker

Sheet 5 Our reward menu

Sheet 6 Step-up ladder

Sheet 7 Our day plan

Sheet 8 A letter to your child

SHEET 1

Our five pieces

Write each piece, where it starts, and where it will build to over time.

| Piece | Starting target | Builds to | Notes |
|-------|-----------------|-----------|-------|
|       |                 |           |       |
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SHEET 2

# This week's tracker

Write the day in the first column. Your child ticks a box when a piece is done, and you initial it when you have checked it.

| Day | Piece 1 | Piece 2 | Piece 3 | Piece 4 | Piece 5 | Checked |
|-----|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|     |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|     |         |         |         |         |         |         |
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|     |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|     |         |         |         |         |         |         |

SHEET 3

# Daily jobs

Write each job in the first column. Your child ticks it off each day. Jobs don't change pieces or tokens.

| Job | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|     |     |     |     |     |     |
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|     |     |     |     |     |     |

SHEET 4

Token tracker

The reward I am working towards:

Write the date each token is earned. Five checked pieces make one token.

| Token | Date earned | Spent on |
|-------|-------------|----------|
|       |             |          |
|       |             |          |
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|       |             |          |
|       |             |          |
|       |             |          |
|       |             |          |
|       |             |          |
|       |             |          |
|       |             |          |

SHEET 5

# Our reward menu

You choose the rewards and their prices. Your child chooses which one to work towards.

| Reward | Tokens | Notes |
|--------|--------|-------|
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|        |        |       |
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|        |        |       |
|        |        |       |
|        |        |       |

SHEET 6

Step-up ladder

Write each step for one task, smallest first, ending with the goal. Move up only when the current step has been managed on most days, and change one task at a time.

| Step | Target | Date started | Notes |
|------|--------|--------------|-------|
|      |        |              |       |
|      |        |              |       |
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|      |        |              |       |
|      |        |              |       |
|      |        |              |       |

SHEET 7

Our day plan

When screens happen:

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.....

When learning happens:

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.....

Breaks (screen-free ideas):

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.....

Small jobs before screens:

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.....

What my child chooses:

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.....

What the grown-up chooses:

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.....

## SHEET 8

# A letter to your child

Some children find a written letter easier than a conversation about learning. Any grown-up in your child's life can write one. Keep it warm, honest and short.

**From (the name your child uses for you):**

**What we have been doing, and what was good about it:**

**What I have noticed lately:**

**Why this matters to me:**

**What happens next:**

**What you get to choose:**

**Why I believe in you:**

.....

.....

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## If you need more help

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Back on Track is a practical tool. It is not therapy, medical advice or legal advice about home education. If your child is distressed, withdrawn or not sleeping or eating, please talk to your GP. For up-to-date legal information about home education in the UK, Education Otherwise is a long-standing home education charity and a good place to start.

You can find more for home educating families at [www.neurodivergentminds.com/back-on-track/](http://www.neurodivergentminds.com/back-on-track/)