



The Home Safety Workbook for Family Caregivers

A Room-by-Room Guide to Making Every Space Safe for Aging in Place

INDOORS • OUTDOORS • EMERGENCY READY

Prepare the home before a crisis — not during one. Walk through with this workbook, check off what is already safe, and build a clear plan for the rest.

This workbook belongs to: _____

How to Use This Workbook

This workbook is built on one simple idea: **proaction over reaction**. The safest time to remove a hazard is long before it causes a fall. You do not need to be an expert or spend a fortune — most changes here are small, low-cost, and something a family member can do in an afternoon.

Three simple steps

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| 1. Walk through, room by room. | Take this workbook into each space — indoors and out. Look at the room the way an older adult moves through it. |
| 2. Check the box for anything already safe. | Every item you leave blank becomes your to-do list. No guilt, no rush — just a clear picture of what needs attention. |
| 3. Move your top blanks to the Action Plan. | At the back of the workbook is a plan you can fill in: what to fix, roughly what it costs, who will do it, and by when. |

A NOTE ON DOING THIS TOGETHER

If you can, walk through with your loved one rather than for them. Ask what feels hard or unsteady in each room. They know their own home — and they are far more likely to use changes they helped choose.

Why this area matters

This workbook is a guide, not medical advice. For a personalized assessment — especially after a fall, hospital stay, or new diagnosis — ask a doctor for a referral to an occupational or physical therapist. See “When to Call a Professional” near the end.

Why Home Safety Matters

Falls are the leading cause of injury — both the kind that lands someone in the hospital and the kind that turns fatal — for adults age 65 and older. More than one in four older adults falls each year, roughly 14 million people. And falling once nearly doubles the odds of falling again.

But here is the part worth holding onto: **falling is not a normal part of aging, and most falls can be prevented.** A large share happen at home, during ordinary activities — stepping out of the tub, reaching a high shelf, crossing a dim hallway. Change the home, and you remove the hazard before it ever causes harm.

1 in 4 older adults fall each year	~14M Americans 65+ fall annually	2× higher risk after a first fall	~37% of falls cause a real injury
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Sources: CDC Older Adult Fall Prevention; National Council on Aging; National Safety Council (2024–2026).

Start here: 10 quick wins

If you only have one weekend, do these first. Together they remove the most common hazards:

- ☐ Remove or tape down loose rugs
- ☐ Add grab bars in the bathroom
- ☐ Brighten the lighting, especially at night
- ☐ Clear clutter from walkways and stairs
- ☐ Add handrails to both sides of stairs
- ☐ Put non-slip mats in the tub and shower
- ☐ Keep everyday items within easy reach
- ☐ Add nightlights along the path to the bathroom
- ☐ Tuck away loose cords and cables
- ☐ Set up a medical alert or easy way to call for help

Part 1 • Inside the Home

Entryway & Front Door

Why this area matters

The front door is where people juggle bags, fumble for keys, and step over thresholds — a common spot for trips. A well-lit, uncluttered entry makes coming and going safe.

Check the box if it's already in place. Leave it blank and it becomes your to-do list.

- ☐ A sturdy bench or chair sits near the door for resting or setting things down
- ☐ There is a spot for keys right by the door, so there is no fumbling
- ☐ The threshold is low and even, or has a small ramp if needed
- ☐ Lighting is bright and turns on before the door is reached
- ☐ Floor mats lie flat and have non-slip backing
- ☐ A clear, wide path leads from the door into the home
- ☐ Coat hooks and storage are within easy reach — no bending or stretching
- ☐ The door has a lever handle instead of a round knob

PRO TIP

Lever-style door handles are far easier for arthritic hands than round knobs — and they are an inexpensive swap.

What needs fixing here — and who will do it:

Living Room

Why this area matters

This is where your loved one spends much of the day, so comfort and clear movement matter. Low furniture, loose rugs, and cords are the usual culprits.

Check the box if it's already in place. Leave it blank and it becomes your to-do list.

- ☐ Walking paths stay clear and at least 3 feet wide
- ☐ Rugs are removed or secured with non-slip backing, with no curled edges
- ☐ Cords and cables run along walls, never across walkways
- ☐ Chairs and sofas are firm and high enough to stand up from easily
- ☐ Frequently used items sit within arm's reach of the main seat
- ☐ A lamp or light switch is reachable without getting up
- ☐ A phone is within reach of the favorite chair
- ☐ Furniture with sharp corners is padded or moved
- ☐ The path to the bathroom and bedroom is clear and lit

WATCH OUT

Deep, soft couches look comfy but can trap someone who then struggles to rise. A firmer seat with armrests is safer.

What needs fixing here — and who will do it:

Kitchen

Why this area matters

Reaching, bending, hot surfaces, and spills make the kitchen a place where small hazards add up. A few storage and safety tweaks keep cooking independent and safe.

Check the box if it's already in place. Leave it blank and it becomes your to-do list.

- ☐ Everyday dishes, food, and pots sit between waist and shoulder height
- ☐ A sturdy step stool with a handrail replaces climbing on chairs
- ☐ Non-slip mats sit in front of the sink and stove
- ☐ Spills are wiped up right away
- ☐ The stove has an auto shut-off feature, or a timer is used as a backup
- ☐ A fire extinguisher is within reach, charged, and not expired
- ☐ Sharp knives are stored in a block or guard, not loose in a drawer
- ☐ Cleaning chemicals are stored separately and clearly labeled
- ☐ Good task lighting brightens the counter and stove

PRO TIP

Mark the "off" position on stove knobs with a dab of bright nail polish so it is easy to confirm at a glance.

What needs fixing here — and who will do it:

Bathroom

Why this area matters

More falls happen in the bathroom than almost anywhere else in the home. Wet floors, low toilets, and slippery tubs are the reasons — and they are all fixable. If you upgrade one room first, make it this one.

Check the box if it's already in place. Leave it blank and it becomes your to-do list.

- ☐ Grab bars are installed by the toilet and inside the tub or shower (mounted into studs — not towel bars)
- ☐ A non-slip mat or adhesive strips cover the tub or shower floor
- ☐ A shower chair or transfer bench is available for anyone who tires or is unsteady
- ☐ A handheld showerhead makes washing while seated easier
- ☐ A raised toilet seat, or a toilet with arms, eases sitting and standing
- ☐ The water heater is set to 120°F or lower to prevent scalding
- ☐ A non-slip bath mat with rubber backing sits outside the tub
- ☐ A nightlight lights the path to and inside the bathroom
- ☐ The door can be unlocked from the outside in an emergency
- ☐ Towels, soap, and toiletries are within easy reach — no leaning or stretching
- ☐ The floor is kept dry, with a squeegee or extra towel handy

WATCH OUT

Towel bars and soap dishes are NOT grab bars — they are not built to hold weight. Real grab bars must be anchored into wall studs or solid backing.

What needs fixing here — and who will do it:

Bedroom

Why this area matters

Getting in and out of bed and finding the way to the bathroom at night are the main risks here. Good lighting and a reachable phone make nighttime much safer.

Check the box if it's already in place. Leave it blank and it becomes your to-do list.

- ☐ A lamp and phone are within arm's reach of the bed
- ☐ The bed is a height that makes getting in and out easy (knees roughly level with hips)
- ☐ A clear, lit path runs from the bed to the bathroom
- ☐ A nightlight or motion-sensor light comes on automatically in the dark
- ☐ Loose rugs are removed from around the bed
- ☐ Everyday clothing is stored between knee and shoulder height
- ☐ A list of medicines and emergency contacts is on the nightstand
- ☐ A sturdy chair is available for dressing while seated

PRO TIP

A motion-activated light strip under the bed lights the floor the moment feet touch down — perfect for midnight trips.

What needs fixing here — and who will do it:

Hallways & Stairs

Why this area matters

Stairs are one of the most dangerous spots in any home, and dim hallways hide tripping hazards. Handrails and bright, even lighting prevent most stair falls.

Check the box if it's already in place. Leave it blank and it becomes your to-do list.

- ☐ Sturdy handrails run the full length of BOTH sides of every staircase
- ☐ Stairs are clear of clutter, shoes, baskets, and stored items
- ☐ Bright lighting covers the top and bottom of every staircase
- ☐ Light switches are placed at both the top and bottom of the stairs
- ☐ Step edges are marked with bright, non-slip tape if they are hard to see
- ☐ Carpet on stairs is firmly attached with no loose or worn edges
- ☐ Hallways stay clear and well lit day and night

WATCH OUT

A handrail on only one side is not enough. Falls often happen coming down, when the stronger hand may be on the wrong side.

What needs fixing here — and who will do it:

Laundry Room

Why this area matters

Laundry means carrying loads, bending into machines, and working on hard, sometimes damp floors. A few changes reduce strain and slips.

Check the box if it's already in place. Leave it blank and it becomes your to-do list.

- ☐ The path to the laundry area is clear, lit, and step-free where possible
- ☐ Front-loading machines or raised pedestals reduce deep bending
- ☐ Detergent and supplies sit at waist height, within easy reach
- ☐ A stable chair or stool is nearby for folding while seated
- ☐ The floor stays dry, with a non-slip mat in front of the machines
- ☐ A rolling cart or basket avoids carrying heavy loads
- ☐ Good lighting brightens the whole space

PRO TIP

Splitting laundry into smaller, lighter loads is easier on the back and safer to carry than one heavy basket.

What needs fixing here — and who will do it:

Part 2 • Outside the Home

Outdoor spaces are easy to overlook — but uneven ground, single steps, weather, and pool decks cause serious falls. Give the porch, patio, yard, pool, and garage the same care as any room inside.

Front Porch & Walkway

Why this area matters

The walk from the car or street to the door crosses uneven ground, steps, and weather. Good footing and lighting here prevent falls before your loved one even gets inside.

Check the box if it's already in place. Leave it blank and it becomes your to-do list.

- ☐ Walkways are even, with no cracks, heaving, or loose pavers
- ☐ Steps have sturdy handrails on both sides
- ☐ Outdoor lighting turns on automatically at dusk or by motion
- ☐ Step edges are visible, marked with contrasting paint or tape if needed
- ☐ The porch surface is slip-resistant, even when wet
- ☐ Leaves, snow, ice, and debris are cleared promptly
- ☐ House numbers are large and visible for emergency responders
- ☐ A covered area shelters the door so it stays dry

PRO TIP

Solar-powered stake lights along the walkway are cheap, need no wiring, and dramatically improve nighttime footing.

What needs fixing here — and who will do it:

Patio & Deck

Why this area matters

Patios and decks bring the outdoors within reach, but uneven boards, single steps, and weathered surfaces create hidden hazards. Keeping them level and slip-resistant makes outdoor time safe.

Check the box if it's already in place. Leave it blank and it becomes your to-do list.

- ☐ The surface is even, with no raised boards, cracks, or gaps
- ☐ Any step up or down is clearly marked and has a handrail
- ☐ Railings are secure and at a safe height
- ☐ Outdoor furniture is sturdy and easy to get out of
- ☐ The surface resists slipping when wet
- ☐ Moss, algae, and leaves are cleaned off regularly
- ☐ A shaded spot protects from heat and sun
- ☐ Lighting extends to the patio for evening use

WATCH OUT

A single, unexpected step between the house and patio is a classic trip point. Mark it clearly or add a small ramp.

What needs fixing here — and who will do it:

Backyard & Garden

Why this area matters

Gardening and time outdoors are wonderful for older adults, but uneven lawns, hoses, and tools can trip. Thoughtful design keeps the yard enjoyable and safe.

Check the box if it's already in place. Leave it blank and it becomes your to-do list.

- ☐ Paths are firm, level, and wide enough for a walker if needed
- ☐ Hoses, tools, and equipment are stored off walking paths
- ☐ Raised garden beds reduce deep bending and kneeling
- ☐ A sturdy garden bench or seat offers a place to rest
- ☐ The ground is even, with holes and roots filled or marked
- ☐ Gates and latches are easy to open with one hand
- ☐ Outdoor faucets are easy to reach and turn
- ☐ Shady rest spots and water are available to prevent overheating

PRO TIP

Raised beds and vertical planters let someone keep gardening without getting down to ground level — and back up again.

What needs fixing here — and who will do it:

Pool Area

Why this area matters

A pool adds real risk — slippery decks, drowning hazards, and hard falls. If there is a pool, extra safeguards protect older adults and any visiting grandchildren.

Check the box if it's already in place. Leave it blank and it becomes your to-do list.

- ☐ The pool deck is slip-resistant and kept clear of standing water
- ☐ Sturdy handrails and steps make entering and exiting the water safe
- ☐ A fence with a self-latching, self-closing gate surrounds the pool
- ☐ Life rings or reaching poles are within easy reach
- ☐ The area is well lit for evening use
- ☐ Pool covers are secure, and fully removed before anyone swims
- ☐ A phone is kept poolside to call for help
- ☐ No one swims alone — a buddy or check-in system is in place

WATCH OUT

Wet pool decks are extremely slippery. Non-slip coatings or textured mats around the edge prevent hard falls.

What needs fixing here — and who will do it:

Garage

Why this area matters

Garages combine hard floors, clutter, tools, and cars — plus the ever-present risk of carbon monoxide. A tidy, well-lit garage with a working alarm keeps this busy space safe.

Check the box if it's already in place. Leave it blank and it becomes your to-do list.

- ☐ A clear, level path leads from the car to the house door
- ☐ The floor is free of oil, clutter, cords, and items underfoot
- ☐ A carbon monoxide alarm is installed and tested regularly
- ☐ The car is never left running with the garage door closed
- ☐ Bright lighting covers the whole garage, including corners
- ☐ Frequently used items are stored at waist height, not high or low
- ☐ A sturdy step stool with a handrail replaces climbing or overreaching
- ☐ The step from the garage into the house has a handrail or grab bar
- ☐ The automatic garage door has a working safety-reverse feature

WATCH OUT

Never run a car, generator, or grill in a closed garage. Carbon monoxide is invisible, odorless, and deadly — a working CO alarm is essential.

What needs fixing here — and who will do it:

Part 3 • Whole-Home Emergency Readiness

Why this area matters

When something goes wrong, the difference between a scare and a tragedy is often how fast help arrives. These basics apply to every room in the house.

- ☐ Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms work and are tested monthly
- ☐ Fresh batteries are installed at least once a year
- ☐ A medical alert device or reachable phone gives an easy way to call for help
- ☐ Emergency numbers are posted where they are easy to find
- ☐ A current list of medicines, doses, allergies, and doctors is accessible
- ☐ Interior doors can be unlocked from the outside
- ☐ Flashlights are in every main room in case of a power outage
- ☐ A trusted person checks in on a regular schedule
- ☐ Exit paths are clear in case of fire
- ☐ The house number is visible from the street for responders

PRO TIP

Program “ICE” (In Case of Emergency) contacts into the cell phone, and post the same list on the fridge — the first place responders look.

Your Home Safety Action Plan

You do not have to fix everything at once. Start with the changes that remove the biggest risks — usually bathroom grab bars, better lighting, loose rugs, and stair handrails. List your top priorities below, then work down the list at your own pace.

Priority	Room / Area	What needs fixing	Est. cost	By when

HOW TO PRIORITIZE

Mark each row N, S, or L: N = fix now (a real hazard), S = do soon, L = plan for later. Tackle every N first. Many N's — rugs, nightlights, cord management — cost little or nothing.

When to Call a Professional

Most items in this workbook are do-it-yourself. But some situations call for trained help — especially after a fall, a hospital stay, a new diagnosis, or when bigger changes like ramps, walk-in showers, or widened doorways are needed. Here is who does what:

Occupational Therapist (OT)	Assesses your loved one and the home together, then recommends specific changes for daily safety. Often covered by insurance when a doctor orders it.
Physical Therapist (PT)	Builds the strength and balance that reduce falls in the first place.
Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (CAPS)	A contractor trained specifically in safe, accessible home modifications — grab bars, ramps, curbless showers, and more.
Home-modification contractor / handyman	Installs grab bars into studs, adds railings and ramps, improves lighting, and handles the hands-on work safely.
Medical alert company	Provides a 24/7 help button — wearable or in-home — so help is one press away.
Area Agency on Aging	Your local hub for free or low-cost guidance, referrals, and sometimes funding for home safety changes.

Find trusted specialists near you

The Aging in Place Hub connects families with vetted aging-in-place professionals — occupational therapists, CAPS contractors, and home-safety specialists who do this work every day. Start your search at theaginginplacehub.com.

Notes

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