

PHOTO MENU PLAN



For people who can use pictures and photos to help them to understand.

Most of us look forward to mealtimes. When we were young, getting home after school, one of the first questions we would ask was “What’s for dinner?” Even as we get older, one of the things we like to know when we get in from work is “What is on the menu tonight?” Most of us like to know what we will be eating some time before our mealtime, and we often develop a routine of having the same or similar meals on particular days, for example, fish and chips on a Friday night, ‘take away’ on Saturday, a roast on Sunday.

If we are involved in cooking, we usually have to think about meals well in advance. We have to plan and check what ingredients we have in the house and what items need to be put on the shopping list.

What is a Photo Menu Plan?

A Photo Menu Plan is when a photograph or picture is used to represent a meal. The same idea is used in Japanese or Korean restaurants where there are photograph menus or mock fibreglass meals for us to choose from.

Some modified cookbooks are based on photographs or line drawings of the ingredients, showing the steps involved in making the meal and the finished product.

Why use a Photo Menu Plan?

When a number of people live together, there is often much discussion around mealtimes. Different people like different foods and there may be dietary considerations, for example, low fat diets, vegetarian meals, high fibre diets, food allergies etc. Planning a weekly menu becomes an important event. This is particularly true for people who can recognise pictures but have literacy or communication difficulties. They need a way to let others know what they would like to eat and a way to be involved in the planning of meals.

Who benefits from a Photo Menu Plan?

People who recognise pictures and photographs and who want to be involved in the planning, shopping and cooking process.

How to make a Photo Menu

1. Find a range of recipes, for example, a modified cook book
2. Decide how to represent the meals outlined in the book, for example, digital photographs, commercially available photographs (found in the cook books), magazine pictures. This will take some planning as all potential meals will need to have a picture to go with them. It also helps to attach a word label to the photograph so that new people know what the menu item is.
3. Decide where the weekly menu will be displayed, and how and where the individual menu items will be stored.
4. Decide who will be responsible for updating the photo menu plan.

How to introduce a Photo Menu Plan

1. Hold a meeting (with residents and support workers) to discuss house issues including menu plans. This may also include discussion of new menu items, shopping needs, duty rosters and household news.
2. Decide how people will choose the weekly menu. People may take turns in choosing the meal or residents might vote for their preferred meal.
(Remember that people become bored with the same limited range of menu items. It is important to introduce new menu items from time to time. People will need to be shown the new menu item and the associated photograph.)

Photo menu plan - The days of the week were listed across the top of the display board. The days were represented using line drawings and word labels. Photographs to represent the evening meal and deserts were listed below each day.

Storage

Ideally, the photographs representing the menu items should be stored near to the menu chart so that changes can be made easily. It may be possible to use "Blue tack" or Velcro strips to stick the individual items to the menu display.

How to adapt Photo Menu Plans for different communication levels.

People whose communication is at an unintentional or informal level

- Will indicate food preferences by their reactions to the actual meal through their facial expression, actions and body language.
- Are not able to recognise photos however the use of real objects might help.

People whose communication is at a symbolic (basic) level

- May only recognise a few photos and will need support to make an informed choice.
- Should be offered a choice of only two pictures or photographs at a time.

People whose communication is at an symbolic (established) level

- Can recognise many photos.
- Will learn to associate the photograph menu with particular meals.
- Will be able to use photographs to indicate their menu preferences