

What Does It Mean To Be Capable?

Capability is personal. What you need depends on how you want to live. It can include using tools, adapting a movement, or accepting support while maintaining choice and independence.

Capability = Independence

Physical capability is the ability to move through daily life with confidence, handle what needs doing, and participate in what you want to do.

The practical question is: **“What do I want to keep doing—and what abilities will help me keep doing it?”**

Physically capable means having the strength, endurance, mobility, balance, and power to do the things that matter to you.

How Do We Lose Capability? What’s Happening?

We lose physical capability when the demands of life exceed the abilities we’ve maintained. That can happen gradually through reduced movement, or suddenly through illness or injury.

Several things contribute:

- **Doing less.** When we stop lifting, walking, reaching, balancing, or getting onto the floor, we give our bodies fewer opportunities to maintain those abilities.
- **Changes with age.** Strength, power, endurance, and balance can decline. Regular activity can help preserve them, though it cannot prevent every change.
- **Illness, injury, and pain.** These can limit movement and make rebuilding capability harder.
- **Inadequate nourishment and recovery.** Our bodies need enough food, protein, sleep, and recovery to maintain and rebuild capacity.
- **Fear and lost confidence.** Avoiding an activity can mean less practice, which can make it feel even harder when we try again.

A common cycle is: **something becomes difficult → we do it less → our capacity decreases → it becomes more difficult.**

That’s why small changes deserve attention: needing more effort to climb stairs, struggling with groceries, or avoiding the floor.

Losing capability isn’t a personal failure. But noticing a change gives us an opportunity to respond—through practice, adaptation, rehabilitation, or support.

Keep giving your body a reason—and an opportunity—to remain capable.

Your muscles pay attention to what you ask them to do.

When you challenge them regularly—lifting, carrying, pushing, pulling—they respond. With enough challenge and time to recover, they adapt to become stronger.

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When you consistently ask less of them, they receive a different message: “You don’t need this much strength.” Over time, unused capacity begins to fade.

Your muscles don’t literally think, but they do respond to demand. What you repeatedly ask them to do helps determine what they remain capable of doing.

Give them a reason to stay strong.

The Capability Five

Five everyday movements. One purposeful sequence.

Purpose: Practice the strength, coordination, and control used to sit down, lift things, push, pull, and carry. **This is a suggested teaching sequence; learn each movement individually before combining them.**

Equipment: Two light dumbbells, a sturdy chair for squat practice, and a clear walking space.

1. Warm up — 3–5 minutes

Light stretching, then practice a few chair squats, unweighted hip hinges, and gentle arm movements.

2. The five capability movements.

Movement	Practice	Teaching cue	Everyday connection
Squat	Lower toward a chair, then stand.	“Sit back and down. Push through your feet.”	Getting out of a chair.
Hinge	Soften your knees and move your hips backward.	“Hips back. Keep your back neutral.”	Bending to lift something.
Pull	From the hinge, row dumbbells toward your lower ribs.	“Elbows back. Lower slowly.”	Pulling something toward you.
Push	Press dumbbells from shoulder height overhead.	“Reach up without leaning back.”	Placing something on a shelf.
Carry	Walk with dumbbells at your sides.	“Stand tall. Take steady steps.”	Carrying groceries or camping gear.

Practice 3 repetitions of each exercise separately, followed by a short carry.

3. Connect the sequence — 5–10 minutes

Begin standing with the dumbbells at your sides:

1. **Squat:** Bend your knees and hips, lowering to a comfortable depth with the weights beside your legs. Stand tall.
2. **Hinge:** Soften your knees and push your hips back, letting the weights travel close to your thighs. Keep your back neutral.

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3. **Pull:** Hold the hinged position and row the dumbbells toward your lower ribs, pause, lower the weight, then stand tall.
4. **Transition:** Curl the weights to shoulder height.
5. **Push:** Press the weight overhead through a comfortable, pain-free range without leaning backward. Lower to your shoulders, then your sides.
6. **Carry:** Walk 10–20 controlled steps with the weights at your sides. Stop before beginning the next round.

One complete sequence equals one round. Pause between movements as needed; the curl simply positions the weights for the press.

4. Starting practice dose

- Begin with **2–3 rounds**, resting 15–30 seconds between rounds.
- Practice **twice weekly on nonconsecutive days**.
- Use weights that make the press comfortable and controlled.
- Finish while you still have enough strength to maintain good technique.

Start light, breathe throughout, and exhale during the lifting effort. Stop any movement that causes pain.

5. Adapt and progress

Progress from **3 rounds to 4–5 rounds** as control improves. Then increase either the carry distance or the weight slightly—one change at a time. Because the press limits the shared weight, this sequence may be more useful for movement practice than for challenging leg strength.

“Move with control. Build capability. Keep yourself ready for the life you want to live.”

Everyday Movements

Squat - Getting out of a chair.

Hinge - Bending to lift something.

Pull - Pulling something toward you.

Push - Placing something on a shelf

Carry - Carrying groceries or camping gear.