

The First 30 Days

Gluten-Free

Your Practical Action Plan for Making It Stick



A Note Before You Begin

Nobody picks up a workbook like this because things are going well. You're probably here because a doctor told you to cut out gluten, or because you finally connected the dots yourself after months of feeling terrible and not knowing why. Maybe it's both.

Whatever got you here, there's a good chance you're feeling two things at once right now: **some relief that you have an answer**, and a quiet **panic about what that actually means for your life**. That's a completely reasonable place to be.

Going gluten-free sounds simple enough until you realise how much of your daily routine involves bread, pasta, sauces, and a dozen other things you've never had to think twice about. The learning curve is real, and it can feel steep in the beginning.

This workbook is designed to flatten that curve.

It's not a medical guide. It won't tell you what your diagnosis means or what to discuss with your doctor. What it will do is walk you through the first 30 days in a way that's practical and manageable, without overwhelming you with information all at once.

The workbook is broken into four weeks. Each week has a clear focus, a set of exercises and checklists to work through, and a short reflection section at the end so you can track what's working and what still needs attention. The weeks build on each other, so work through them in order rather than jumping ahead.

Some days this month will go smoothly. Others won't. A slip-up isn't a failure; it's just part of learning something new. The readers who do best with this workbook aren't

the ones who get everything right immediately. They're the ones who keep going even when it gets frustrating.

By the end of week four, you'll have a solid working knowledge of gluten-free eating, a kitchen that's set up for success, and enough real-world practice that this starts to feel like your new normal rather than a constant effort.

Take it one week at a time. You've already done the hard part by starting.

What's Inside

Week One covers clearing your kitchen, learning to read food labels, and stocking the basics.

Week Two is about real life: meal planning, eating out for the first time, and handling social situations.

Week Three goes deeper: dealing with slip-ups, finding hidden gluten sources, and building a routine that actually holds.

Week Four is about stepping back: reviewing your progress, troubleshooting any ongoing problems, and planning what comes next.

Throughout the workbook you'll find checklists to tick off, fill-in sections for your own notes and meal ideas, and reflection prompts at the end of each week.

Print it out if you can. There's something genuinely useful about writing things down by hand, and physically checking a box feels better than clicking one. If you're working through it digitally, that works too.

A quick note on language: this workbook uses the term **"gluten-free"** to mean avoiding wheat, barley, rye, and related grains. If you have coeliac disease specifically, cross-contamination matters significantly more than it does for a general intolerance, and a few sections will flag that distinction for you.

When in doubt about anything medical, check with your doctor or a registered dietitian who specialises in coeliac disease or gluten-related conditions.

Clear the Kitchen, Learn the Labels, Stock the Basics

Setting yourself up before you do anything else

Before you can eat gluten-free with any confidence, you need to know what gluten actually is and where it's currently sitting in your home. That's the whole job this week. You'll go through your kitchen, work out what stays and what needs to go, get comfortable reading a food label, and put together a simple list of safe staples to keep on hand.

It might feel like a lot. Do it anyway. Getting your kitchen sorted in week one means every week after this gets easier. Don't try to overhaul your entire diet at once. This week is just about getting clear on your environment and making the changes that matter most right now.

What Is Gluten, and Where Is It Hiding?

Gluten is a protein found in three grains: wheat, barley, and rye. It gives bread its chewy texture and dough its elasticity. It also turns up in products you'd never think to question, like soy sauce, malt vinegar, certain spice blends, and even some medications.

Common sources of gluten in a typical kitchen:

Bread, wraps, bagels, rolls, and most baked goods
Pasta and egg noodles (unless labelled otherwise)
Most breakfast cereals (many contain wheat or barley malt)
Crackers, pretzels, and breadsticks
Soy sauce, teriyaki sauce, and most bottled marinades
Beer and ale
Plain flour, breadcrumbs, batter mixes, and seasoned coatings
Gravies, packet soups, and jarred sauces thickened with wheat flour
Some spice blends, seasoning packets, and flavoured crisps

Foods that are naturally gluten-free include fresh and frozen meat, poultry, fish, eggs, plain dairy, all fruits, all vegetables, rice, potatoes, legumes, nuts, seeds, and most plain oils and fats. These are your foundation.

A note on oats: Oats are naturally gluten-free but are very commonly contaminated during growing and processing when they share equipment with wheat. If you want to include oats, look specifically for **certified gluten-free oats** or **purity protocol oats** on the label. Regular oats are not safe.

EXERCISE 1

The Kitchen Audit

Set aside 30 to 60 minutes for this. Go through every cupboard, shelf, the fridge, and the freezer. Pick up each packaged item and ask one question: does this contain wheat, barley, rye, or malt?

Sort everything into three groups:

Safe - naturally gluten-free, or clearly labelled certified gluten-free

Contains gluten - needs to be removed or stored separately

Not sure - needs a closer label check (use Exercise 2 to help)

For items that contain gluten: give them to a friend, donate to a food bank, move them to a labelled separate shelf if others still eat gluten in your home, or throw them away if opened and cross-contamination is a concern.

Kitchen Audit Tracker

Item	Location	Keep / Remove / Check

Notes from the audit:

If you share a kitchen: You don't need to clear the whole kitchen, but cross-contamination is a real issue and a few simple changes make a big difference.

- Get your own toaster. Crumbs collect inside and can't be properly cleaned out.
- Use separate butter, jam, and condiment jars. A shared knife transfers crumbs directly into the jar.
- Have your own chopping board, colander, and wooden spoons. Wood is porous and can't be fully cleaned.
- Store your gluten-free items on a labelled, separate shelf, ideally above anything containing gluten.

What do I need to replace or label as mine only?

EXERCISE 2

Learning to Read a Food Label

This is one of the most important skills you'll build this month, and it gets faster with practice. Most countries require wheat to be clearly declared on packaging. Barley and rye are less consistently highlighted, so it pays to know every name gluten can travel under.

Names that mean gluten

Wheat, durum wheat, spelt	Kamut, einkorn, emmer, farro
Semolina, wheat starch, wheat germ	Wheat bran, wheat flour
Barley, barley malt, malt extract	Malt vinegar
Rye, rye flour	Triticale (a wheat-rye hybrid)
Bulgur, couscous (forms of wheat)	Hydrolysed wheat protein
Modified wheat starch	Brewer's yeast

Terms that need a second look

"May contain traces of wheat" - a cross-contamination warning. How cautious you need to be depends on your sensitivity level.

"Starch" - fine if from corn, potato, or tapioca. Not fine if the source is unspecified or is wheat.

"Natural flavours" - usually safe, but occasionally derived from gluten-containing grains. If unsure, contact the manufacturer.

"Oats" - only safe if the label specifically says certified gluten-free or purity protocol.

Your label-reading checklist

- ☐ Check the ingredients list first. Scan for wheat, barley, rye, and malt.
- ☐ Check the allergen statement (usually bold or listed after "Contains:")
- ☐ Look for a certified gluten-free logo (US: GFFS or NFCA; UK/EU: Crossed Grain symbol)
- ☐ Check for any "may contain" warnings
- ☐ When in doubt, don't eat it, or contact the manufacturer directly

Label reading practice - grab 10 items and fill this in

[illegible]

What surprised you?

EXERCISE 3

Stocking the Basics

You don't need to buy 40 new products this week. A small, well-chosen set of staples will carry you through most of the first month. Build your shopping trips around naturally gluten-free whole foods first, then fill in the gaps with a few packaged alternatives where you actually need them.

Naturally gluten-free staples to keep on hand

Category	What to Keep on Hand
Grains & Starches	White rice, brown rice, potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn, polenta, quinoa, certified GF oats, rice noodles
Protein	Fresh or frozen meat, poultry, fish (plain, not pre-marinated or breaded), eggs, canned legumes, plain tofu
Produce	All fresh vegetables and fruit; plain frozen vegetables with no sauces or coatings
Dairy	Plain milk, butter, cream, plain yoghurt, most cheeses (flavoured varieties need a label check)
Fats & Flavour	Olive oil, coconut oil, apple cider vinegar, balsamic vinegar (not malt vinegar), plain herbs and spices, tamari, salt and pepper

Useful gluten-free swaps

Instead of...	Try...
Regular pasta	Rice pasta, corn pasta, chickpea pasta, lentil pasta
Regular bread	Canyon Bakehouse, Schar, Udi's, or a certified GF local brand

Soy sauce	Tamari (San-J, Kikkoman GF, La Choy)
Regular crackers	Rice cakes, Simple Mills, Mary's Gone Crackers
Flour for baking	Bob's Red Mill 1-to-1 GF Flour, King Arthur Measure for Measure
Regular oats	Bob's Red Mill GF Oats, GF Harvest, Purely Elizabeth
Breadcrumbs	Crushed rice crackers, certified GF breadcrumbs
Regular beer	Glutenberg, Ground Breaker (fully GF-brewed options)

My Week 1 shopping list

Week 1 Checklist

Work through these before the end of the week and tick each one off as you go.

Kitchen Setup

☐ Completed the kitchen audit
☐ Removed or separated gluten-containing items
☐ Identified cross-contamination risks in my kitchen
☐ Got a separate toaster if needed
☐ Set up my own shelf or section in the kitchen

Label Reading

☐ Practised reading labels on at least 10 products
☐ Learned the key names gluten hides under on ingredient lists
☐ Found at least one product I assumed was safe that actually contains gluten

Shopping and Stocking

- ☐ Written a gluten-free staples shopping list
- ☐ Done my first proper gluten-free grocery shop
- ☐ Identified at least three meals I can make easily from safe ingredients

Mindset

- ☐ Cut myself some slack. This is day one of something new.
 - ☐ Told at least one person I trust about the change (optional, but it helps)
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Week 1 Reflection

Take 10 minutes at the end of the week to sit with these. Write whatever comes up. There are no wrong answers.

What went well this week?

What was harder than you expected?

Was there a moment where you weren't sure what to eat? What did you do?

One thing I want to do differently next week:

How are you feeling at the end of week one?

☐ Overwhelmed

☐ Getting there

☐ Okay, actually

☐ Feeling good

WEEK TWO | DAYS 8 TO 14

Meal Planning, Eating Out, and Handling Social Situations

Taking gluten-free eating into the real world

Your kitchen is sorted and you've got the basics down. Week two is about taking all of that into real life. Gluten-free eating isn't just about what you cook at home - it's about navigating restaurants, friend dinners, birthday parties, office lunches, and every other food situation that comes at you through an average week.

This week you'll build a simple meal plan so you're not standing in front of the fridge at 6pm wondering what you can eat. You'll also get practical guidance on eating out for the first time and handling social situations that can feel awkward when you're still finding your footing.

EXERCISE 4

Your Simple Meal Planning System

You don't need to plan every meal in detail. You just need a loose structure that stops you from ending up hungry with no safe options. The simplest way to do that is to have a small rotation of meals you can rely on.

The approach: 3 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 3 dinners.

Have three options in each category that you can make without much thought. Rotate them through the week. Add new ones as you find them. That's it. Nine meals total is enough to get through the first month without decision fatigue.

Lunch is often the easiest to sort out once you have dinner handled - leftovers from the night before are your best friend. Cook a little extra at dinner, and lunch is done.

Starter ideas if you need inspiration

Meal	Ideas
Breakfast	Scrambled eggs with veggies & GF toast / Plain yoghurt with fruit & certified GF granola / Smoothie with fruit, spinach, & GF oats / Rice cakes with nut butter & banana / GF overnight oats with berries
Lunch	Leftovers from last night's dinner / Rice bowl with canned beans, avocado, and salsa / Baked potato with tuna and a green salad / Corn tortilla tacos with beans and cheese / Salad with grilled chicken, olive oil, and lemon
Dinner	Stir-fry with rice, vegetables, protein, and tamari / Grilled salmon with roasted sweet potato and greens / Chicken thighs with potatoes and roasted vegetables / Chilli with rice (made from scratch) / GF pasta with homemade tomato sauce

My 3-3-3 meal rotation

Meal	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Breakfast			
Lunch			

Dinner			
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Weekly meal planner

Day	Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

What do I need to prep ahead this week?

(e.g. cook a batch of rice, boil eggs, chop vegetables)

EXERCISE 5

Eating Out for the First Time

Eating out is one of the more stressful parts of going gluten-free in the beginning. With a bit of preparation though, it gets much easier - and most restaurants are far more aware of gluten-free needs than they were even a few years ago.

Before you go

- ☐ Look up the restaurant's menu online in advance. Most now list allergen information on their website or app.
- ☐ Call ahead if you're unsure. A quick call during off-peak hours gives the kitchen time to prepare.
- ☐ Look for naturally gluten-friendly options: Mexican (corn tortillas, rice, beans), Thai (rice dishes, check sauces), Japanese (sashimi and rice - ask about soy sauce), Indian (many naturally GF dishes - ask about flours used), steakhouses, and

seafood restaurants.

- ☐ Check whether the restaurant has a dedicated GF menu or an allergen guide.

What to say when you get there

You don't need a speech. A simple, clear statement works best:

"I have a gluten intolerance and need to avoid wheat, barley, and rye. Could you help me find something safe on the menu, or let the kitchen know when they prepare my meal?"

If you have coeliac disease specifically, say so. Kitchens take a coeliac diagnosis more seriously than a general intolerance because cross-contamination matters more.

Questions to ask at the table

- ☐ Is this dish prepared with any wheat, barley, or rye?
- ☐ Is the sauce or marinade gluten-free?
- ☐ Is it cooked in shared fryer oil? (A shared fryer used for battered items will contaminate otherwise GF food)
- ☐ Can they use a clean pan and utensils to prepare my meal?
- ☐ Does the salad dressing contain any gluten?
- ☐ Is the soup made with a gluten-free stock or thickener?

Common restaurant landmines

Looks safe...	But often contains gluten because...
French fries	Often cooked in shared fryers with breaded items
Soy sauce on the table	Almost always made with wheat. Ask for tamari.
Caesar salad	Dressing often contains Worcestershire sauce; croutons always contain gluten
Soup	Many soups are thickened with flour or use wheat-based stock
Veggie burgers	Almost always contain wheat or breadcrumbs as a binder
Teriyaki dishes	Teriyaki sauce is typically made with regular soy sauce
Risotto	Occasionally finished with a wheat-based stock

My first eating-out experience

Where did I go?

What did I order?

How did it go?

What would I do differently next time?

EXERCISE 6

Navigating Social Situations

Food is social. It shows up at birthday parties, family dinners, work lunches, and celebrations. Going gluten-free can feel awkward in those moments, especially in the beginning when you're still figuring things out yourself. Most people are more supportive than you expect, and a little preparation goes a long way.

Scenarios and what to do

A friend's dinner party	Tell the host in advance with something like: <i>"I'm eating gluten-free at the moment - please don't go out of your way, I'm happy to bring a dish."</i> Offer to contribute something you know is safe. Eat beforehand if you're worried there won't be options.
A work or office lunch	Keep GF snacks at your desk so you're never in a difficult spot. For catered events, contact the organiser ahead of time. At buffet-style lunches, go first before serving spoons start cross-contaminating dishes.
A family gathering	Be matter-of-fact, not dramatic. <i>"I'm avoiding gluten at the moment"</i> is simpler than a full explanation. Bring your own dish and frame it as a contribution, not a limitation. Have a few short answers ready for questions.
Someone who says "just a little won't hurt"	A calm, firm response works best: <i>"I appreciate it, but I really can't - even small amounts affect me."</i> You don't owe anyone a medical explanation. If they keep pushing, change the subject.

My social situation prep

What social situation am I most nervous about this month?

What can I do to prepare for it?

What will I say if someone questions my choices?

Safe snacks to always have on hand

Keep these in your bag, car, or desk drawer so you're never stuck without options:

- Rice cakes
- Nuts and seeds (plain, unseasoned)
- Single-serve nut butters
- Dried fruit
- Fresh fruit (banana, apple)
- Hard-boiled eggs (prepped at home)
- Kind Bars or Larabars (check labels)
- String cheese or mini babybel
- GF crackers in a small zip-lock bag

My go-to emergency snacks:

Week 2 Checklist

Work through these before the end of the week and tick each one off as you go.

Meal Planning

- ☐ Written my 3-3-3 meal rotation
- ☐ Filled in the weekly meal planner
- ☐ Identified what I need to prep ahead this week

Eating Out

- ☐ Identified 2 to 3 local restaurants I can eat at safely
- ☐ Eaten out at least once, or called ahead to a restaurant
- ☐ Practised asking about gluten when ordering

Social Situations

- ☐ Prepared for at least one social eating situation this week
- ☐ Have a simple response ready when someone questions my diet
- ☐ Stocked my bag or desk with at least one safe snack for emergencies

Mindset

- ☐ Noticed at least one thing that's getting easier compared to week one
 - ☐ Reminded myself that awkward moments are temporary - the routine is forming
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Week 2 Reflection

Take 10 minutes at the end of the week. Write whatever comes up honestly.

What went well this week?

What was the most uncomfortable moment? How did you handle it?

Did you eat out or attend a social event? How did it go?

What's one thing that's getting easier?

How are you feeling at the end of week two?

☐ Still rough	☐ Getting there	☐ Starting to feel normal	☐ Actually doing this
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WEEK THREE | DAYS 15 TO 21

Slip-Ups, Hidden Gluten, and Building Your Routine

Going deeper so the whole thing starts to feel automatic

You've got the basics down. Your kitchen is sorted, you have a meal plan, and you've started navigating restaurants and social situations. That's real progress, and it's worth recognising.

This week is about going a layer deeper. You'll find out where gluten hides beyond the obvious places, including in products you'd never think to check. You'll learn how to handle a slip-up without it derailing you. And you'll start building a routine that doesn't require constant effort - one where gluten-free eating starts to feel like just the way you eat, rather than a project you're managing.

EXERCISE 7

Handling Slip-Ups

You ate something with gluten. Maybe you didn't check a label. Maybe the restaurant wasn't as careful as you'd hoped. Maybe it was someone's birthday cake and you said yes before you thought. It happens to everyone, and it doesn't mean you've failed.

What to do when it happens:

Don't panic	One exposure isn't the end of your progress. Your body will process it. The goal is to minimise repeat exposures, not to achieve a perfect record.
Write it down	Where were you? What did you eat? How did you feel, and for how long? This helps you spot patterns and know where to be more careful next time.
Manage symptoms	Rest, stay hydrated, and eat simply for a day or two - plain rice, cooked vegetables, lean protein. Give your body a chance to settle.
Move on	Once you've noted what happened and recovered, let it go. Guilt doesn't help. The next meal is a fresh start.

My slip-up log

Use this space if you have a slip-up this week. It's not a shame journal - it's a learning tool.

What happened	How I felt / for how long	What I'll do differently

EXERCISE 8

Finding Hidden Gluten Sources

By now you know to check food labels. But gluten doesn't only live in food. There are a handful of non-food products that can be a source of exposure - especially for people with coeliac disease. This exercise is about closing the gaps you might not have thought of yet.

Non-food sources worth checking

Source	What to Know
Medications	Some tablets use wheat starch as a filler or binder. Ask your pharmacist to check the inactive ingredients of any regular medication you take. Most pharmacists can identify GF alternatives.
Vitamins and supplements	Capsules and tablets can contain gluten as a filler. Check labels for wheat starch or look for supplements labelled certified gluten-free.
Lipstick and lip balm	Products applied directly to the lips can be ingested in small amounts. Wheat germ oil & vitamin E derived from wheat are occasionally used. Worth checking if you're highly sensitive.
Communion wafers	Traditional communion wafers are made from wheat. Many churches now offer certified low-gluten or gluten-free alternatives - it's worth speaking to your church or religious leader in advance.
Playdough (for parents)	Standard play dough is made with wheat flour. If you handle it and then touch food or your mouth, it can cause exposure. GF alternatives are available, or you can make your own with rice flour.
Some toothpastes	A very small number of toothpastes contain gluten-derived ingredients. Most major brands are gluten-free, but it's a

	quick check worth making if you're highly sensitive and still experiencing symptoms.
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Sneaky food sources you may have missed

Oat-based products - unless certified GF, oat milk, oat bars, and porridge sachets are not safe

Imitation seafood - crab sticks and imitation crab meat almost always contain wheat starch

Stocks and broths - many contain wheat or barley. Look for certified GF versions or make your own.

Chips and crisps - plain varieties are usually fine; flavoured ones often use wheat-based flavouring or maltodextrin

Pickles and condiments - some pickles, chutneys, and relishes use malt vinegar. Check every label.

Deli meats - sliced meats can contain wheat fillers, and shared slicing machines at deli counters cause cross-contamination

Rice crackers and corn chips - usually safe, but some varieties are made on shared equipment or have flavouring that contains gluten. Check the label every time.

Chocolate and candy - plain dark chocolate is often GF; milk chocolate and flavoured varieties frequently share equipment with gluten-containing products

What hidden sources did I find this week?

EXERCISE 9

Building a Routine That Actually Holds

The goal of this exercise is to take gluten-free eating from something you have to think hard about every day to something that just runs in the background. That shift doesn't happen overnight, but it does happen - and the people who get there fastest are the ones who build simple systems rather than relying on willpower and constant vigilance.

The four habits that make the biggest difference

1. Batch cook once a week

Pick one day - Sunday works well for most people - and cook a large batch of one or two staples: a pot of rice, a tray of roasted vegetables, some cooked chicken or legumes. Having these ready in the fridge means you can assemble a safe meal in minutes on any weeknight without having to think about it.

2. Shop with a rhythm

Once you've found safe versions of your regular products, stick with them. Switching brands unnecessarily means re-checking labels every time. Build a core shopping list of products you trust, and only add new items when you've checked the label properly. Familiarity is your friend here.

3. Always have a safe option within reach

Hunger is when most slip-ups happen. If you're out and running low on energy with no safe food nearby, your decision-making gets easier to override. Keep a snack in your bag every time you leave the house. It doesn't need to be elaborate - a handful of nuts or a piece of fruit is enough to buy you time.

4. Do a quick weekly reset

At the start of each week, take five minutes to think about what's coming up. Any meals out? Any social situations? Any days that are going to be hectic? Planning for those moments in advance is far easier than problem-solving them on the spot.

My trusted go-to products

List the GF products you've found and trust. This becomes your personal shopping reference.

Category	My Trusted Brand or Product
Bread	
Pasta	

Crackers / snacks	
Soy sauce / condiments	
Oats / breakfast	
Stock / broth	
Flour for baking	
Other	

My weekly batch cook plan

What will I prepare ahead each week to make the rest of the week easier?

Eating on the Go Without the Stress

One of the trickiest parts of week three is travel, busy days, and situations where you're away from your own kitchen for long stretches. Here's how to handle them without either going hungry or making poor decisions under pressure.

Situations and strategies

Long travel days	Pack your own food. Airports and motorway service stations have limited GF options. A container of rice and protein, some fruit, and a bag of nuts will keep you safe for most of a day. If you're flying, call ahead to request a gluten-free meal - most airlines offer this with 24 hours' notice.
A full day out	Research one or two safe restaurants near where you're going before you leave. Having a backup plan means you're not scrambling when you're already hungry. Apps like Find Me Gluten Free are useful for locating restaurants with good GF reputations in your area.
Busy workdays	Sunday batch cooking pays off most on your busiest days. If you have cooked rice, roasted vegetables, or pre-portioned protein in the fridge, lunch takes five minutes to assemble. Keep a set of GF snacks at your desk as a backup for days when lunch plans fall apart.
Staying at someone's home	Let your host know ahead of time, keep it simple, and offer to handle your own breakfast. Bring a few of your own safe staples - a loaf of GF bread, your own condiments, some snacks - so you're not entirely dependent on what's available.

Upcoming situations I need to plan for:

Signs that your routine is forming

By the end of week three, you should start noticing some of these. Tick any that feel true for you.

☐ Reading food labels is getting faster and more automatic

☐ I have a set of meals I can make without looking anything up

☐ I feel less anxious about eating at restaurants than I did in week one

☐ I always have at least one safe snack available when I leave the house

☐ I've handled at least one social situation without it being a big deal

☐ I know what to do when a slip-up happens, and I don't spiral about it

Week 3 Checklist

Work through these before the end of the week and tick each one off as you go.

Slip-Ups

- ☐ Read through the slip-up guidance and know what to do if it happens
- ☐ Used the slip-up log if I had an exposure this week
- ☐ Identified what caused it and what I'll do differently

Hidden Gluten

- ☐ Checked my medications and supplements for gluten-containing fillers
- ☐ Identified at least one hidden gluten source I wasn't aware of before
- ☐ Reviewed the sneaky food sources list and checked any relevant items

Building a Routine

- ☐ Filled in my trusted products list
- ☐ Done at least one batch cook session this week
- ☐ Planned ahead for at least one tricky upcoming situation

Mindset

- ☐ Checked off at least one item in the "signs your routine is forming" box
- ☐ Acknowledged how much further along I am compared to day one

Week 3 Reflection

Take 10 minutes at the end of the week. Be honest with yourself - this is where the real learning happens.

What went well this week?

Did you have a slip-up? What happened and what did you learn from it?

What's one thing that feels more automatic than it did in week one?

What's still feeling hard? What's your plan for it going into week four?

How are you feeling at the end of week three?

☐ Still figuring it out	☐ Getting more confident	☐ Starting to feel normal	☐ I've got this
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WEEK FOUR | DAYS 22 TO 30

Review, Troubleshoot, and Plan the Path Forward

Taking stock of where you are and building on it

You've made it to week four. That matters more than it might feel like right now, because getting through the first three weeks of any significant dietary change is genuinely hard. Most people who struggle with going gluten-free don't fail because the diet is too restrictive. They give up because they don't have a system and they run out of energy for constant decision-making. You've been building that system.

This week is about stepping back and taking stock. You'll review how far you've come, troubleshoot anything that's still not working, and put together a clear plan for what comes next - so that when this workbook is done, you're not starting from scratch again. You're continuing from a solid foundation.

EXERCISE 10

Reviewing Your Progress

Before you troubleshoot or plan ahead, it's worth honestly reviewing the last three weeks. Not to grade yourself, but to see what's actually changed - because some of those changes are bigger than you might realise when you're in the middle of them.

Work through these questions one by one. Take your time.

Compared to day one, how confident do you feel about reading food labels?

What's the meal or food situation you handle most easily now that felt difficult at the start?

Have you noticed any changes in how you feel physically? Note them here.

What's the thing you're proudest of from the last three weeks?

My 30-day wins (big and small)

Write down everything that counts as a win, no matter how small it seems.

EXERCISE 11

Troubleshooting Common Problems

Most people hit at least one or two persistent sticking points by week four. Below are the most common ones, along with practical fixes. Read through and flag any that apply to you.

Problem	What's likely happening and what to do
Still feeling symptoms despite eating GF	There's likely a hidden source you haven't found yet. Common culprits: shared cooking equipment at home, cross-contamination at a restaurant you trust, a medication or supplement, or an unlabelled product. Go back through the hidden sources list in week three and look again.

Getting bored with the same meals	This is normal at the four-week mark. Add one new recipe a week rather than trying to overhaul your rotation all at once. Start with cuisines that are naturally GF-friendly: Thai, Indian, Mexican, and Japanese all have rich options that require very few modifications.
Eating out still feels stressful	Find two or three restaurants near home or work that you've eaten at safely and repeat them. Having a small set of trusted restaurants takes most of the stress out of eating out. You can expand from there once the routine is solid.
Social situations are still uncomfortable	This gets easier with time and repetition. The more times you navigate a social eating situation without incident, the less charged it feels. Practice your go-to response for questions until it feels natural. Most people stop asking after the first few times.
GF food is costing too much	Gluten-free packaged alternatives are expensive. Shift your diet further towards naturally GF whole foods - rice, potatoes, legumes, meat, eggs, and produce - and reserve the packaged GF products for occasional use. A meal based on rice and vegetables costs very little.
I'm exhausted by the constant label-checking	This is label fatigue, and it's very common in the first month. It eases significantly once you've settled into a regular set of products you know and trust. Use the trusted products list from week three and stop checking the same items every shop once you're

	confident they're safe.
Family or housemates aren't being supportive	A calm, factual conversation about cross-contamination is worth having. Most resistance comes from not understanding why it matters, not from actual unwillingness to help. If it's an ongoing issue, a brief explanation from your doctor or dietitian can carry more weight than coming from you.

My main sticking points and what I'm going to do about them:

EXERCISE 12

Planning the Path Forward

The first 30 days are about survival and learning. The next phase is about building on what you've learned and making this genuinely sustainable for the long term. This exercise helps you figure out what that looks like for you specifically.

What to focus on in the next 30 days

Expand your meal rotation gradually

Add one new recipe per week. Look for GF versions of meals you used to love before - most can be adapted with a few ingredient swaps. Cookbooks and blogs specifically focused on gluten-free cooking are worth exploring now that you have the foundational knowledge to assess recipes properly.

Keep seeing your doctor or dietitian

If you haven't already, ask for a follow-up appointment to review how the dietary change is going. If you have coeliac disease, your doctor will likely want to monitor your bloodwork over the coming months to check that your gut is healing. Don't skip these appointments - they matter.

Find your community

Connecting with other people who eat gluten-free makes a bigger difference than most people expect. Online communities, local coeliac support groups, and GF-focused social media accounts are all good starting points. People who've been doing this for years have hard-won practical knowledge that's genuinely useful.

Stop treating this as temporary

This is perhaps the most important shift of all. People who do best long-term are the ones who stop thinking of gluten-free eating as a restriction and start thinking of it as simply how they eat. That mental shift takes time, but actively choosing to frame it that way - rather than waiting for the feeling to arrive on its own - speeds it up considerably.

My next 30-day focus areas

What are the two or three things you most want to work on in the month ahead?

New recipes I want to try in the next month

Restaurants or cuisines I want to explore next

Your Gluten-Free Life, Going Forward

Before you close this workbook, here are a few reminders worth holding onto.

Label reading never fully stops, but it gets much faster.

Once you've built up a trusted set of products, most of your regular shopping requires very little checking. New products still need a label check, and it's worth re-checking familiar ones occasionally since manufacturers do change formulations. But the daily cognitive load drops significantly after the first couple of months.

Travelling gluten-free is very doable with a bit of planning.

Research restaurants at your destination before you go. Learn a few key phrases in the local language if you're going abroad - "I cannot eat gluten, wheat, barley, or rye" is worth knowing in the language of any country you visit. Many countries have strong coeliac support organisations with local restaurant guides.

The social awkwardness fades.

The people in your life will adjust. The ones who see you regularly will stop asking questions because your dietary needs will just become part of how they know you. New people will follow your lead - if you're matter-of-fact about it, they will be too.

Slip-ups will happen occasionally, and that's okay.

Even people who have been eating gluten-free for years have occasional slip-ups. What changes is how quickly you identify the source, how calmly you manage it, and how little it disrupts your overall progress. The skill is in the recovery, not in achieving a perfect record.

Stay connected to your medical team.

This workbook is a practical guide, not a substitute for professional medical advice. If you have coeliac disease, regular follow-ups are important. If symptoms persist despite eating strictly gluten-free, that's a conversation to have with your doctor rather than something to troubleshoot alone.

Useful resources to explore

Coeliac UK - coeliac.org.uk - detailed food and travel guidance, restaurant directory, and medical information for those in the UK

Celiac Disease Foundation (US) - celiac.org - research updates, dietitian directory, and a recipe database

Beyond Celiac (US) - beyondceliac.org - practical guides for newly diagnosed individuals and families

Find Me Gluten Free - app and website - crowd-sourced restaurant reviews from GF eaters, searchable by location

Gluten Free Watchdog - glutenfreewatchdog.org - independent testing of GF-labelled products; useful if you want to go deeper on product safety

People or resources I want to connect with:

Week 4 Checklist

Your final week. Tick these off as you go.

Progress Review

- ☐ Completed the progress review questions honestly
- ☐ Written down my 30-day wins
- ☐ Noted any physical changes I've noticed over the month

Troubleshooting

- ☐ Identified my main sticking points and written a plan for each
- ☐ Addressed any ongoing symptoms by checking for remaining hidden sources
- ☐ Made a plan to manage anything that still feels difficult

Planning Ahead

- ☐ Written my next 30-day focus areas
- ☐ Listed new recipes and restaurants I want to try

☐ Booked or planned a follow-up with my doctor or dietitian

Mindset

☐ Read through "Your Gluten-Free Life, Going Forward"

☐ Acknowledged that 30 days in, I have more knowledge and skill than I did on day one

☐ Decided to keep going

Your 30-Day Final Reflection

This is your last reflection in the workbook. Give it the time it deserves.

What's the single biggest thing that's changed for you over the last 30 days?

What do you wish you'd known on day one?

What does your gluten-free life look like right now, in one honest paragraph?

What's one piece of advice you'd give to someone starting day one?

How are you feeling as you finish this workbook?

☐ Still finding my feet	☐ More confident than I expected	☐ Ready for what comes next
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You Made It Through the First 30 Days.

That's not a small thing.

When you opened this workbook, you were probably somewhere between confused and overwhelmed. You had a dietary restriction you hadn't asked for, a long list of things you couldn't eat, and no clear sense of how to make it work in your actual life.

Look at where you are now. You know how to read a label. You know what gluten is and where it hides. Your kitchen is sorted. You have a set of meals you can make without thinking twice. You've eaten out, handled social situations, dealt with at least one awkward conversation, and kept going through all of it.

That's a lot. And most of it happened simply because you showed up and worked through it one week at a time.

Going gluten-free doesn't have a finish line. There's no point at which you've fully arrived and the work is done. But there is a point - and you're approaching it - where it stops feeling like something you're managing and starts feeling like just your life. That shift is closer than it probably feels right now.

A Few Things Worth Holding Onto

Progress is rarely linear.

Some weeks will feel easier than others. A difficult stretch doesn't mean you're going backwards - it usually just means something in your life got more complicated. Come back to the basics, use the tools in this workbook, and keep going.

This workbook is a reference, not a one-time read.

Come back to it. The label-reading guide, the restaurant checklist, the troubleshooting table, and the social situation strategies are all worth revisiting whenever a new challenge comes up. You've built a resource here, not just completed an exercise.

Ask for help when you need it.

Your doctor, a registered dietitian who specialises in coeliac disease or gluten-related conditions, and the broader gluten-free community are all there for you. You don't have to figure everything out on your own.

Give yourself credit along the way.

It's easy to focus on what's still hard. Make a habit of noticing what's become easier - because that list is growing every week, even when it doesn't feel that way.

The first 30 days are behind you.

Everything that comes next is built on what you've already done.

A note to myself as I move forward:

Use this space however feels right. A goal, a reminder, a word you want to carry with you.
