

5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Script

Written for therapists, counsellors and school staff who need a script to read aloud.
Six minutes through the five senses with every pause timed — the silences are where the work happens, and most written versions run them far too short.

6 min · 6 segments

01. Arriving

1 min

[they may be activated — your pace sets theirs, so read this slower than feels natural]

We're going to do something very ordinary. I'll ask you to notice five things you can see, then four you can feel, three you can hear, two you can smell and one you can taste. That's the whole exercise.

You don't need to close your eyes. Keep them open — this one works better that way.
[pause for 8 seconds]

There's no right answer to any of it. If you can't find something, say so and we'll move on. *[pause for 10 seconds]*

02. Five things you can see

1 min 30

[the longest section — resist filling the silence, they are working]

Start with what you can see. Name five things — out loud if you can, quietly to yourself if you'd rather. *[pause for 20 seconds]*

One at a time. Not the whole room — one object, then the next. *[pause for 25 seconds]*

If you have your five, go back to the first one and find something about it you missed. A mark, a colour, the way the light sits on it. *[pause for 30 seconds]*

03. Four things you can feel

1 min 15

[contact, not reach — if they start hunting for things to touch, bring them back to what is already there]

Now four things you can feel touching you. Not things you could reach for — things already in contact. *[pause for 20 seconds]*

The chair under your legs. The floor through your shoes. A sleeve on your forearm. The air on the back of your hands. *[pause for 25 seconds]*

Press one foot into the floor a little harder, and notice that it presses back. *[pause for 15 seconds]*

04. Three things you can hear

1 min

[furthest to nearest — the order matters, it widens attention before narrowing it]

Three things you can hear. Start with the furthest away. *[pause for 18 seconds]*

Then something closer. *[pause for 15 seconds]*

Then the closest sound there is — which might be your own breathing. *[pause for 18 seconds]*

05. Two you can smell, one you can taste

45 sec

[often the thinnest answers — 'not much' is a real answer and worth naming as one]

Two things you can smell. This one is harder indoors, and it's fine if the answer is not much. Notice that too. *[pause for 18 seconds]*

And one thing you can taste. Coffee from earlier. Toothpaste. The inside of your own mouth. *[pause for 15 seconds]*

06. Landing

30 sec

[the closing question is the point — it moves them from performing the exercise to reporting on the present moment. Do not skip it.]

Look up. Take one breath a little deeper than the last few. *[pause for 10 seconds]*

Tell me one thing you noticed that you hadn't before we started.

USAGE

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