

Visual Schedules Tip Sheet

What is it?

- A visual schedule is a strategy using objects, pictures, or words to help a person organize and plan activities; make transitions; reduce anxiety; maintain motivation through a task; or convey expectations
- Examples of visual schedules include a day planner, a recipe, or instructions to put something together.

Why should I use it?

Visual schedules provide structure for a person with autism and can decrease the amount of anxiety he or she feels. Schedules also help to teach many skills, including:

- Learning to predict
- Being flexible
- Increasing independence
- Finishing tasks calmly
- Communicating about events
- And others

When should I use it?

- Visual schedules should be used when a person is having difficulty completing a task or transitioning from one activity to another independently and calmly.
- At first, the focus person will be taught how to use the schedule while also going through the activity or transition.
- The goal is for the person to use the schedule independently.

Where can I use it?

- Visual schedules are portable and small enough so that they can be utilized anywhere.
- In fact, taking the schedule to the focus person when it is time to transition or to complete an activity is the best way to teach the use of the schedule.
- After the person is able to use the schedule independently, the schedule can be moved to a central location. The focus person would then be expected to go to the schedule for the information.
- Once the learner is able to go to the schedule, there will need to be a visual cue to let the learner know it is time to use the schedule, such as an index card with an image or word on it that is meaningful for the learner.

How do I teach it?

- Bring the schedule to the learner
- Stand behind the learner when prompting use of a visual schedule
- Place schedule information in the learner's hand
- Using very direct, relevant language, tell the learner where to go or what activity to begin
- Help the learner stay in the area or the activity
- Repeat steps 1-5 until learner is able to motor through the use of the schedule independently
- Be sure to reinforce the use of schedule. Initially, teach the schedule with activities that the learner finds highly enjoyable. Then introduce activities that are neutral. And finally, use the schedule with activities that are highly preferred, neutral, and non-preferred.
- Using beloved characters or objects may help the learner to be more receptive to using the visual schedule

Which Type of visual schedule should I use?



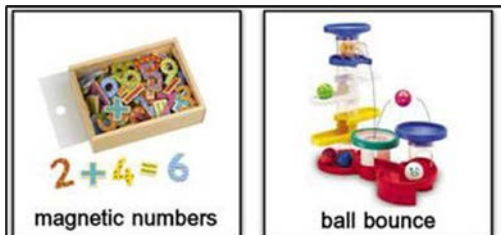
Objects are used when a person cannot match a 2-D representation (picture) to a 3D representation (object).

Always position objects, pictures, or words from left to right -OR- up and down



Some learners with autism can use drawings instead of photographs or objects to represent the task in the schedule.

It is a good idea to pair words with the images to foster reading skills.



Using pictures of the actual objects is helpful for people who can match objects to pictures. When taking pictures to use (or finding pictures on the internet), the objects in the pictures should be on blank surfaces with nothing around them to distract the person with autism.

Morning Routine



Brush your teeth



Wash your face



Comb hair



Get dressed



Make bed

Other learners with autism can use visual schedules that only have words, phrases, or sentences on them. Handwriting a schedule is just as effective as typing one.