

TOPIC: Visual Schedules

A. Description and Purpose:

Visual schedule systems are an easy way to provide students with consistent cues about their daily activities. They provide a structure that allows a student to anticipate what will happen next, reduce anxiety by providing the student with a vision of his/her day and promote calmness between transitions.



B. Equipment Needed:

Items needed in setting up a visual schedule vary depending upon the student's level of understanding. Examples are objects, photos, picture symbols, written words, laminating paper, scissors, Velcro, binder, cardstock or related paper supply, tiles, writing tools, etc.

C. Setting it Up:

1. First, break the day into segments and name each segment. For example, "Put away backpacks and get settled", "Morning Circle Time", "Independent work stations", etc..
2. Decide how the segments will be represented. Will you use objects, photos, picture symbols, tactile symbols or words?
3. Next, decide how the schedule will be presented; on a clipboard or notebook, mounted on the wall, attached to a desk, on the chalkboard, on the door.
4. Determine where the symbols will be placed once an activity is "finished". Make sure you have a clearly identified place to put "finished" symbols.

D. Implementation:

Now that you've made the schedule, it is important to use it consistently, making it part of the child's daily routine. The schedule should be used to preview what is going to happen throughout your child's day and referred back to during each transition. In order for the schedule to be useful it is important to have some way of indicating that an activity has ended. This can be done by either turning the picture over or placing it in a stop or finished pocket. If your child wanders away from an activity, you can also use the schedule to guide the child back.

When you first begin using the schedule, you probably need to perform the steps yourself. This is called modeling. It allows your child to learn how to use the schedule by first watching you. However, as soon as possible your child needs to actively participate in the process. For example, at first you may need to put the schedule together yourself but soon your child might take part by placing each picture on the board as you hand it to them.

E. Teaching Tips:

- Students learn schedule following skills more rapidly if some of the activities in the first schedule are familiar or already mastered.
- Select activities that have clear endings so that the student will know when each task is completed.
- The first schedule should end with a snack or play activity that is especially enjoyable for the student when introducing a visual schedule.

F. References/Resources:

Center for Autism and Related Disabilities, University of Florida / Gainesville.

Hodgdon, L. (1995). *Visual Strategies for Improving Communication: Practical Supports for School and Home*. Troy, MI: Quirk Roberts Publishing.

McClannahan, Lynn E., Ph.D., Krantz, Patricia J., Ph.D. (1999). *Activity Schedules for Children with Autism: Teaching Independent Behavior*. Woodbine House, Inc.

Quill, K. (1995). *Teaching Students with Autism: Strategies to Enhance Communication and Socialization*. New York: Delmar Publishers, Inc.