

HOW TO MAKE A VISUAL SCHEDULE

Types of Schedules

1 || Object Schedules

For most kids who are very concrete thinkers, it's best to use actual objects rather than pictures for the schedule. Try to pick an object that the child will use wherever they are going and give them the same object each time they go to that location.

2 || Photograph Schedules

Some kids are able to understand pictures only if they are photographs of the exact activity or location. Try taking a clear, simple photograph without a lot of distractions in it. You'll know your child is ready to use photographs on a schedule if they can consistently identify real life objects that match to pictures of the same objects.

3 || Drawing or Icon Schedules

These may be the easiest type of picture to find, but they are the hardest to understand! If your child consistently shows that they understand that cartoon pictures or icons represent real items, and can match items to these types of pictures, they may be able to use a symbolic picture schedule.

4 || Schedules With Pictures and Words

For kids who are learning to read but read slowly, guess words incorrectly, or get frustrated trying to make sense of written language, it's best to pair the words with a picture.

5 || Written Schedules

For kids who are strong readers, a written schedule may be a good fit.

How to Use a Visual Schedule

Take the Schedule to a New Location

Many kids get distracted as they move from the schedule to the new location, or simply aren't motivated to go to the place the schedule directs them to. Taking the object or picture with them to the location where they are transitioning may help remind them where they are going.

Move picture to "finished"

Some kids don't need to carry the picture with them but aren't quite ready to use a checklist. For these kids, moving the picture into a "finished" pocket can be meaningful and satisfying.

HOW TO MAKE A VISUAL SCHEDULE (CONTINUED)

Marking or checking off a list

Many kids with written or written/picture schedules can check or mark through items on their list before completing the task. It seems counter-intuitive to many of us, but a great approach is:

- 1) check the schedule
- 2) mark it off
- 3) go to the new location.

How long should the visual schedule be?

Some kids need to see their whole day represented on their schedules, otherwise they may feel stressed or perseverate on questions like, "When are we going swimming?" Others can't process the whole day at once and need a two-part schedule or even one schedule item at a time. No matter what type of schedule you have, you can use any length! It all depends on what works for the child.

How can you work on flexibility?

- 1 || Making easy changes to preferred activities with lots of notice. "Look, this afternoon, we aren't going to do homework because we're going to the park!"
- 2 || Making easy changes to preferred activities with less notice. "Okay I'm going to make a change! Instead of chores we are going to play board games."
- 3 || Eventually move towards making changes to neutral or non-preferred activities with less and less notice. That way when there's a surprise fire drill during recess, your child will be ready.