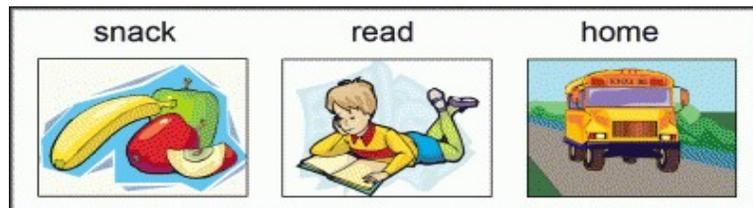


Visual Schedule

Tip Sheet

What is it?

A **visual schedule** is a tool that gives the child information about what is happening, the sequence of events, what changes may be occurring, or when it is time to stop an activity and move on to another. A visual schedule may include objects, pictures, and/or written words.



Why is it Important?

Visual schedules may be used to:

- clarify expectation,
- organize the events of the day,
- provide concrete reminders of what to do,
- promote independence,
- provide structure during unstructured times,
- help make the day more predictable,
- assist with the transitions between activities,
- redirect child back to the current activity, and
- alleviating anxiety and help maintain regulation.



Things to Consider

Prior to introducing this visual, it is important to consider the following:

- Does the child require reminders (prompts) to complete routines independently?
- Does the child already attend to or respond to objects, pictures, or written words?
- Where will the visual schedule be placed? Will the child be able to see the visual clearly at all times, or know where to go to look for upcoming activity?
- Will the visual schedule be presented horizontally or vertically?
- How many objects, pictures, or written words should be on the visual schedule for the child to be successful?
- How will the child track the completion of tasks (e.g., use red-green schedule and move the icon over to the "done" side, will there be a pocket for completed activities, place a checkmark, cross off).

How to Use a Visual Schedule

1. Place the visual schedule in a location that is easy for the child to refer to throughout the day.
2. Prior to starting the first activity or routine on the schedule, review with the child all the upcoming planned activities. Ensure the child is looking (attending) to the visual.
3. Draw attention to any unexpected changes in routine (e.g., surprise visit, unavailable activity). Could use the zig-zag visual for unexpected changes.
4. Refer (point) to the first routine and provide a verbal instruction (e.g., "It's time for circle time"). Provide the verbal instruction and allow the child to process the information. Provide the instruction twice per routine. If the child requires additional support, consider using one of the following strategies:
 - a. point in the direction which the activity or routine is to be completed,
 - b. point or tap at the task materials, or
 - c. use a "check schedule" card to redirect the child to their schedule.
5. Facilitate the completion of the activity or routine by providing assistance as necessary. Assist from behind if support is required.
6. Provide positive reinforcement for following and completing routines independently (e.g., praise, such as "Great job coming to circle" or "Good sitting and painting".)



Tips and Strategies

- When first introducing a visual schedule, start with 2 or 3 routines on the visual schedule.
- Incorporate child's choices into the schedule where appropriate (e.g., allow the child to decide on the order of activities, or ____'s choice).
- Minimize verbal instructions when teaching to use the visual, especially for life skill routines as the child should be as independent as possible.
- Ensure the visuals are easy to add or remove (e.g., use Velcro) so the schedule can be easily modified for changes in routine.
- A visual schedule may be used for the class, or individual child. If the schedule is individualized, promote independence by allowing the child to manipulate the schedule (e.g., after task is completed, remove the icon to signal completion).
- Be consistent with the visuals being used, for example, use the same picture of playdoh on the playdoh bin on the schedule.
- A mini schedule may be required for multiple steps within a given routine.

References

- Hodgdon, L. (1995). *Visual strategies for improving communication: Practical supports for school and home*. Troy, MI: Quirk Roberts Publishing.
- Quill, K. (2000). *Do-watch-listen-say: Social and communication intervention for children with autism*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks Publishing.