



Visual Schedules

A Practical Guide for Parents and Educators

A *visual schedule* presents the abstract concept of time in a concrete form. The schedule communicates when events and activities will take place and what will come next in a clear, stable, and concrete manner. This strategy assists persons with ASD in predicting and planning. As a result of the increase in effective communication, successful implementation of a visual schedule will often decrease challenging behaviors.

The individual may need the schedule posted on the wall or he may need to be able to carry the schedule in a binder with him wherever he goes. The schedule may be arranged left to right or top to bottom and the variety of materials that can be used to create a schedule is endless.

Individual schedules may look very different and be implemented very differently depending upon the person using it. Typically, a cue is necessary to communicate to the individual when it is time to check the schedule. This cue may be an arbitrary object such as a red block or it may be a verbal phrase. When the cue is given, the student should go to the schedule, 'check' what's next, and then proceed to the next activity.

The following is an example of the implementation of a schedule: Joe's schedule is mounted on the wall just inside the classroom door. The schedule is arranged left to right, and the picture symbols are attached with Velcro. Joe's teacher lets him know he needs to check his schedule by saying 'What's next?'. When he arrives at the schedule, he moves the picture symbol farthest to the left to indicate what activity is next and then proceeds to the next work station. When that task is over the teacher says 'what's next', which takes him back to the schedule and the process begins again.

When implementing a visual schedule it is important to:

- Keep the schedule in an easily accessible location.
- Be consistent. Use the schedule during each transition
- Return to 'check' the schedule after completing and before starting an activity
- 'Schedule' any changes in the routine

References:

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