

Visual Schedules

Standard 1.3, Standard 2.1

What is a Visual Schedule?

A [visual schedule](#) is a graphic representation of scheduled tasks and activities. They are very useful for breaking down tasks that have multiple steps and ensuring that children follow daily routines and program guidelines. Visual schedules reduce anxiety through providing consistency while also reducing resistance that comes with certain activities. Although most people associate visual schedules with pictures or photographs, events can be triggered through toys, objects and even word phrases. The visual schedule itself provides a snapshot of expectations that help children understand where they should be, what they should be doing and when scheduled routines such as play time, lunch, brush 'n wash routines etc... should start and end.

The Visual Schedule Process

In order to be effective, educators and parents should first ensure that the child understands the concept of sequenced activities. Visual schedules are often taught through pictures, role play and first-then timeline types of boards. Most educators prefer to mix preferred activities with routines that are less interesting. Physical reminders are usually posted on walls, but they can also be portable by way of a routine outline binder or clipboard. Regardless of the locations, the child should have visual reminders at child level in order to familiarize themselves with routines and stay on track throughout the day. When it is time for a scheduled activity to occur, children are then cued with a brief verbal reminder.

Dealing with Challenging Behaviors

There will inevitably be some natural resistance to certain routines throughout the daily schedule just given individual child preferences, fatigue and/or interests. When challenging behaviors occur, educators should then work to support children through tasks collectively. If difficult behaviors continue, educators may rearrange the schedule with a preferred activity to encourage children through to completing important tasks at hand. For important tasks that may trigger challenge, educators may opt to share the visual schedule as a reminder of preferred routines later in the day. Praise and positive reinforcement for completing routines, tasks and/or successfully transitioning to other activities may also be helpful. Some educators find turning tasks into games and/or using a timer may help children remain focused and transition to new tasks more readily.

How Teachers Organize Visual Schedules

When it comes to visual schedules, educators creatively use everything from color coding to times of day to organize flow of the day predictably. In order to maximize effectiveness, educators individually organize visual schedules based on the learner's preferences and personality. Every morning, the educators will arrange the child's daily schedule with interesting learning materials prior to the child's arrival to support interests. It may be appropriate to empower older children to control and be responsible for their own schedules. For developmentally delayed children, it may be appropriate to physically coach and guide the child through the entire process with helpful prompts.

There are many reasons why visual schedules are popular and helpful. They provide helpful structure predictability, so as to minimize and naturally decrease undesirable behaviors, while assisting children in understanding abstract concepts such as time and new language concepts. Visual schedules also increase communication, organizational skills and decision making skills.



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<https://www.appliedbehavioranalysisprograms.com/faq/what-is-visual-scheduling/>

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