

www.autismhelp.info

Visual schedules

What is a visual schedule?

A schedule is a tool that enables children to keep track of the day's events and activities, as well as develop an understanding of time frames and an appreciation of environmental sequences.

Schedules are an important teaching tool for students with autism because they have:

- *Limited understanding of the concept of time*, ie. knowing what is happening or will happen and then sequencing, predicting and organising the order of events.
- *Difficulty with communication*. This includes difficulty understanding verbal explanations of what will happen at certain times during the day.
- *Rigidity and need for sameness*. Changes can create considerable stress for students with autism. One way to reduce stress and increase opportunities for success is to use schedules.

A visual schedule can increase the child's independence and ability to understand classroom routine. You may find the child becomes less dependent on teaching staff and verbal instructions, along with a reduction in difficult behaviour and repetitive questions.

Types of Visual Schedules

- Yearly diaries
- Term diaries
- Monthly calendars
- Weekly calendars or timetables
- Schedules of one hour, 10 minutes or less
- General daily classroom schedule with activities and individual tasks
- Individual work skill schedule
- Sequence charts / schedule of daily routines

Remember Visuals

A variety of visuals are used in schedules. Remember most students with autism spectrum disorder are visual learners, so where possible use pictures or written words in conjunction with verbal communication.

You can use a computer program such as Boardmaker™ to make your visual schedule or download and print the pictures provided on this site (see links below).

A range of formats can be used. This includes posters, blackboard / whiteboard, diary, strips, small photo albums, business card holders, cardboard strips or books.

Behaviour

Schedules can be the cornerstone of management practices for children with challenging behaviours. Specific behavioural deficits can be managed using schedules. For example, to clarify expectations, set limits, reduce negative teacher attention for undesired behaviour. Schedules can indicate that a preferred activity will follow a non-preferred activity.

Communication

Schedules can be used in a variety of ways to develop language and aid comprehension depending upon the individual student's needs. For students with limited verbal language, schedules can provide an opportunity to interact and communicate.

Mathematics

Schedules are excellent for teaching time, numbers, days of the week, months and year. These are all important life skills.

Social Skills

The playground can be extremely challenging for students with autism; many find this an extremely overwhelming experience. Using a schedule of 'activities to do in the playground' can considerably reduce anxiety. Provide a range of appropriate activities (written word, Compic, photos etc. depending upon student's needs). At first you may need to select the order.

The above text adapted from "Making It A Success" by Sue Larkey
See [Recommended Reading](#) for details.

A great little site that explains the use of visual supports and social stories can be found at www.angelfire.com/ky/touristinfo/index5.html

View [images](#) on this site.

A large range of images can also be found at www.dotolearn.com