

Visual Supports: Visual Schedules

What are visual schedules?

Visual schedules represent upcoming activities through the use of sequenced objects, photos, pictures and/or text. They are a visual support that create structure and establish expectations (Rutherford et al., 2020).

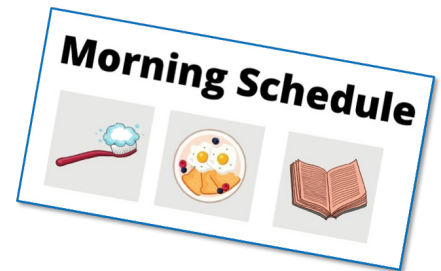
Why use a visual schedule?

They help to show what to expect and make it clear that an activity will end and what comes next.

How do I make a visual schedule?

Select the visual format that best matches the way the person understands information.

- Objects: actual objects or object representations
- Photo: photos of real objects or activities
- Picture symbolic: colored drawings
- Line drawing: black-and-white line drawings
- Text: written words and numbers



Consistently present the schedule in a format that best meets the person's needs.

- Layout: Arrange the schedule horizontally (left to right) or vertically (top to bottom).
- Materials: Use schedule pieces and materials that the individual is able to easily grasp and move.
- Length: Select a length that will be helpful for the person:
 - *Long schedules* show multiple activities at a time and can help the individual plan and prepare.
 - *Short schedules* show a few activities at a time and can help the person not feel overwhelmed or anxious.

Select materials to use based on the format identified.

Visual supports do not have to be expensive! They can be made from things around your house (e.g. magazines, cereal boxes, folders). Make it interactive so the person can remove or check off completed activities.

How do I use a visual schedule?

Arrange the schedule for the person in advance

Break down activities and put them in order they will happen moving left to right or top to bottom.

Display the schedule

Set up the schedule in an area where the person spends most of their day.

Reinforce the use of the visual schedule

Guide the person through the schedule, pointing to the activities as they occur. Praise the person when they use the schedule correctly and when they complete the tasks.

Monitor and adapt

Watch how the person uses the schedule and make adjustments when needed.

Additional resource guides and a full list of references at: <https://www.delawareautismnetwork.org/>

Reference: Rutherford, M., Baxter, J., Grayson, Z., Johnston, L., & O'Hare, A. (2020). Visual supports at home and in the community for individuals with autism spectrum disorders: A scoping review. *Autism: The International Journal of Research and Practice*, 24(2), 447–469. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361319871756>

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DNEA resource guide: Visual supports: Visual schedules. Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism.