

AUTISM AWARENESS

Creating a Visual Schedule

Unstructured Time:

Unstructured time can be difficult for some children and people with autism. This lack of structure or routine can sometimes increase behavioural issues, stress and anxiety. Structure and particularly knowledge of “what’s happening next” can help them to increase their independence and reduce and manage these potential issues.

A visual schedule can take a number of forms, but normally the rule of thumb would be the more visual the better. This may involve the sequencing of pictures to map the structure of their day at school or a particular task that needs to be learned. This allows the person with autism to understand what’s happening next throughout the day or with a particular task or interaction.

Creating a Visual Schedule:

A visual schedule does not need to be complex and should cover the flow of events that will take place or should outline the individual elements of a goal or task to be achieved. The primary purpose of a visual schedule is to offer an alternate or enhanced means of understanding to the child or person with autism.

The schedule should have as much visual content as possible and also have a chronological flow of what will happen during the task or interaction. As always the best place to start is “at the start”.

It is important to identify the key steps in what will happen during the task and break them down to a series of individual steps. Then build those individual steps into a visual schedule. You then ask the following questions:

- *What is the purpose of the schedule?*
- *What is the task or interaction that you want to cover?*
- *What are the key component steps that will make up that schedule or task?*
- *What is the ultimate goal to be achieved?*



For example, below you will see a morning schedule for a child with autism:

1



Wake Up



2



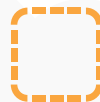
Wash Face &
Hands



3



Brush Teeth



4



Get Dressed



5



Eat Breakfast



Morning Schedule

This is a general visual morning schedule that takes the child through the steps of getting ready for school.

As you will see these are very general steps that involve a lot of individual tasks such as brushing teeth and getting dressed for example.

This schedule also has a tick system so that the child or adult can mark an individual task as completed.

The sequence of images on the schedule clearly shows the flow of tasks to be completed. Once this sequence of tasks is learned the schedule can gradually be withdrawn.

Let's look at one of the individual morning tasks and break it down into a different type of schedule. In this example we will look at brushing your teeth.

As you know brushing your teeth has a number of steps:

1. Get your toothbrush
2. Get the toothpaste
3. Put toothpaste on the toothbrush
4. Brush your teeth
5. Rinse & Spit

Here is an example of a visual schedule on how to brush your teeth:



So as you can see the morning schedule is made up of a number of individual tasks that may also need to be learned with the help of a visual schedule.

Let's go visual

We will create a schedule for: **Going to the shop**

What do we want to achieve?

To take a child, accompanied by a carer to a local shop safely and to explain to the child or person with autism what will happen during this task.

Break it down:

- Where are we going?
- Why are we going?
- Who is going?
- When are we going?
- How will we get there?
- What will we see on the way?
- What will we do when we get to the shop?
- What will happen when we are finished at the shop?
- Positively re-enforce the task when completed.

Build it up:

- We are going to the shop.
- Mary is going with you.
- We are going to buy some milk.
- We will walk to the shop.
- We will hold hands.
- No running.
- We will walk on the footpath.
- We will say hello to the man in the shop.
- We will wait in line.
- We will walk back to school.
- We will walk on the footpath and hold hands.
- When we get back we will put the milk in the fridge.
- Great Job.

Going to the Shop

David is going to the Shop



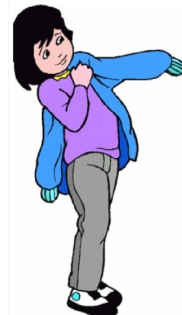
**Mary is going to the shop
with David**



We are going to buy milk



Put on our coat



Going to the Shop

Hold Hands



Walk on the footpath



No running

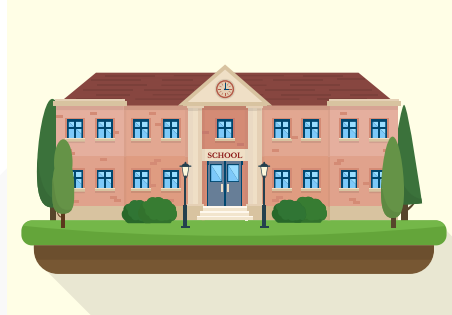


Wait in line



Going to the Shop

Walk back to School



Put the milk in the fridge



Great Job!

