

How to use a Visual Timetable



Teaching **where** the child is going to next:

A visual timetable should be initially used to teach the child where in their environment they need to go next.

You will need symbols/photographs for the timetable and matching slightly larger symbols/photographs in the appropriate locations.

For example, you will need a symbol for the toilet and a larger version on the toilet door with velcro where the smaller symbol will be attached.

Plan what symbols you will need ahead of time. If you do not have access to Google Images, Clip Art, Boardmaker or Writing with Symbols, please ask your Speech and Language Therapist. Remember you can draw the pictures too.

It may be easier to break the day up into morning and afternoon sessions, or even from the start of the day until morning break, then morning break until lunch-time, especially if there is a lot of movement or activities going on,

An example of symbols/photographs needed for a morning session:

- Chairs (for registration, greetings, etc).
- Home corner (for free play)
- Toilet
- Outside 9for free play, going to the park, etc)
- Table (for table top activities)
- Carpet (for story time, construction activities, etc)
- Dining hall (for lunch)

If you have different coloured tables/chairs, then corresponding symbols with chairs in different colours can be used for particular activities e.g. red chairs for snack time, blue chairs for construction work, etc.

Have the appropriate symbols on the timetable for when your child comes in at the start of the day. Bring them to the timetable and point to each symbol in turn; saying what it is to show them what is going to happen for that session.

Next, encourage your child to take the symbol off and together walk to where the corresponding symbol is. Encourage your child to place the smaller symbol onto the larger one. Use hand over hand guidance if your child is having difficulty doing this.

After the activity has finished, encourage your child to take the smaller symbol off and place it in the finished box at the bottom of the visual timetable before taking the next symbol off the timetable and going where indicated.

As your child becomes more confident, they will need less encouragement to go to the visual timetable and take the symbols off.

Teaching **what** is going to happen next:

This is the next step, once your child understands what the visual timetable is for and is able to take the symbols off and match it to the larger symbols in their environment. You can use it to tell your child what they are going to do throughout the day, like a pictorial Filo-fax or diary.

Example of Visual Timetable Structure

- Coats off
- Circle time
- Lego
- Toilet
- Outside play
- Snack time
- Drawing
- Book corner
- Lunch

Your child is encouraged to look at the visual timetable at the beginning of the day, so they know what is meant to happen.

They take the top symbol off, look at it and place it at the very top of the visual timetable. (This is usually a different colour to the rest of the Visual Timetable). They go to the activity and complete it. When they finish, they return to the visual timetable, remove the symbol from the very top, put it in the finished box before looking at what they have to do next and placing that symbol at the very top of the Visual Timetable.

Strategies:

- The timetable can either be structured top to bottom or left to right (this method facilitates the development of left to right reading).
- The use of a 'no' cross shows the child when a usual/expected activity will not take place and what it will be replaced with.
- Use of a finished box clearly shows when an activity has finished and that it is time to move on to the next activity.
- It develops the child's concept of finished.
- It can help reinforce the child's concept of different days of the week.
- It encourages independence strategies, e.g. when a child asks when lunch is, the teaching staff can refer them to the timetable.

