



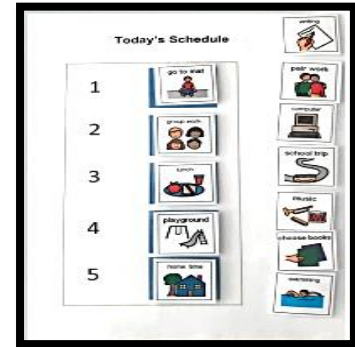
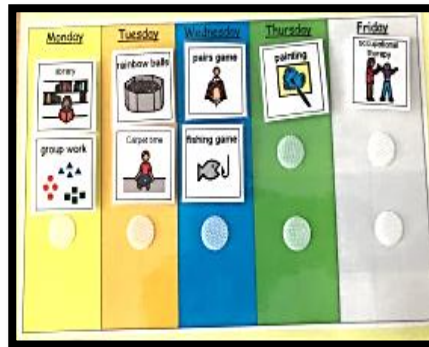
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NEURODEVELOPMENTAL TEAM

Visual Timetables

What is a visual timetable?



A visual timetable shows what is happening over a certain period of time in a visual way. It might use real photographs, cartoon pictures or symbols. It could show a short amount of time e.g. what is happening now and what is going to happen next or it could show longer periods, such as the plan for part of, or all of the day. Simply, a visual timetable shows the plan, in pictures.

Why use a visual timetable?

We all like to know the plan, we like to know what is happening and when, so we know what to expect. This is just the same for young people. For some of the young people we work with it is even more important to them to know what is happening and when. Using visual timetables can help young people to see and understand what is happening and help them to prepare for what is coming next. There are many benefits of using visual timetables, here are just a few:

- **Helps to manage anxiety** - Using visual timetables can help young people to manage their anxieties by helping them know what to expect.
- **Easier to understand** - It takes the pressure off verbal language skills and gives the young person more time to process the information. Words come and go so quickly, whereas pictures can be referred back to.
- **Supports independence** – Visual timetables can support young people to know what they are doing in the day and enable them to prepare for tasks themselves. They can be used as part of a morning routine or to help sequence a task e.g. getting dressed, as well as to help the young person to be able to do things independently.
- **Supports decision-making** – Visual timetables can support young people to make and communicate decisions about what they would like to do. For example young people can be given an option of activities and they can choose what and when they would like to do things e.g. “after lunch do you want to play with the cars or do some painting?”.
- **Helps to manage challenging behaviour** – all behaviour is communication. When young people are feeling big emotions, they can behave in ways which challenge us. Using visual

timetables can help young people to see what is happening and be clear about the expectations. This can support them to manage situations better.

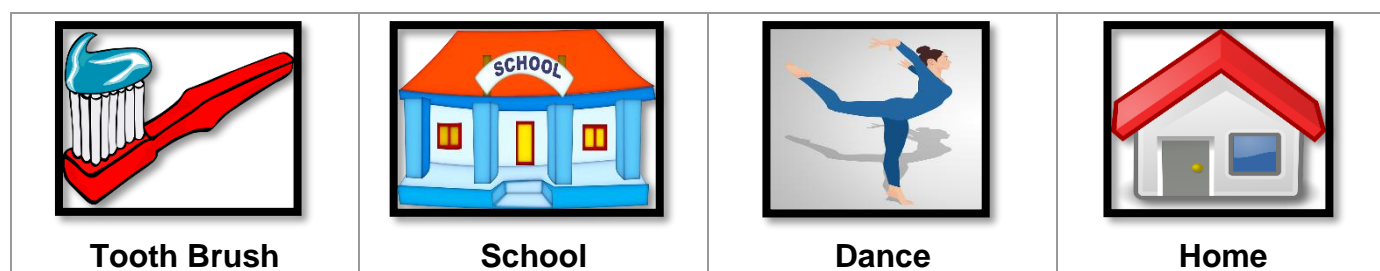
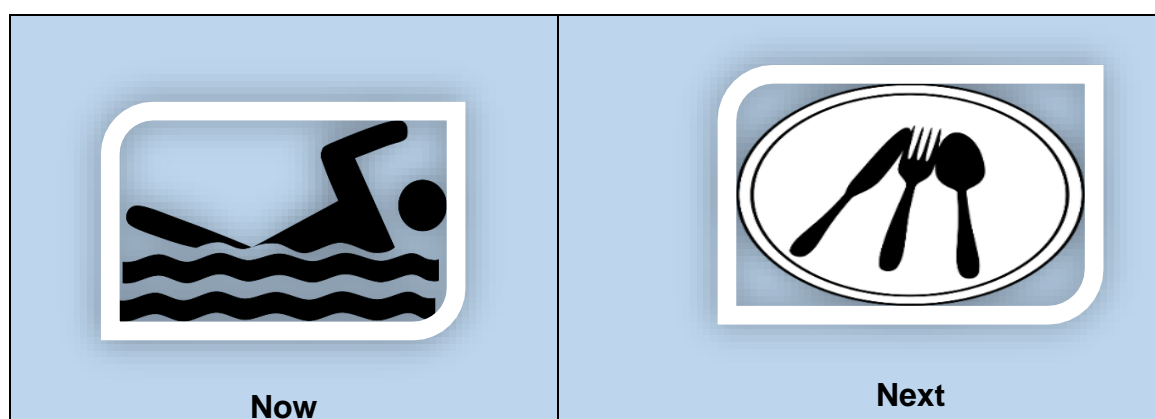
How do you use a visual timetable?


There is no right or wrong way to use a visual timetable, it is about finding out what works best for the young person. Below we have a guide about what a visual timetable could look like:

1. Create the template.

Most visual timetables start with a template. The template will remain the same and the activity pictures can be changed. Depending on the young person, the timetable will show different amounts of information. Remember not to try to fit too much into the timetable, as this can be overwhelming. The timetable could show what is happening now and what is coming next or it could show the activities across the day. You might want to use different templates for different situations. Some young people will be happy knowing just the activities, which are happening in the day, for others they may want to know exactly when things will happen. You can use a simple template or you could personalise the template to reflect the interests of the young person.






- Typically, the pictures attach onto the template so you will want to think about how you are going to do this. Some people laminate the template and the pictures and attach them together with Velcro. Other people use paperclips or blue tack. It can be helpful to include an envelope, pouch or small box as part of or near to the template to store the pictures in.



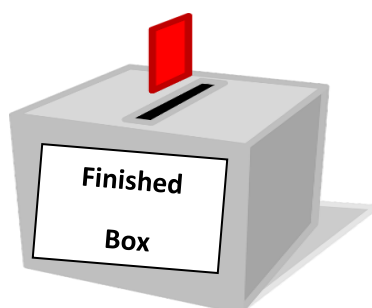
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2. Choose your pictures.

It is important that the young person understands what the pictures on the timetable mean. It can be fun to include the young person in choosing the pictures. Some young people like to draw their own pictures to use on the timetable. Some young people will need to have real photographs and some will need photographs of the exact objects e.g. their actual shoes. Some will prefer to have cartoon pictures of the activities and some may prefer to use symbols. Again, there is no right or wrong answer - it is whatever works best for the young person!

Actual Photo of their own item	Generic Photograph	Cartoon	Drawing	Symbol
				

3. Now it's time to try it out!



Together with the young person place the pictures onto the timetable and talk about what the plan is. Allow the young person time to ask any questions about the plan. Use the timetable to show the young person what is happening now and what is coming up. After an activity is complete, take that picture off the timetable to help the young person know where they are up to. It may take a while for the young person and the family to adjust to the visual timetable but many people find it to be a helpful tool. It is important to be consistent with the timetable and to keep using it. You may want to adapt your timetable as your young person grows or you may want to make a few different kinds to use in different situations.

Here are some sources we have found useful when making our visual timetables:

AutismWales - <https://autismwales.org/en/>

Resources to develop personal profiles, picture cards and advice sheets.

Boardmaker - <https://goboardmaker.com/collections/boardmaker-software>
Software to develop visuals

Do2learn - <https://do2learn.com/picturecards/howtouse/reminderstrips.htm>

Reminder strips and visual cards

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