



Parent Resource Guide

Visual Schedule

Templates & Planner

Printable picture & icon schedules designed to support daily routines and foster independence.



Morning



School



Mealtime



Bedtime



Why this helps: Visual supports greatly reduce stress and help children anticipate what's next. Widely recommended for autism routines.

Download Printable Pack

10+
Templates
Inside



Important Disclaimer

This guide is designed for **educational and informational purposes only**. It aims to provide general strategies that may support sensory regulation and daily routines.



Not Medical Advice

The content within this presentation is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or therapeutic intervention. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have.



Every Child is Unique

Autism is a spectrum. Sensory needs and preferences vary widely. A strategy that calms one child might overstimulate another. It's essential to observe your child's reactions and adjust approaches accordingly.



Consult Professionals

We strongly recommend consulting with qualified professionals (Pediatricians, Occupational Therapists, Speech-Language Pathologists, BCBAs) for individualized guidance tailored to your child's specific needs and developmental goals.



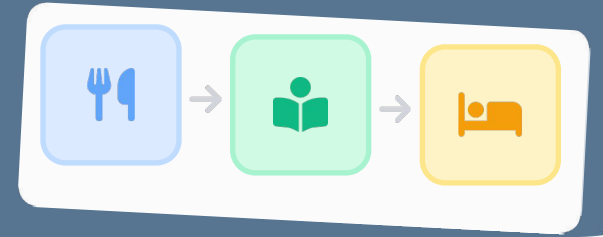
Safety First

Always supervise children during activities, especially those involving small parts (like Velcro pieces), water, weighted items, or physical movement. Ensure all materials used are age-appropriate and safe for your child.

By using this guide, you acknowledge that you are responsible for ensuring the safety and appropriateness of these activities for your specific situation.

What Is a Visual Schedule?

A sequence of pictures, photos, or words that show a child what will happen and in what order.



Core Benefits



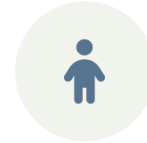
Lowers Anxiety

Predictability reduces stress by clearly showing "what's next," eliminating fear of the unknown.



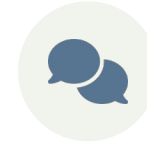
Supports Transitions

Makes moving between activities smoother, especially shifting from preferred to non-preferred tasks.



Builds Independence

Allows children to check their own schedule rather than relying constantly on verbal adult prompts.



Aids Communication

Provides a concrete visual reference that is easier to process than fleeting spoken words.

✓ **Evidence-Based Practice:** Visual schedules are widely recommended by speech therapists, occupational therapists, and autism specialists as a foundational support strategy.

Why Use Visuals?

Comparing traditional verbal methods with structured visual supports demonstrates clear benefits for processing and independence.

Traditional Approach

Verbal & Reliance based

Auditory & Verbal (Fleeting)

Unpredictable = High Anxiety

Relies on Adult Prompts

Transitions are Surprises

Varies by Caregiver

VS



Communication



Anxiety Level



Independence



Transitions



Consistency

Recommended

Visual Schedule

Structured & Concrete

✓ Visual & Concrete (Permanent)

✓ Predictable = Calm & Regulated

✓ Builds Self-Monitoring Skills

✓ Anticipated & Smoother

✓ Consistent Everywhere

Morning + School Routines



Morning Routine



	Wake Up	☐
	Toilet	☐
	Get Dressed	☐
	Breakfast	☐
	Brush Teeth	☐
	Pack Backpack	☐
	Out the Door	☐



School Day



	Arrive at School	☐
	Unpack Bag	☐
	Circle Time	☐
	Work Centers	☐
	Snack Time	☐
	Recess	☐
	Bus / Home	☐

Mealtime + Bedtime Routines



Mealtime Routine





Wash Hands

☐



Sit at Table

☐



First Dinner, Then Fun

☐



Drink Water

☐



All Done

☐



Clear Plate

☐



Reward / Choice

☐



Bedtime Routine





Take Bath

☐



Put on Pajamas

☐



Brush Teeth

☐



Read Story

☐



Lights Low

☐



Get in Bed

☐



Goodnight

☐

Customize & Introduce Visual Aids

Successful implementation relies on making the schedule meaningful to your child and introducing it gradually. Use these three core strategies for best results.



01

Make it Personal

- ✓ Use real photos of your child or familiar objects if abstract icons are confusing.
- ✓ Incorporate favorite colors, characters, or specific family routines.
- ✓ Include cultural practices or special interests to increase engagement.



02

Teach & Practice

- ✓ **Model-then-Prompt:** Show them how to check the schedule, then guide their hand.
- ✓ Use "First-Then" boards for difficult transitions (e.g., "First Work, Then iPad").
- ✓ Rehearse new routines when the child is calm, not during a meltdown.



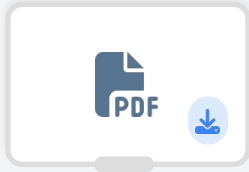
03

Keep It Flexible

- ✓ Start small with just 3-5 steps to avoid overwhelming them.
- ✓ Offer "Choice" tiles within the schedule to build autonomy.
- ✓ Fade prompts gradually as independence grows over time.

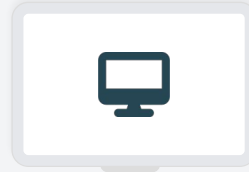
How to Create Your Schedule

A simple step-by-step guide to customizing, printing, and assembling your visual planner for daily use.



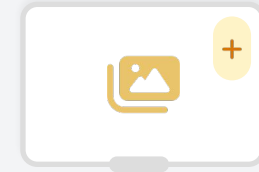
1 Download PDF

Save the template pack to your computer. Ensure you have a PDF reader installed.



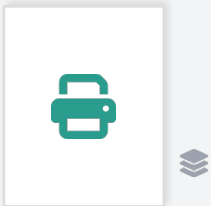
2 Open & Prepare

Open in Adobe Acrobat or your browser. Decide if you need to edit digitally or print first.



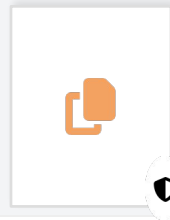
3 Add Custom Photos

Use the blank tiles to paste personal photos or specific icons that match your child's routine.



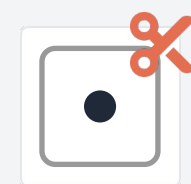
4 Print on Cardstock

Use heavy paper (65lb-110lb) for durability. Standard printer paper may rip too easily.



5 Laminate

Seal pages in laminate pouches before cutting. This protects against spills and daily wear.



6 Cut & Assemble

Cut out the tiles. Attach soft Velcro to the board and rough Velcro to the back of each card.

10-Point Implementation Checklist

Follow these steps to successfully set up and integrate visual schedules into your daily routine.

1

Choose Priority Routine

Start with just one routine (e.g., Morning) rather than the whole day to ensure success.



2

List Steps in Order

Break tasks down into small, manageable steps. Ensure the sequence is logical.



3

Select Clear Icons

Choose between photos, line drawings, or text based on your child's comprehension level.



4

Print, Laminate & Add Velcro

Durability is key. Use Velcro so the child can physically remove tasks when "All Done."



5

Mount at Eye Level

Place the schedule where the child can easily see and reach it independently.



6

Pre-Teach When Calm

Introduce the schedule during a quiet, happy moment—never during a meltdown.



7

Use Consistent Language

Use the same simple phrase (e.g., "Check schedule") every time to build a habit.



8

Pair with Timers

Use a visual timer for transitions to help the child understand when to move to the next icon.



9

Reinforce & Praise

Celebrate when the child checks the schedule. Consider a small reward for completion.



10

Weekly Review

Assess what's working. Adjust steps or fade prompts as your child masters routines.



10 Essential Tips for Success

Expert recommendations to ensure your visual schedules are effective, engaging, and supportive.

1

Start Small

Don't overwhelm the child. Begin with one simple routine (e.g., bedtime) before expanding.



2

Use "First-Then"

Leverage motivation: "First [task], Then [reward]." It clarifies expectations visually.



3

Offer Choices

Increase buy-in by offering two acceptable options (e.g., "Red shirt or Blue shirt?").



4

Embed Sensory Breaks

Schedule "brain breaks" or sensory activities between difficult tasks to prevent overload.



5

High-Contrast Icons

Use clear, uncluttered images on plain backgrounds to help focus attention.



6

Routines Song or Timer

Pair visuals with an auditory cue like a specific song or timer to signal transitions.



7

Generalize Across Settings

Use similar visual supports at home, school, and therapy for consistency.



8

Involve Siblings & Caregivers

Ensure everyone interacting with the child understands how to use the schedule.



9

Track Progress

Keep a simple log of what works and what doesn't to refine the routine over time.



10

Celebrate & Fade Prompts

Praise independence! Gradually reduce verbal reminders as they master the visual.



Pros and Cons of Visual Schedules

While visual schedules are powerful tools for supporting neurodivergent children, successful implementation requires balancing the benefits with practical considerations.



BENEFITS (PROS)



Lowers Anxiety

Provides predictability, reducing stress about "what comes next."



Improves Transitions

Visually prepares the child for shifting from one activity to another.



Builds Independence

Allows the child to self-monitor routines without constant adult guidance.



Reduces Verbal Prompting

Minimizes "nagging" tone; the schedule becomes the neutral authority.



Supports AAC & Communication

Reinforces vocabulary and concepts for non-speaking children.



Consistent Caregiving

Ensures parents, teachers, and sitters follow the same routine.

VS



CONSIDERATIONS (CONS)



Initial Prep Time

Requires printing, cutting, laminating, and organizing materials upfront.



Can Be Over-Detailed

Too many steps can overwhelm rather than help; finding the right balance is key.



Needs Upkeep

Must be updated frequently as skills grow or daily routines change.



Resistance to Change

Some children may initially resist the new structure or demand rigid adherence.



Risk of Rigidity

If not taught flexibly, a child might become upset if the schedule isn't followed perfectly.



Material Management

Loose icons and Velcro pieces can get lost or damaged, requiring ongoing maintenance.