Tip 6: Visual Schedules

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- Video - Tip 6: Visual Schedules

Definition

A visual schedule uses words, pictures or graphics to represent the order of events that will occur within a day, increasing your child's independence at home.

Benefits

All learners benefit from having structure and routines in their environments. While changing between tasks and settings can come easily to some, other children may find transitioning between tasks and settings more difficult. Transitioning can be made easier for your child by having a visual schedule in place.

Visual schedules **provide structure and predictability**. They:

- are a **flexible** resource that can be individualised and changed as needed.
- are an excellent **whole-family support**. They support homework or 'learning new skills' routines, keeping your child on-task and assisting in accomplishing the activities or goals set by their teacher.
- act as a **concrete reference**. If your child is unsure of what to do next, they can refer to the visual schedule as needed.
- support the development of self-management and organisational skills.

Using visual schedules to support your child's independence at home has a positive effect on your child's behaviour by communicating expectations such as what they need to do, when, how long for and what comes next.

Types

Daily Schedule

Display the day's activities in sequence. These may include homework check-ins, practising new skills at home and breaks. You may like to use pictures or graphics from magazines or hand drawn at home, as shown in the photograph below.

The schedule can be displayed on paper or a chalkboard/whiteboard. Tasks can be checked off the schedule, or physical components such as magnets or sticky notes can be moved to 'Done' when finished.

Lesson/Homework schedule

Display the list of activities to be completed, as per the 'Today we will' example on page 3.

This helps to keep your child on track, and allows you to see your child's progress towards completing each of the allocated tasks.

You can display the lesson schedule as a list (with pictures, if age-appropriate) written on a chalkboard/whiteboard or piece of paper next to the homework learning objective/intention.

Example: use a daily schedule to list the day's activities in sequence, including lessons and breaks.

Using this tip

Select the content for the visual schedule, generally three to eight activities/steps, depending on the child's/family's needs and the task.

For example, a whole-family schedule of the day may display time for practising new skills, breaks, and other home activities; but a particular homework task for your child may feature just four activities for that lesson e.g. read, write, show parent, break.

Accessing the schedule

- Whole-family schedules may be displayed in a central location and large enough for the whole family to see.

- Individual schedules can be portable (carried between spaces) online or hard copy, perhaps fixed to a desk or wall next to the child's learning space.

- Include times on visual schedules. In addition to reflecting the order of lessons/activities, include times of day or lengths of time for each task. Set a timer to clearly signify transition times.

- Briefly discuss the schedule with your child at the start of each day or task.

- Give warnings of any changes to the schedule. If possible, have your child help you change the schedule. Provide reminders of the upcoming change in the days leading up the schedule change.

Referring to the schedule

- Refer to the whole-family schedule regularly during the day.
- Tick off the tasks as you go to visually demonstrate progress.
- Refer to individual schedules frequently when first introduced. When it is time to move on to the next task, use the prompt, 'Check your schedule'. This will help your child to learn to regularly (and eventually independently) refer to the schedule to know what to expect next.
- Some children benefit from removing each activity/step of the schedule as it is completed.

Over time, your child may become less reliant on the visual component of the schedule.

However, the schedule should still be accurate and accessible, particularly on days with an altered schedule when the visual support may be needed again.

Example: a list of activities to be completed for an English lesson.

TODAY WE WILL		
1. Check in online with my teacher on what we learned in the last lesson about suspense	**2.** Discuss with classmates online examples of suspense in literature and movies (20 mins)	**3.** Do an independent activity - practise writing with suspense (25 mins)

Handy resources

- Create structure through visually represented routines
- Steps for Implementation: Visual Schedules
- Visual Daily Timetable
- Using Structure to Access Remote Learning