

Schedules

Strategies for Creating Routine and Structure Throughout the Day



Structured schedules can create predictability and help develop a regular routine.

Visual schedules may help facilitate participation and ease of transitioning from one activity to the next.

Setting up your schedule:

Creating a predictable routine can help prevent stress and make things easier for you and your child. There are a few things to consider when creating a schedule:

- Decide what activities will be a part of your schedule. Prioritize the things that must get done (e.g., taking a bath, eating dinner, school work). During this complex time some activities you “want” to get done may have to be put aside temporarily to complete what “needs” to get done.
- Include activities that are fun for your child. Brainstorm activities which can be used to motivate your child to get through the less preferred activities.
- Don’t overdo it. No need to schedule every minute of the day. Keep it simple and not to a specific time frame, just activities. Typically, a schedule should not cover more than a half a day. This way if anything unexpected happens during the day, your entire schedule does not get disrupted.
 - Create small schedules to start, depending on your child’s needs, this could mean starting with a schedule with only two activities (e.g., first breakfast, then iPad). Remember you can always make your schedule longer later, start small and build off of it until you figure out what works best for you and your child.
- Always end the schedule with something preferred and fun! This helps motivate your child to get through the schedule if there is anything



unpreferred.

- Post the schedule somewhere visible that is easy for your child to access or on a device. Instruct your child to review the schedule before it starts. “Let’s check your schedule!”

TIP: Use the time at the end of the schedule when your child is doing something preferred, to give yourself a break and/or get ready to set up the next schedule. If this means giving your child an extra long break at the end of the schedule, that is okay. It is important to find time for yourself as well!

Personalize your child’s schedule:

If you believe it would be helpful to your child, decorating your child’s schedule with their favorite images can be a fun way to make your child’s schedule their own. Their favorite superhero, cartoon character, or sports activity is an easy way to personalize a schedule.

TIP: If you do not have access to pictures of your child's favorite things try making it into a craft project and have them decorate their own schedule.

Using “First/Then” statements to gain compliance:

Before asking your child to do something they typically do not want to do, try giving them something to work FOR. You can simply ask them, “what do you want to work for?” or select their favorite item based on your knowledge of their preferences.

Once you have selected the reward, use a “first/then” statement before presenting the demand.

- For example, “First brush your teeth, then you can listen to music.”

TIP: Incorporate visuals by taking a picture of them doing the non-preferred, and preferred tasks. You can print these pictures, or show them on your device as visual aids when stating the “first/then” statement.

Rewarding appropriate behaviors and completing activities along the way:

Use your child’s favorite items to encourage their appropriate behavior. By breaking down large tasks into smaller chunks and rewarding them throughout the task, you can help encourage them to finish the entire task.

- For example, if you are asking your child to put away their toy and come sit at



the table, use small pieces of their favorite snack (e.g. a chip) to reward them after standing up, setting the toy in the basket, walking toward the table, and sitting down at the table.

Keep track of completing activities on the schedule with your child. Once an activity is finished, bring your child's attention back to the schedule. If it is something your child might enjoy, have them "check off" the activity that has been completed. If your child is not interested in following along the schedule with you, simply remind them you are moving through the schedule and start the next activity. "All done with school work, now it's time to play with your legos!"

TIP: Let them know that they can earn something they like when you ask them to do a non-preferred. For example, "It's time for dinner. You can earn chips by putting your toy away and coming to the table."

Use a visual timer:

Using a visual timer may be helpful when completing non-preferred activity and when getting ready to transition out of a preferred activity. Decide on a set amount of time that they should be engaging in the activity. Set a visual timer, and tell them, "when the timer is up, you can stop" or "when the timer is up, iPad time is over"

TIP: Start small! After your child begins successfully completing non-preferred tasks and they learn that they can earn their favorite things by doing them, you can slowly begin to increase the amount of time you set the timer.

References

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