



## **Strategy:** Visual Schedules

### **What is it?**

A visual schedule is a series of objects, pictures, words, and/or symbols that are sequenced to reflect the activities that an individual will participate in. At school this may look like the classes that a student will go to in sequential order. For older students this may be a series of pictures that show the classes they will go to and then the activities that they will be participating in while out in the community. A visual schedule helps individuals with autism organize their day, decrease anxiety by knowing what to expect next, and have successful, independent transitions.

### **How To:**

- Determine the appropriate form of representation for the schedule based on the students' comprehension level. (functional objects, pictures, representational symbols and / or words)
- Decide what type of format to use keeping in mind you always want to go "left to right" or "top to bottom" in sequencing. Things to consider: 1. Degree of portability – will the teacher bring the schedule to the student, is it a stationary schedule placed in a central location, or does the student carry the schedule across locations. 2. Layout- schedule strip with Velcro and pictures, clipboard, 3 ring- binder, pockets for objects. 3. Length- does the student learn best in small chunks, whole day or longer? 4. "Finished"- where does the schedule piece go when done or what happens when the activity is complete.
- Gather materials needed to develop the schedule. Functional objects that represent the activities on the schedule, Boardmaker pictures, photographs, poster board, Velcro, glue, lamination, sharpies. Make the needed schedule icons using the materials determined appropriate for the students' comprehension level. Be sure to make extras in case, over time, some get lost.
- Once the schedule icons have been developed, organize them sequentially in the chosen format. Put the schedule in a location determined accessible for the student. Have a set location for extra schedule icons to be kept so that if you lose any you have extras easily available.
- Implement the schedule by directly teaching the student how to use it. Give the student a visual cue that signifies "check schedule" (a poker chip, written icon, other token) and then prompt them to the schedule.
- Standing behind the student, prompt them to take the schedule icon by, hand over hand, placing the icon in their hand. Next, prompt them to the location or activity indicated by the icon. When it is time to transition, give them the transition token / icon, and prompt them through the routine of going to the schedule location where they will get the next schedule indicator.

- As the student becomes more familiar with the routine of using the schedule, fade out the prompting until they are consistently independent.

**Resources:**

McClannahan, L.E. and Krantz, P.J. (2010). *Activity Schedules for Children with Autism, Second Edition: Teaching Independent Behavior (Topics in Autism)*. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House, Inc.

Hume, K. (2009). *Steps for implementation: Visual schedules*. Chapel Hill, NC: The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, The University of North Carolina.

**Links:**

<https://www.boardmakeronline.com/> Boardmaker Share

[http://www.autisminternetmodules.org/mod\\_view.php?nav\\_id=15](http://www.autisminternetmodules.org/mod_view.php?nav_id=15) Visual Schedules

<http://www.do2learn.com/>

<http://www.assistivetechology.vcu.edu/files/2013/02/VisualScheduleHandoutBoston.pdf>

<http://ipad-autism.com/category/ipad-apps-for-autism/visual-schedules/>

