



VISUAL TIMETABLES

A visual timetable uses symbols or pictures to break a task or routine down into small steps or to let your child know what s/he will be doing next or soon.



1. Uses and benefits of visual timetables

Many children are visual learners: they find it easier to learn something if they have something at which to look. It is easier for them to learn something new if something which is a strength for them is used to help them.

a. Attention and listening

If your child can look at a symbol or picture, it may help him/her to concentrate more on what is being said. A visual timetable doesn't disappear like words do and will attract and hold a child's attention. It can be used as a prompt or reminder.

b. Understanding

Children who have difficulties understanding language are often helped by seeing a picture or symbol of the word being said. Having a picture or symbol also helps them to remember what has been said while they are processing it.

Visual timetables make concepts, such as, next, before, after, etc. more concrete and help your child to understand sequences.

c. Expressing themselves

Children who have difficulties with speaking can point to pictures to express themselves.

d. Behaviour

A child who is anxious or who has difficulty moving from one activity to another can be helped significantly by a visual timetable: s/he can be prepared for what is going to happen next. If it helps, s/he can take a picture of what will happen next to the next activity. Similarly, a child who is worried because they can't remember the next step and their reading isn't great will be able to look at pictures/symbols to help them.

Visual timetables are often personalised to a child, so they are relevant and meaningful to them. If a child can see the steps in an activity being done, s/he will know that the end of the activity is approaching.

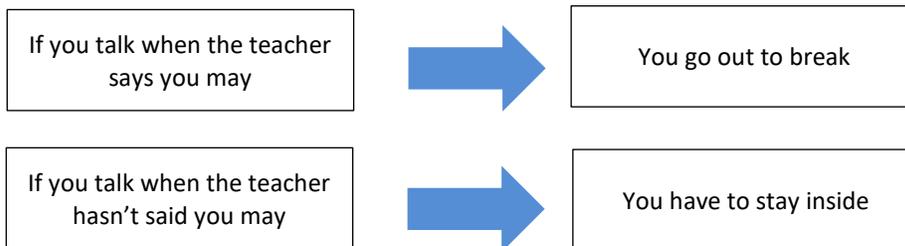
A visual timetable can increase independence because your child can see what's coming rather than worrying.



2. How to use a visual timetable

- a. For tasks that on which your child has difficulty concentrating, use a specific visual timetable, with simple line drawings . There are lots available online if you search visual timetables. If necessary, draw a picture of the reward s/he will get after finishing the task (e.g., sticker, computer/TV time) to keep him/her motivated.
- b. Use a timetable to let your child know what you expect of him/her. As an example: use an egg timer to put a limit on the time dedicated to each activity: start off small, (e.g., 3-5 minutes) and increase the time as your child becomes used to this way of working.
- c. Put in learning breaks. These will:
 - i. prevent your child being 'overloaded' with information;
 - ii. help your child concentrate when you need him/her to do adult-led activities.
- d. Encourage your child to tick things off the list or remove symbols as tasks are completed.
- e. Use consequences to show what will happen if your child does and doesn't do something (but check with your child's teacher or SLT first that s/he can understand these, if you're not sure).

An example may be:



- f. Use siblings/other children to help keep rewards consistent; praise the other child for, 'Good sitting', 'Good writing', etc. Praise your child as soon as he follows their lead.
- g. Identify a good place with your child for him/her to put his/her visual timetable and a box into which to post finished activities.
- h. At the start of the day, sit down and go through each activity individually. Have a picture to represent each activity in the day; this could be hand drawn or a clipart picture. As you complete an activity encourage your child to remove the picture off the board and put it in a box to show it is finished.

