Object and Visual Schedules

Object and visual schedules help all students, including those on the autism spectrum, approach activities with confidence. This tip sheet describes four types of schedules from most to least concrete, along with examples.

Object Schedules

Some children understand information presented concretely. With object schedules, a tangible item represents an activity. The child receives the object soon before the activity begins and uses the object during the activity.

> **Example:** A basketball indicates recess, a pull-up indicates a bathroom break, and a plate indicates lunch. The child carries the basketball to recess and plays with it outside, takes the pull-up to the bathroom for a change, and brings the plate to lunch.

Photo Schedules

While not tangible, photos offer concrete information. With photo schedules, a photo of a real item or place represents an activity. A teacher shows the photo to the child before the activity. Some children may carry the photo to the activity. Photo schedules can represent a sequence of events.

> **Example:** A photo of the school playground indicates recess, a photo of the classroom toilet indicates a bathroom break, and a photo of the table set with plates and cups indicates lunch. These photos are posted with Velcro vertically on a clipboard that the child carries. The child places photos of completed items in a pocket marked "done."

Line Drawing Schedules

With line drawing schedules, a line drawn image represents an activity. Line drawings are more abstract than photos. They require generalization, but this makes them versatile. For example, a drawing of toilet could represent *any* bathroom. Images are often presented on laminated cards. A teacher shows the image to the child before the activity. Some children may carry the image to the activity. Line drawing schedules can represent a sequence of events.

> **Example:** A drawing of swings and a slide indicates recess, a drawing of a toilet indicates a bathroom break, and a drawing of a plate and cup indicates lunch. These drawings are posted with Velcro vertically on a clipboard that the child carries at school. The same images are used across settings such as home, playgroup, and therapy.

Written Schedules

Written schedules are the most abstract. They can be a good fit for children who are motived by reading. Simple words, presented on laminated cards or written on paper, indicate upcoming activities. A teacher gives the schedule to the child before the activities.

> **Example:** The words *recess, bathroom,* and *lunch* are posted from top to bottom on a clipboard that the child carries.

Which of these is a good fit for a student in your classroom? If in doubt, start with a more concrete option and move down the list until you find the one that works.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.

Illinois Early Learning Project
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
Telephone: 217-333-1386
Toll-free: 877-275-3227
E-mail: iel@illinois.edu
https://illinoisearlylearning.org

10/25