

# How-To Templates

## Visual Schedules



Individuals with an ASD sometimes have difficulties with sequential processing (i.e., learning the order of events). These difficulties with sequential processing may result in individuals becoming anxious or overwhelmed in certain situations, which in turn may lead to problem behaviors. In contrast, individuals with ASDs often have strengths in visual processing. As a result of this strength, the use of visual schedules can help the individual better understand expectations, thus reducing the likelihood of negative behaviors.

A visual schedule is a line of pictures, objects, or words that represent each major transition during the day. Some people worry that by adding a schedule to an individual's day, it reduces the individual's ability to be flexible. In reality, the opposite is true. By implementing a visual schedule, individuals generally are less dependent on having the same daily routine ongoing because the schedule itself provides the stability and routine s/he needs. Individuals can better handle changes to routine when they have schedules because they know that, regardless of the precise activities reflected, they can always determine what will happen next and get information by checking their schedule.

There are a variety of visual schedule formats available. Individuals should always be actively involved in monitoring his/her schedule (e.g., peel off completed activities, check off boxes for activities).

There are a variety of activity schedule formats available (e.g., picture, word, pull-off, check off). For details on each format, refer to the information for visual schedules on this website.

### How Do I Make a Visual Schedule?

1. Break the individual's day into several steps represented by pictures or words
2. Be conscious of details (include even minor steps as needed for the individual)
3. Represent each activity so the individual knows what is expected (even periods like free time and break)
4. Determine the best visual format for the individual based on skills (motor, reading, attention to detail, etc.), developmental level, interests, distractibility, and functionality
5. Determine how the schedule will be used to indicate which activities are completed and which remain to be done as well as how the individuals will transition to and from the schedule (e.g., transition strips, transition pockets, finished pockets on schedule, mobile schedules)
6. Added details in making these format decisions are provided below in the sections regarding specific types of schedules.



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Resources: call 317-944-8162 Options "0"  
[www.iupui.edu/~psycdept/autism/](http://www.iupui.edu/~psycdept/autism/)

[rileyhospital.org](http://rileyhospital.org)

**Materials provided are samples only!**  
**They may need to be individualized to meet the particular needs of a person with an ASD!**

## How to Use a Visual Schedule

When using the schedule, remember the following steps:

1. Give a standard phrase (e.g., "Check schedule")
2. Prompt the individual (from behind) to go to the schedule
3. Prompt the individual to look at or point to the first activity
4. Prompt the individual to go to the location of the first activity
5. When the activity is over, give the standard phrase again and prompt the individual back to the schedule

### **Remember!**

*The schedule will require teaching; it will not automatically have meaning. Use enough prompting to ensure the child gets there, but fade out slowly so s/he goes to the schedule with increasing independence.*

If you cannot fit the individual's entire day on the schedule (or if the individual does better with less information at a time), it is fine to simply put up part of the day. While s/he is engaged in one of the last activities on the schedule, you can arrange the schedule to include the next part of the day or have it ready on another board for putting up once the first section is complete.

## Formats and Presentations of Visual Schedules

### Schedule Format

#### Picture/Icon/Photo Schedules



In a picture schedule, the activities are illustrated through picture icons or photographs. Each picture is attached to a schedule board with Velcro, and the pictures are removed as activities are completed. For some individuals, it is most appropriate to have them check their schedule, complete the activity, and then return to the schedule to remove the picture (into an envelope or box next to the schedule) to indicate the activity is complete. The individual then checks the next item on the schedule and continues in that manner.



Others do better when they check their schedule and then take the picture card to the area where their next activity will occur. This process helps the individual remain focused on



where s/he is supposed to be going. In this variation, envelopes or boxes must be next to each area where activities might occur (e.g., a bathroom, kitchen or bedroom at home; a play area, work area, and reading area at school) for pictures to be deposited in or have a matching picture to Velcro to in the activity area.



Picture schedules may be arranged vertically or horizontally. A general rule of thumb is to use a vertical schedule (i.e., top to bottom) for pre-readers and a horizontal (i.e., left to right) schedule for readers.

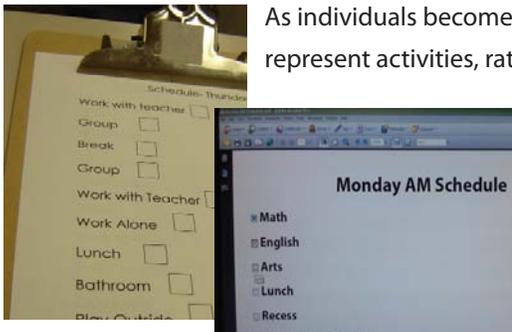
## Object Schedules

For some individuals, pictures or photographs may be too abstract. If the individual needs a more concrete indication of activities, an object schedule can be implemented. In such a system, each activity is represented by a concrete object easily associated with the activity (e.g., a fork for lunch, a block for playtime, a pen for work time) or to be functionally utilized in the next activity (e.g., Lego to be utilized in playing Legos). The objects can be arranged in a row from first to last, indicating the order of activities and can be manipulated as represented above for picture schedules.



## Word Schedules

As individuals become stronger readers, it can be appropriate to use words to represent activities, rather than pictures or photographs. If an individual has been on a picture schedule previously, it may help to fade the pictures out and the words in. Specifically, begin printing words on the picture schedule cards and, over time, increase the size of the words while decreasing the size of the picture. This process will help the individual begin to focus more on the written word than on the image.



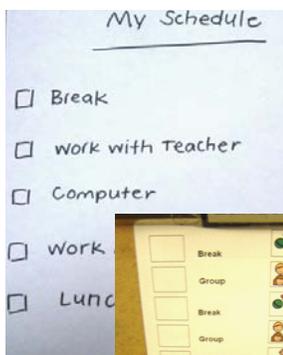
## Schedule Presentation

### Pull-Off Schedules

The use of Velcro to attach words or pictures to a schedule is a helpful method for some individuals. The process makes it easy to focus on which activity is next, because all prior activities have been removed from the board.



### Check-Off Schedules



Although the use of Velcro highlights which activities are remaining on the schedule (by removing completed activities), other schedule formats may be more appropriate for certain individuals. In a check off schedule, all activities are listed on a piece of paper. Depending upon the reading level of the individual, it may be appropriate to use pictures, words, or a combination of the two to represent activities. A square should be next to each activity so the individual can "check off" activities as s/he completes them. This format allows the individual to see what s/he has already completed as well as see what remains to be done. Other variations of this schedule could include schedules written on a dry erase board or a cross off schedule in which the individual crosses off items completed in order on his/her sheet. This format can be distracting for some individuals, however, so it is not always the most appropriate format to use.

## Stationary Schedule

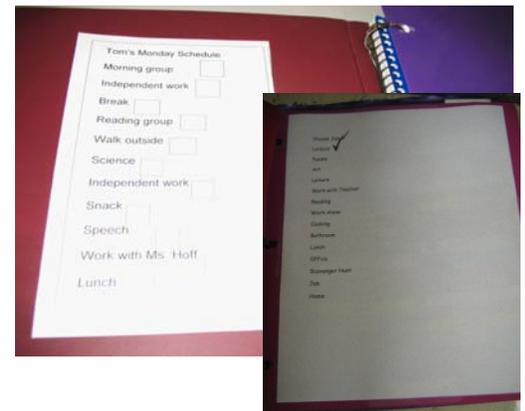
Schedules are placed stationary in a transition area (e.g., on the wall, table, cubby, etc.). The student will go to the transition area regularly after each scheduled activity.



## Mobile/Portable/Travel Schedules

In all the above schedules, the schedule is located in a specified space and the individual returns to that place between each activity to check the schedule. For some individuals, it may be more appropriate to teach a mobile schedule. A mobile schedule is a schedule that an individual carries from one activity or room to the next.

Mobile schedules may be check-off (or cross off) schedules written on paper and placed on clipboards or in binders or pull-off schedules located on a small but sturdy surface. They can also be PDAs for the older student. When teaching the individual to use a mobile schedule, ensure that there is a clearly defined place for him/her to place the schedule in each activity area. It may be helpful to tape off a spot or use a sign, basket or other visual cue to indicate where the schedule should be placed. When using a mobile schedule the individual should check his/her schedule immediately after completing one activity so s/he knows where s/he is going next.



*To make a Pull-Off Schedule*

1. Cut out the pictures provided here (or write/draw your own based on the needs of the individual you know)
2. Laminate the schedule cards, if possible
3. Cut a rectangular piece of poster board so it is large enough for multiple activities to be listed (e.g., 8-12).
4. Place Velcro on the poster board in a straight line.
5. Use Velcro to place pictures or words on poster board

*Schedule Template (not to scale)*

## Picture Schedules

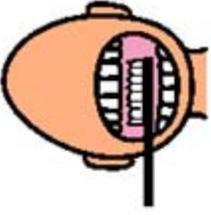
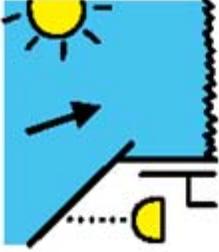
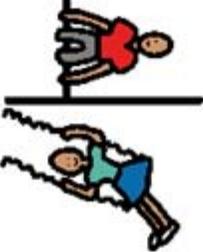
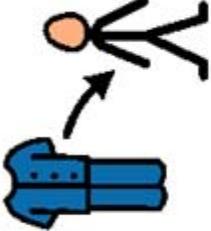
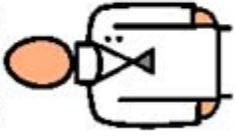
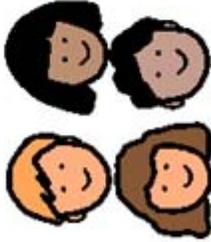
Velcro picture here

## Check-Off with Pictures Schedules

**My Schedule**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Put picture card here
<input type="checkbox"/>	Put picture card here
<input type="checkbox"/>	Put picture card here
<input type="checkbox"/>	Put picture card here
<input type="checkbox"/>	Put picture card here
<input type="checkbox"/>	Put picture card here

Picture Template

brush teeth 	outside 	playground 	finished 
brush hair 	read 	exercise 	store 
get dressed 	watch TV 	arts & crafts 	doctor 
sleep 	breaktime 	circle time 	work 
eat 	play 	homework 	bath 