
21 Reasons to Use and Keep Using a Visual Schedule or “Please Don’t Take Away my Visual Schedule!”

1. Some children have difficulty with receptive and expressive language. This limitation *MAY* exist for one or several possible reasons:

- Children *MAY* have a *slow processing time* which interferes with their ability to ‘take in’ verbal instructions. Much of what is said may be missed.
- Children *MAY* be dealing with *sensory malfunctioning* where the sensory system may be either over or under-functioning. A hyper functioning system can make sensations almost unbearable that would otherwise be ordinary, and make it almost impossible for the child to attend to what is being said. When a system is hypo functioning, a youngster may be preoccupied by a need to *create* sensation or stimulation. It is important to note that the functioning of the sensory system may not be consistent across time.
- Children *MAY* be *almost always highly stressed* by their lack of understanding of the social milieu in which they must function. Some children may be so overwhelmed with attempting to deal with social events and expectations, that they may miss entirely any language-based input. Stress can also be brought on by the experience of being physically close to other children.
- Children are least likely to process verbal information when they are *upset, worried or angry*.
- Children *MAY* have poor sleep patterns. Their sleep may be brief or interrupted, and they will therefore often be *too tired to be attentive*.
- Children *MAY not understand the pragmatics* of communication, such as gestures, vocal intonation, facial expressions, conversational pauses and emphases.
- Children *MAY take words literally*. What they hear if not mediated by an intrinsic understanding of the social situation and an understanding of the personality or intent of the speaker.

2. Visual schedules are tangible and non-transitory; *language is fleeting*. A child may not have heard what the teacher said, but still has the schedule as a reference.

3. Children who have a poor *sense of time* and who have difficulty understanding the vocabulary of time and order (example: *before, after, then, yesterday, first, second*) benefit from use of schedules addressing this difficulty directly, routinely and systematically.

4. Children *MAY* have attentional difficulties. Visual schedules are a *support to the inattentive or ill-focused child*.

5. The use of visual schedules *capitalizes on the visual learning strength* that many children have.

6. The use of visual schedules is one support strategy that can *provide the organization, structure and predictability* that are so essential to many children. Lacking such supports, these children find the world to be highly unpredictable and confusing.

7. Preparing/amending the schedule daily *gives the child a sense of some autonomy and control of daily events in a world of confusing demands.*
8. Visual schedules *teach the importance of organization in a day.* Children who learn to prepare a visual schedule are developing a habit that will promote good organizational methods throughout life.
9. Visual schedules *minimize the need to write; writing CAN be difficult for some children.*
10. Because they provide a means for children to anticipate coming events, visual schedules help to *ease students' transitions.* Thus, they are one means of promoting the flexible behavior (reducing rigid behavior).
11. Visual schedules provide a means by which adults can systematically introduce the element of 'change' into a student's day. Many children need to *learn to deal with change* (see 10).
12. Visual schedules *increase on-task behavior* and therefore increase Academic Learning Time.
13. When students learn to remove icons from their schedule to indicate task completion, they are able to see daily progress. This visual representation of accomplishment helps to *build a sense of success* and thus improves self esteem.
14. Visual schedules provide *independence* by removing the need for students to ask others (particularly adults) about what schoolwork has to be done. Independent functioning (i.e. appearing 'normal') can increase a student's acceptance by his/her peers.
15. Visual schedules remove the necessity of having an adult verbally direct students to each upcoming event. Not only is a sense of independence and autonomy gained, but also the lack of direct adult verbal direction *removes what might otherwise become an opportunity for verbal argument or negotiation.*
16. Visual schedules serve as a reminder that a preferred activity is only one or two steps away after completion of a non-preferred task. Thus, the schedule helps a child to *learn patience and persistence.*
17. Visual schedules provide a means for students to schedule breaks and relaxing activities on their own initiative as they learn to be aware of their own needs and body signals. In other words, a schedule becomes a way for a student to learn to be *proactive in managing his/her own behavior.*
18. The use of visual schedules can be extended to *teach children long-range planning formats* or multi-stage or multi-task assignments.
19. Visual schedules can *cue recollection* of belongings that need to be assembled for home time, and of jobs that need to be completed before or at home time.

20. Research indicates that visual schedules and supports are *one of the most effective interventions* for children with receptive and expressive language difficulties. They are certainly one of the most easily implemented.

21. Research has demonstrated that visual systems actually *promote the development of oral communication* in non-verbal children. This evidence can serve to reassure those who fear that such system will inhibit language development in those who language is delayed. However, use of visual systems will *not guarantee* the development of language in the non-verbal child.

Adapted from Margaret Brown, POPARD, January 2001