

# Tool Kit

## Visual Schedules for Young Learners

Printable templates for daily routines

### For families and carers

A simple, practical toolkit to help young learners understand what is happening, what is changing and what comes next. Use the templates at home to support calmer mornings, smoother transitions and more predictable daily routines.

#### Reduce uncertainty

Children often feel calmer when they can see what is happening next.

#### Support independence

Visual prompts reduce the need for repeated verbal reminders.

#### Make transitions easier

A clear first/then plan can help children move between activities.

# How to use this toolkit

## Keep it simple

A visual schedule does not need to be perfect. Start with one tricky part of the day, such as getting ready for school, bedtime or leaving the house.

## What is a visual schedule?

A visual schedule is a simple way to show a child the order of activities using pictures, symbols, objects, words or a mixture of these. It helps make routines visible and predictable.

## It can help with:

- understanding what is happening now and next
- reducing anxiety linked to uncertainty or change
- supporting attention, memory and processing
- building independence with daily routines
- reducing repeated verbal instructions
- supporting children who find transitions hard

## How to introduce it

1. Choose one routine to start with.
2. Use clear pictures, simple words or real objects.
3. Show the schedule before the routine begins.
4. Point to each step as it happens.
5. Remove, tick or move each step when it is finished.
6. Celebrate progress, even if the routine is not perfect.

## Family note

Some children need the same visual repeated many times before it becomes helpful. This is not failure - it is the child learning to trust the routine.

# Choosing the right type of visual

Type of visual	Best for	Example	Tip
Real objects	Very young learners or children who need concrete prompts	A toothbrush for brushing teeth	Use the real item when pictures are too abstract.
Photos	Home routines and familiar places	Photo of their shoes or lunchbox	Take photos on your phone and print them.
Simple symbols	Repeating routines	A bed symbol for bedtime	Use the same symbol consistently.
Words	Children who read or recognise key words	Breakfast, shoes, school	Pair words with pictures when possible.

## Top tips for success

- Use fewer steps at first. Three to five steps is often enough.
- Use positive, clear language such as "shoes on" rather than "do not forget your shoes".
- Place the schedule where the routine happens.
- Build in something motivating after a difficult step.
- Use a finished box so the child can see progress.
- Change the schedule calmly when plans change and show the new plan visually.

# Template 1: First / Then Board

Use this when a child needs help moving from one activity to another. Keep it short and clear.

FIRST	THEN
Place picture or write activity here	Place picture or write activity here
<b>Example</b> First: shoes on. Then: choose a song for the car. First: bath. Then: bedtime story.	

## Template 2: My Daily Routine

Time / order	Picture or symbol	Activity
1	Draw, stick or write	
2	Draw, stick or write	
3	Draw, stick or write	
4	Draw, stick or write	
5	Draw, stick or write	
6	Draw, stick or write	
7	Draw, stick or write	
8	Draw, stick or write	

# Template 3: Morning Routine

Use this for school mornings or nursery mornings. Tick, move or remove each step as it is completed.

Done	Picture / symbol	Step	Notes
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Wake up	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Toilet	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Get dressed	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Breakfast	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Brush teeth	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Shoes on	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Coat and bag	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Leave home	

# Template 4: After School Routine

After school can be a high-demand time. Keep this routine gentle and include decompression time if needed.

Done	Picture / symbol	Step	Notes
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Arrive home	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Snack / drink	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Quiet time	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Change clothes	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Homework / reading	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Play / movement	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Dinner	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Bath or bedtime routine	

## Helpful idea

Some children need a quiet transition before questions, homework or chores. A visual such as "snack - quiet time - homework" can reduce overwhelm.

# Template 5: Bedtime Routine

Done	Picture / symbol	Step	Notes
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Tidy toys	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Bath / wash	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Pyjamas	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Brush teeth	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Toilet	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Story	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Cuddle / calm time	
[ ]	Draw or stick picture	Lights out	

## Bedtime tip

Try to keep the final steps the same each night. Predictability can help the body and brain feel safer.

# Template 6: Change and Transition Cards

These cards can be used when plans change, when it is time to stop, or when a child needs a warning before moving on.

Picture / symbol <b>5 minutes</b>	Picture / symbol <b>2 minutes</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Finished</b>
Picture / symbol <b>Something changed</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Wait</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Help please</b>
Picture / symbol <b>Break</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Try again</b>	Picture / symbol <b>All done</b>
Picture / symbol <b>Now</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Next</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Choice</b>

Tip: cut out, laminate if possible, and attach Velcro or blu tack so the routine can be changed easily.

# Printable Routine Cards

Cut out the cards below and use them on a schedule board. Add your own pictures or symbols above the words.

Picture / symbol <b>Wake up</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Toilet</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Wash hands</b>
Picture / symbol <b>Get dressed</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Breakfast</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Brush teeth</b>
Picture / symbol <b>Hair</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Shoes on</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Coat</b>
Picture / symbol <b>Bag</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Car / bus</b>	Picture / symbol <b>School</b>

Tip: cut out, laminate if possible, and attach Velcro or blu tack so the routine can be changed easily.

# More Printable Routine Cards

Picture / symbol <b>Snack</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Drink</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Quiet time</b>
Picture / symbol <b>Play</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Outside</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Homework</b>
Picture / symbol <b>Reading</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Screen time</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Dinner</b>
Picture / symbol <b>Bath</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Story</b>	Picture / symbol <b>Bed</b>

Tip: cut out, laminate if possible, and attach Velcro or blu tack so the routine can be changed easily.

# Blank Visual Cards

Use these to create personalised cards for your child, such as favourite activities, sensory breaks, family routines or places you visit regularly.

Picture / symbol _____	Picture / symbol _____	Picture / symbol _____
Picture / symbol _____	Picture / symbol _____	Picture / symbol _____
Picture / symbol _____	Picture / symbol _____	Picture / symbol _____
Picture / symbol _____	Picture / symbol _____	Picture / symbol _____

# Family Visual Schedule Plan

Use this page to decide how you will start. Keep it manageable and review what works.

Question	Family notes
Routine we want to support	
Hardest part of this routine	
Visuals we will use: objects, photos, symbols or words	
Where the schedule will be placed	
How we will show finished steps	
Motivator or calming activity we can build in	
What we will try for one week	

# When it does not go to plan

Visual schedules are a support tool, not a magic fix. If a child still finds the routine hard, the schedule may need to be made simpler, more motivating or more sensory-friendly.

**The child ignores the schedule:** Use fewer steps. Start with one first/then board and point to it calmly.

**The child becomes upset when something changes:** Add a "something changed" card and show the new plan visually.

**The routine is still too much:** Look at sensory needs, tiredness, hunger, transitions and timing. The schedule may need more breaks.

**The child removes all the cards:** Try a finished box, Velcro, or adult-led movement of each card at first.

**There are too many verbal reminders:** Use the visual as the reminder. Point, pause and give time to process.

## Remember

Connection comes before correction. A calm adult, a clear visual and reduced pressure can make transitions feel safer.

# Website download text

You can copy and paste this description onto your website next to the download button.

## **Download: Visual Schedules for Young Learners**

A free printable toolkit for families, including daily routine templates, first/then boards, transition cards and blank visual cards to support calmer routines at home.

## **Suggested button text**

- Download Free Toolkit
- Download: Visual Schedules for Young Learners
- Get the Printable Visual Schedule Templates