

# Visual Timetables

## Why use Visual Timetables:

Visual Timetables are useful to support children as they can:

- Help your child to see what activities they are going to be doing
- Help them to understand the order in which things are going to happen
- Visually represent what is going to happen throughout their day or within a specific activity
- Help to reduce anxiety around the routine of the day

Visual Timetables are most commonly used with pictures or symbols but they can also be used with the written word. It is helpful to keep a set of symbols that you are using to represent different activities but if you don't have these available you can draw pictures on post-it notes, write on a whiteboard or on a piece of paper.

Visual Timetables can be used for

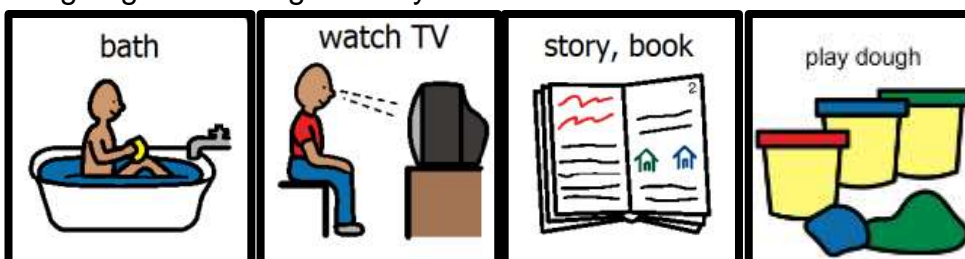
- A whole class of children
- A small group of children
- The whole family

Many Children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) may need and benefit from their own personalised visual timetable, even when a whole class timetable is available.

## How to introduce Visual Timetables:

Visual timetables can be used either in a top down or left to right format. It is often better to use a top down format, particularly for children who have not yet learnt that reading goes from left to right.

- Create a large strip of paper with Velcro down the centre of it (or across the middle if right to left).
- Make sure you have symbols or pictures (with Velcro on) available for the activities that you are going to be doing that day.



- Make sure that you have a finished box, bag or envelope at the end of the timetable that the symbols can be put in.
- At the start of the day or individual activity, place the symbols on the timetable in the order that they are going to happen.
- When you start an activity, show your child the symbol by pointing to it and say 'it's time for X'.

- When the activity has finished, say 'X is finished' and place it in the finished box.
- Tell your child what the next activity is by showing them the symbol and say 'it's time for X'

## Top Tips for Visual Timetables:

- Always use spoken language alongside Visual Timetables.
- It is important to use the Visual Timetable across the whole day.
- Once you have introduced Visual Timetables, make sure it is accessible throughout the day. At home, you could keep it on the fridge, on a door or somewhere else where the child can always see it. At school, you could stick it to the child's table or on their workstation (if they have one). This will make sure that the child can see it throughout the day and you can draw their attention to it if they want to move on to something else.
- If your child asks when a favourite activity is going to happen, show them the visual timetable and point to the activities that are going to be happening in a certain order.
- Make sure to include symbols like 'choosing time' or 'free time' so that your child can still choose what they do at certain times of the day.
- Adults using Visual Timetables will first need to show children how they are used. You will need to remove the symbols as they are finished but eventually, as your child becomes more familiar with Visual Timetables, they may start to remove the symbols themselves and place them in the finished box with a small amount of support once they have completed the activity. This is a good skill for developing their independence.
- Always make sure that the timetable is up to date; all activities that are finished should no longer be on the timetable. If a child looks at the timetable, they should know what is currently happening by looking at the first symbol on the timetable.
- It is useful to have finished box or envelope at the end of the timetable so that children or adults can put the finished symbols in this box.
- Once your child is familiar with how a visual timetable works, it is beneficial to introduce symbols such as 'Surprise' or 'Special Activity'. This supports them to work towards accepting that they will not always know exactly what will happen next but provides them with a familiar structure at the same time.
- Remember, for some children who are able to read or who are older, you can use a visual timetable using just the written word. You could write this on a whiteboard and rub off the word once the activity is complete so that your child knows what they need to do next.
- Visual timetables can also be used for set activities if there are lots of elements that need to be completed such as getting dressed or brushing your teeth.
- Visual timetables can be used alongside other forms of visual supports. *See our advice sheet on Working Towards Boards and First and Then Boards.*