

USING A VISUAL TIMETABLE

What is a visual timetable?

A visual timetable is a series of pictures or symbols that set out an order of activities, sometimes using cards that can be fixed to a schedule board. They can be used in a setting or at home. A visual timetable can help children to understand sequences of events and routines. It helps them to develop the concept of time – now, next, later, and to relate words to pictures, supporting their comprehension.

Ways of using a visual timetable with the whole setting or a group of children

1. Fold a long strip of paper to give a section for each activity within a session. Make a simple line drawing of each activity in sequence, one in each section, describing this to the children at the same time. At the end of the activity or session cross off the activities with the children, showing that they are finished.

2. Make a card for each activity using printed or drawn symbols and use Velcro to attach to a sectioned strip of board or card. Children can be asked to help put up the cards as you talk through the order of activities and to remove them once the activity has finished.

The sequence of activities is usually put in a list going downwards because children learn to scan up and down (vertical discrimination) first, or left to right to support pre-literacy skills.



Using a visual timetable with individual children

An individual timetable or schedule board can help a child to make sense of his/her day, to remember what to do and to anticipate what will come next. It can be as simple as a two square board to which picture/symbol cards can be affixed to show 'now' and 'next', or set out a longer sequence of activities from which the child selects each card in turn and places it in a 'current activity' box at the top of the timetable. In either case the child needs to be taught the sequence of steps to be used in following the schedule.

At home a simple schedule board can support routines like going to bed, with pictures of having a bath, putting on pyjamas, brushing teeth, having a story and putting your head on the pillow.