

Topic Summary:

A Visual Schedule is visual/concrete system used to tell a student what, where, and when activities will occur during their day; and can be used across environments (home, school, work, community), ages, and functioning levels. A Visual Schedule is also a means of teaching flexibility; top to bottom/ left to right progression; aides in transitions; provides predictability across environments; establishes routines; teaches the concepts of first-then and finished; and, accommodates receptive language deficits. The type of Visual Cue used to create a Visual Schedule, ranges from concrete to abstract, depending upon the student's level of understanding of abstractness. Some additional considerations for developing and implementing a Visual Schedule for an individual student: amount of flexibility, mobility, the routine for checking the schedule, and the visual cue used to indicate the schedule.

Implementation Checklist:

1. Using a tool such as the TEACCH Structured Teaching Assessment: Guides to Individualizing the Schedule and Work System, assess a student's ability to independently use a visual schedule. (Skills assessed include initiation, identifying own schedule, identifying which cue is next in sequence, understanding of the meaning of the visual cue, and staying on track.)
2. Individualize the structure for the student based upon assessment results.
3. Instruct the student in the use of the newly restructured Visual Schedule.
4. After a short period of time, reassess the student's use of the Visual Schedule.
5. Continue this process of reassessment and restructuring until the student has achieved independence in using the Visual Schedule for over a month.
6. Collect data and record student's progress in following a Visual Schedule independently. Reassess when necessary, making adjustments as indicated.
7. After several months to a year of complete independence, if you wish to introduce a more sophisticated or higher type of schedule, make only one change at a time. The goal is to design a schedule that will help your student function most independently!

Recommended Resources:

1. Faherty, Catherine (1998). TEACCH Structured Teaching Assessment: Guide to Individualizing the Schedule and Work System. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: TEACCH Autism Program, Dept. of Psychiatry.
2. <http://www.teacch.com>
3. Mesibov, G., Shea, V., & Schopler, E. (2005). The TEACCH Approach to Autism Spectrum Disorders. New York, New York: Springer Science & Business Media, Inc.

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