

What does it look like?

A schedule is a laid-out structure or plan on how and when tasks and activities will be completed.

A routine is established by repeatedly following a plan.

How to create a schedule

Make a list of the “Must Do” items. These are tasks or activities that are required for your child to complete. Next, list the “Want To” items. These are items or activities that your child enjoys. Your schedule will become your routine. Take these additional questions into consideration:

- When does your child have the most energy?
- What time of day does your child focus best?
- What are your child’s favorite academic subject areas? Consider scheduling a favorite activity following a less preferred activity.
- What other schedules are you taking into consideration?

Answers to these questions can help you to determine when to schedule activities. For example, if your child is most focused in the morning, aim to complete academic tasks during the earlier part of the day, saving less-demanding tasks for later in the day when your child may not be as attentive. Finally, allow your child to provide input to his or her schedule. Providing choices will contribute to building independence and decreasing problem behavior.

Examples of schedule tasks and activities:

Must Do items: math, reading/writing, content

Want To items: iPad, Legos, scooter/bike, Playdough

How?

Types of schedules

Object Schedules

- Use actual objects as the cue of what activities are to come.
- Good for students with visual impairments, severe/profound cognitive disabilities, and early learners

TO DO: Gather actual objects that will serve as the cues of which activities are a part of the schedule and arrange them in the order in which they’ll be completed. Examples could be blocks for building time or a math activity, play food to indicate snack or a play break, art materials for a project, a book for reading, etc. You can also talk to your child’s teacher to request suggestions.

Picture Schedules

- Pictures help our learners make meaning of the words we are telling by providing a visual representation of the activity.
- Activities are lined up in the sequence they will be done.
- After each activity is complete, the visual piece is removed.

TO DO: Print or gather pictures that will serve as the visual representation of the activities and align them on the wall or another surface (i.e. table, refrigerator, side of a piece of furniture) in the order that they will be completed.

First-Then Schedules

- Simply put, First-Then schedules present what will be done now (First) and what will be done next (Then). This is a proactive strategy to present a less-preferred activity, followed by a preferred item or activity.

TO DO: Using pencil or marker and paper, dry erase markers and a white board, window crayons on a window, draw two squares of equal size so they are side by side. On the left side, write, use a picture, or use an object to identify the task. On the right side, write, use a picture, or an object to identify the reinforcer that will follow the work task. (i.e. When your child completes his/her math activity, Then he/she will earn Playdough.)

Written schedules

- Written schedules are great for higher level readers

TO DO: Write your schedule using paper and pencil or on a dry erase board, window, or mirror using window markers, dry-erase markers, or window crayons.

How to reinforce your schedule

Build your “Want To” items into your schedule to reinforce your child for participating in and/or completing the “Must Do” items. Also, try to incorporate opportunities for social interaction with your child. Offer specific praise to your child such as “great work on your multiplication facts!” You can also provide smiles, high-fives, and pats on the back for behavior you want to see more of in the future.

Key Tips

*Review expectations prior to the start of an activity. Example: “First you will complete your math activity and then it will be time for Legos.”

*Set a timer. If your child is to read for 15 minutes, set a timer so he or she will know when the time is finished. The same goes for preferred or “Want To” activities. Set the timer so your child will know when it is time to transition to the next activity.

*Remember, your schedule is yours and you can change it to meet your needs. Be flexible with yourself and your child. If you have other demands such as a doctor appointment or work meeting, adjust your schedule to avoid overwhelming yourself and your child.

