

# Using Visual Timetables

*A visual timetable shows what is happening over a certain period of time in a visual way.*

## Why are visual timetables important?

### ➤ ***They support children's wellbeing***

We all like to know what is happening in our day, for example, on a training day we like to know what time lunch is and what time we will be going home! Likewise, children benefit from knowing what will be happening that day – particularly when lunch times, favourite activities, and home time will come. Visual timetables can reduce anxiety. This can be particularly important for autistic pupils and those with social, emotional needs. They are also very supportive for pupils settling into school or experiencing transitions, for example, pupils new to school.

*Having a regular routine that is clearly displayed on a visual timetable for pupils to understand helps them to know what to expect and therefore contributes to providing a safe, secure, predictable environment for children.*

### ➤ ***They are easier to understand***

Using a visual timetable is much easier for pupils to understand than using verbal language alone. Some pupils find it challenging to listen to, process and understand the language used when plans are explained to them verbally. Also, verbal language is transitory – it goes away once it has been said, whereas a visual timetable is there for a child to refer to again and again.

### ➤ ***They help to build independence around transitions***

Visual timetables help pupils to understand what is expected of them, so they can transition between activities and become involved more independently. Examples of this include collecting their belongings at home time or preparing for lunch. As children get older, visual timetables can help to build independence around self-organisation skills such as what to bring in to school each day.

### ➤ ***They provide valuable learning opportunities***


Using a visual timetable effectively can support children to learn about time and the days of the week, including vocabulary and language around time such as 'now,' 'next,' 'later,' 'after,' 'this afternoon.'

## 'Top Tips' for using Visual Timetables:

1

### Think about the type of 'visual' to use

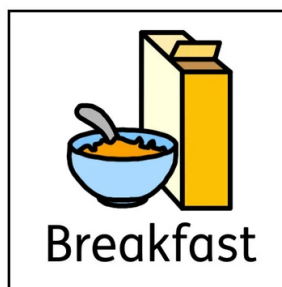
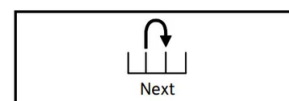
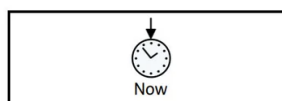
*You will need to think about what type of visual meets your pupils needs best. This may be different for various pupils in your setting. The below chart shows the progression of 'Visual Levels of Understanding.'*

	Actual Photo of their own item	Generic Photograph	Cartoon	Drawing	Symbol	
[real object]						Put shoes on on

2

### Think about the time period it will represent

*Would pupils benefit from knowing what is happening now / next or seeing the whole session or day represented?*



3

### Make sure the visual timetable reflects every pupil's experience.

*For example, if a child goes home early or a group of children go to a small group intervention, this needs to be shown on the visual timetable. Some children may benefit from their own visual timetable if their day varies significantly from the majority of pupils.*

**4**

**Refer to the visual  
timetable VERY  
OFTEN.**



**5**

**Remove each activity when it is 'finished' to show  
the passage of time.**

*Having a 'finished' box or wallet can be useful for this.*

**6**

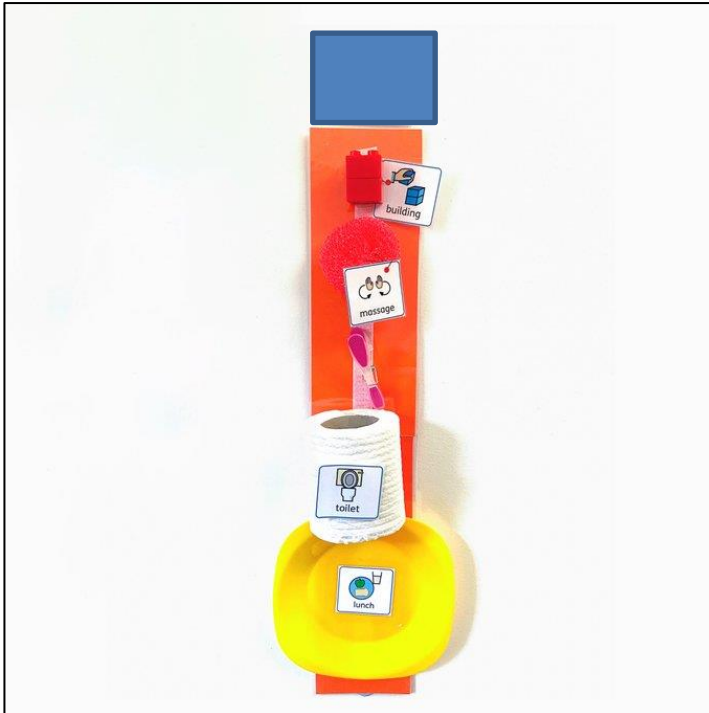
**Use the visual timetable to prepare children for any  
changes in routine.**

*Talk about any changes to the adults in class and any changes to activities or routines in the  
day.*

7

**Use sand-timers and 'transition songs' to support pupils to transition between activities.**

*Sand-timers are a supportive way of respecting pupil's high levels of involvement in their work or play and giving them an opportunity to finish what they are doing.*



8

**Keeping daily routines fairly similar each day in the Early Years will support pupils to follow routines and understand the visual timetable.**



## **Even more top tips...**

- Some pupils will find waiting for favourite activities challenging. You could encourage waiting patiently by drawing the activity they want e.g. playdough, on a post-it note and sticking it to the visual timetable to show when they can do that activity.
- Having a way of visually showing the day of the week and any upcoming weekends / holidays can be supportive – it's also a great way of learning days of the week and about time!