



# Consistently use schedules

## Practice brief

### The practice

Teachers ensure the learning environment is structured and predictable by preparing and consistently using class and/or individual schedules.

### How does it help?

Visual schedules support students on the autism spectrum by providing event, location, and occasionally time information in an accessible format that facilitates understanding and reduces teacher talk. Knowing what will happen and in what order can help reduce some of the anxiety experienced by students on the spectrum. Visual schedules enhance the structure and predictability of the learning environment and can be used to support the explicit teaching and consistent use of day-to-day routines. They can also be used to prepare students for changes in the daily routine.

### What is it?

Schedules depict a series of events using objects, photos, symbols, or words. They provide students with event, location, and time information. Schedules can be used with individual students and/or the whole class.

### How does it work?

Schedules let students know what events will occur where, and in what order, providing them with structure and predictability. The balance, order, and tempo of activities/events should be considered when developing class and/or individual schedules. In addition, teachers should take into account the student's attention span and when they are most alert. Routines are typically explicitly taught using schedules at the beginning of the year. When establishing a schedule:

- decide on the format of the schedule (e.g., object, picture, written)
- decide on the length of the schedule (e.g., activity, routine, transition, session, or day)
- decide on a set location for the schedule within the classroom
- explicitly teach schedule use
- consistently use the schedule
- monitor student use of the schedule
- make changes to the schedule when required and review the changes at the beginning of the day in order to help students feel secure and understand the expectations of their environment.





## How do I do it?

- Establish class and/or individual schedule/s.
- Review schedule/s frequently and prepare students for any changes.
- Consistently use schedule/s.
- Provide reinforcement when schedule/s are followed.

## It works better if:

- the teacher consistently puts down all the activities on the schedule, especially if unexpected things happen
- the teacher reviews schedules with students on a daily basis.

## It doesn't work if:

- the schedule changes without warning/for no reason
- schedules are not updated to reflect what is actually happening.

## How will I know if it's working?

- Students know what to do and when to do it, and do so independently.
- Off-task behaviours decrease.

## Where can I go to find out more?

- Indiana Resource Centre for Autism: "Understanding the Design and Power of a Personal Schedule"  
<https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/pages/understanding-the-design-and-power-of-a-personal-schedule>
- Queensland Government, Department of Education and Training "Developing supportive routines and schedules"  
<http://education.qld.gov.au/asd-online-resource-kit/schools/learning-environment/routines.html>

## Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST)

Implementing this practice will meet the following Australian Professional Standards for Teachers:

- 1.6 – Support full participation of students with disabilities
- 4.2 – Manage classroom activities

