



Guidelines for Setting up and Implementing Visual Timetables



Using Photographs or Symbols

Symbols or photographs can be set up in the form of a daily timetable or schedule. The timetables are used to increase independence and reduce anxieties around what is going to happen next.

Setting up:

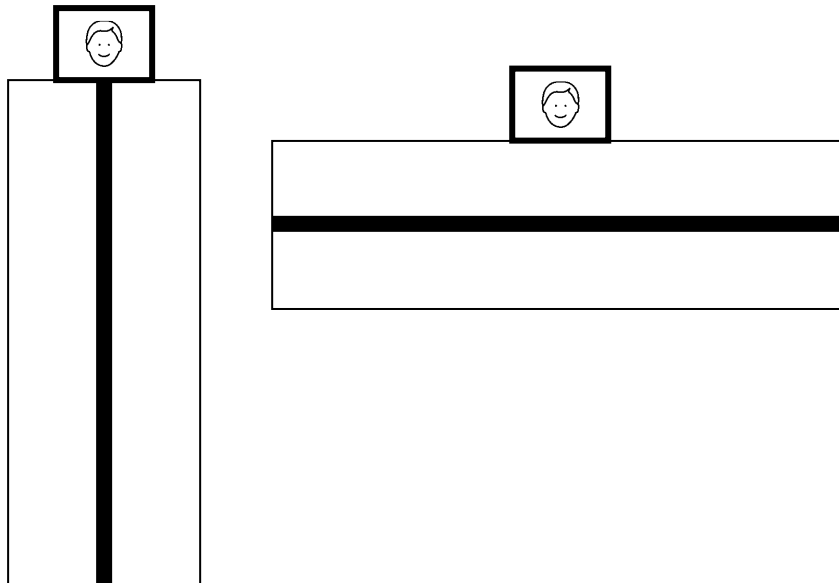
1. Firstly make a list of all the activities the person is likely to do during the day. This should include routine tasks as well as a range of different leisure and other required activities.
2. This activity list now needs to be transformed into 2D images depending on their level of symbolic development (see Symbolic Development Screening Toolkit). Boardmaker symbols are generally used by the local schools and day services however Makaton and Rebus symbols are other options. If the person is already familiar with a particular set of symbols these should continue to be used and added to. If using photographs then it is helpful if they can be as clear as possible and avoiding having lots of people in for confidentiality purposes.
3. Always have the written word underneath the symbol or photograph so that everyone supporting the person knows what each one means and uses the same word when referring to it.
4. The symbols/photos should be made the same size if possible and take into account the any visual needs the person may have. They should be laminated where possible to help make them durable (A duplicate and master set is always a good idea too!).
5. You also need to make a background strip to stick the symbols/photos onto. Laminate a strip of card and place a line of *soft* adhesive Velcro down the middle. Each individual symbol/photo card will need a piece of *rough* Velcro on the back. Blu-tac can be used as an alternative, cheaper option if Velcro is not an option.
6. The strip can be either vertical (with symbols/photos going from top to bottom) or horizontal (left to right).

Continued...



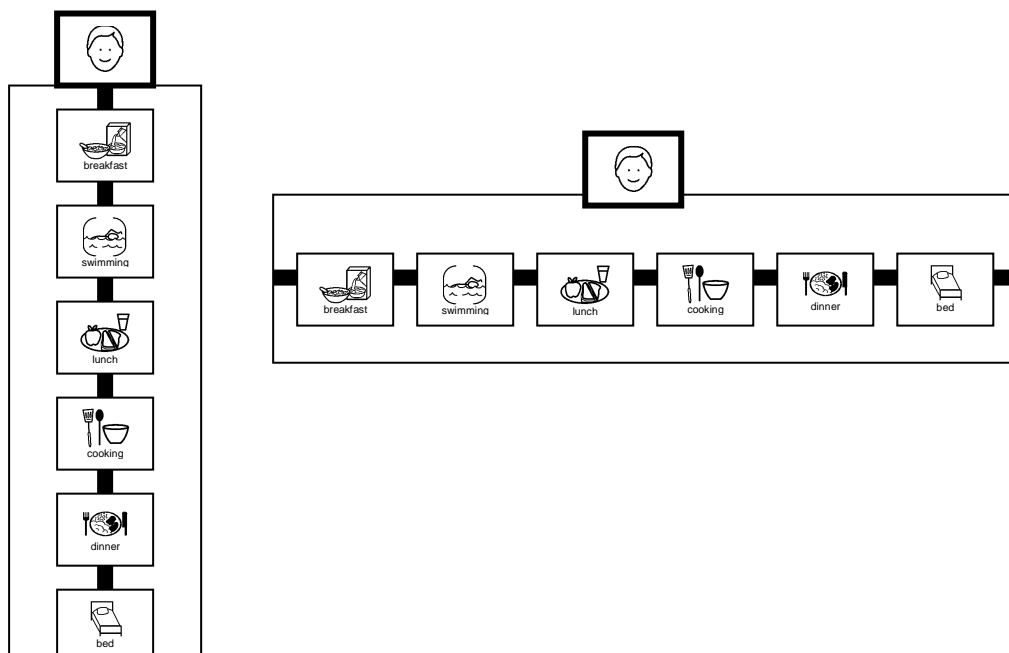
7. At the top of the strip some people have their photo and then the day of the week. Others just have their photo. This is based in what is going to be most meaningful to the person. If they have no concept of 'days of the week' then having a symbol of the day up there may not be helpful to them.

e.g.



8. Decide on a designated place for the timetable that will be most beneficial to the person and where others are less likely to 'rearrange' the symbols/photos!
9. The symbols/photos for the day's activity are stuck onto the strip at the beginning of each day, sequenced in the correct order in which they are going to happen. You may need to work to short time scales i.e. mornings and then afternoons if the person is unable to cope with a full day being presented at once.

e.g.





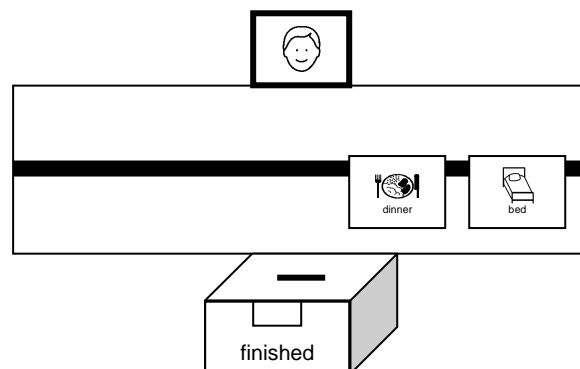
10. Mealtimes and breaks provide an important framework to plan the day around, so it is essential to always have these on the timetable. 'Bed' may also be a significant indicator of when the day will finish.
11. Avoid trying to include every little detail of the day, as this will be too much information for the person. Use a broad activity reference to indicate what sort of thing they will be doing and then use more specific symbols/photos, if need be, when the time comes to it, to give a choice or a more detailed sequence of a specific task.

e.g. Activity between breakfast and a break is 'Personal care'.

When the time comes to do 'Personal Care' the person could select their own symbols/photos of the specific things they need to do within that activity such as 'brush teeth', 'shave', 'shower' etc.

12. Setting up a '**finished**' box can help people to move from one activity to the next in a more concrete and structured way. This can be a box, envelope or wallet – i.e. anything that the completed activity symbols/photos can be 'posted' into. This ideally needs to be placed near the timetable to assist in the redirection back to the timetable for the start of the next activity. It should be labelled with the symbol and written word for 'finished', and the activity reinforced as 'finished' whenever used.

e.g.



Using the Timetable:

1. For some people it will be important to involve them in the process of preparing their timetable each day. It maybe possible for them to make some decisions about what they would like to do during particular times in the day. If this is the case, they should be offered a small choice of symbol/photo activity options. Their choice should be immediately placed on the board in the space relating to when this will happen.
2. Some people may find it too over-whelming to set the timetable up with you. If this is the case, it is essential they have their timetable ready for them as soon as they get up in the morning.
3. Direct person to timetable at start of every activity. Some people need a visual cue of their timetable as an additional and more concrete prompt to go to their timetable. This could be a symbol/photo representing their timetable. It is often helpful to make this cue card a different colour to the general activity symbols/photos used. The person would be shown the card alongside the verbal prompt each time they needed to go to their timetable.



4. The person should be encouraged to remove the next activity symbol/photo from their timetable and use this to 'transition' to that activity. Avoid placing any pressure on the person if they are not able to remove the symbol/photo themselves (due to physical difficulties or because they find it too overwhelming). If this is the case, you should remove the symbol and just show them it at the same time as saying what is going to happen next.
5. Take the symbol/photo to the relevant activity and place it (if possible) next to or near the person so that it can be referred to if they need redirecting back to the activity for any reason.
6. When the activity has finished the person (or you with the person observing) should place the symbol/photo into the 'finished' box. Next, cue the person to go back to their timetable and begin the process again with the next activity on the timetable.
7. Some people find it very difficult to move from one environment to another without becoming anxious (e.g. moving from home to day service). A '**transition**' card can help with this. This is a cue card that the person is given to hold or look at, which cues them into going to their set timetable in the new environment as soon as they arrive. This can be as simple as a specific coloured card or a picture that the person likes to look at. The person will learn to associate this card with what is expected through consistent support to do exactly the same thing each time they are given it (i.e. go straight to find their timetable).
8. **Changes to the timetable** can't always be predictable, yet change is one of the hardest things for a lot of people to cope with. By creating an '**oops**' card this can make changes more manageable because it itself becomes the reliable factor during the change (i.e. 'I'm not doing swimming as usual but it's ok because the 'oops' card has been put up telling me another activity that I like will happen instead.'). This card can be a funny face or anything that an individual associates with making a mistake (e.g. The Simpsons' "doh!"). This would be stuck over the planned activity as the person is told about the change and then the alternative activity symbol/photo placed alongside or in the place of the cancelled activity whilst the person is watching.

e.g.

