



Coronavirus Family Guide

Information
Sheet No.4

Helping you to navigate challenging times

The reassuring importance of Timetables and Visual Supports

Over the past couple of weeks we have all experienced how it feels to have big changes made to our lives with little time to prepare. During this period of uncertainty and change, having some form of consistency and structure is crucial for everyone.

Most people will use some kind of visual reminder to help them keep organised in their daily lives, from a simple to-do list, to a detailed family calendar. As adults these help us to keep on top of tasks, upcoming events and take away the pressure of having to simply remember everything.

This is just the same for our children. In addition to teaching our children these important organisational skills, this can help reduce apprehension about the day ahead and allow them to communicate without expressing thoughts verbally.



Timetables and Schedules

Timetables and calendars can work well for anyone of any age—they give us a reassuring sense of certainty about what is happening that day. However during this time when life is changing almost daily, it might be worth scaling back how far ahead you share your plans with your child or young person until things are clearer. Particularly when speaking about when things will return to “normal”.

Some children may prefer just to know what is coming up after their current activity so you could use “now” and “next” or “first” and “then”. Other children may prefer having a timetable for the whole day ahead.

You could look at the timetable the night before or in the morning. It may be helpful to get your child to help you decide which order to do things. You could give them a small selection of activities and they could either decide which ones to do that day or in which order to do them in. This may help them to be more receptive to following the timetable and give them an element of feeling in control.

Trying to keep to a similar layout for each day may help ease some of the anxiety as > [Page 2](#)

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everyone knows what to expect. Ensure breaks and “down time” are included on your timetable.

If you are feeling particularly organised, then a plan of the week might help for the family to know what is coming up. This could be as detailed or as brief as you all need. It could reflect which days school work will be done, and if a member of the household is still working (whether at home or out as a key worker) it could show when they will be at work.

Depending on the needs of your child or young person the timetable could be made using words, signs, symbols, pictures, photographs or even tactile objects that represent the activity – whatever your child is most familiar with.

Some children find it difficult to relate a drawing or symbol to a real life activity or object, so photographs or short videos of specific items or your child doing the activity may be helpful. You could also use a tactile object to represent the activity, for example a spoon for breakfast.

Some families may prefer to create something digitally on their smart device or computer, or physically using paper, post-it notes or a whiteboard. Whether it is done as a pristine, colourful table or simply a written list on a piece of scrap paper, do what is manageable and works best for your family.

Images, ideas and templates can be found on the links below, or via search engine images or Pinterest.

First and Then https://do2learn.com/picturecards/howtouse/first_then.htm

Picture Schedule <https://do2learn.com/picturecards/howtouse/schedule.htm>

Library of printable images <https://do2learn.com/picturecards/printcards/index.htm>

Downloadable Timetable Templates for Excel

<https://www.calendarpedia.co.uk/timetable-excel-templates.html>

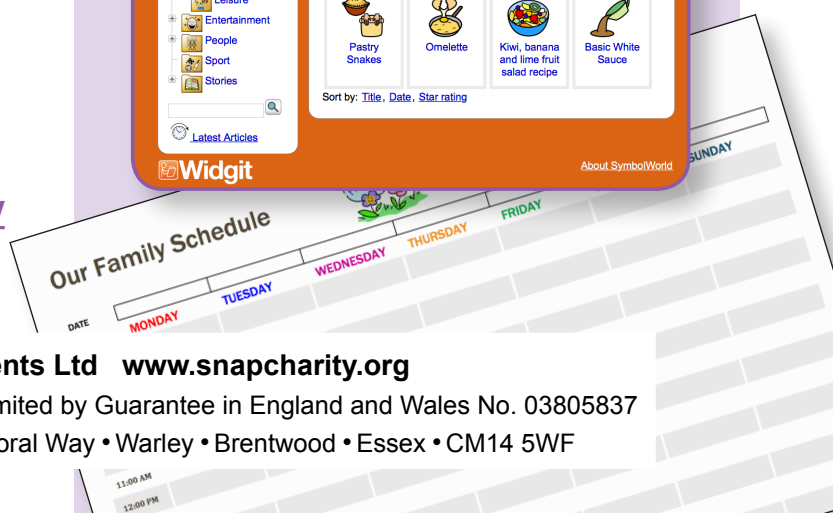
Daily Visual Timetable Resources <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/class-management/daily-routine/visual-timetable>

Visual Timetable App <https://mypicturepath.com/>

Symbol Library <https://symbolworld.org/categories/show/46>

Printable PDF Timetable <https://www.pricelessparenting.com/documents/family%20schedule.pdf>

Microsoft Office has a huge number of downloadable templates for Word and Excel <https://templates.office.com/en-us/schedules>



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Other Visual Supports

We can also use visual supports to help children and young people learn new skills or routines.

This could be related to hygiene, such as washing our hands or brushing our teeth, or learning to do something independently such as getting dressed or making a sandwich.

For some routines (if appropriate) you could take photos or a video of your child or young person completing each step in the process. For older children and young people you could compare it to creating a YouTube tutorial. This may also be helpful if you do not have a printer at home as they can be viewed on your smart device.

Visual supports can also help children communicate their wants, needs and emotions. This could be anything from showing what they like or dislike, to communicating pain or sensory overload.

Images, ideas and templates can be found on the links below, or via search engine images or Pinterest.

Visuals for Routines and/or Independence Skills

Hand Wash Routine <https://www.widgit.com/resources/popular-topics/wash-hands/index.htm>

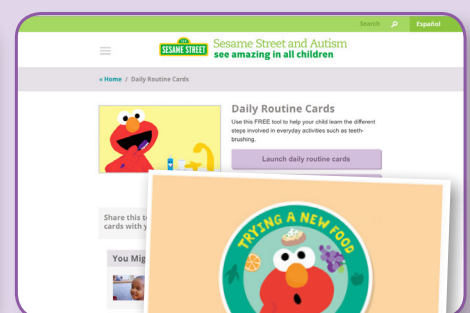
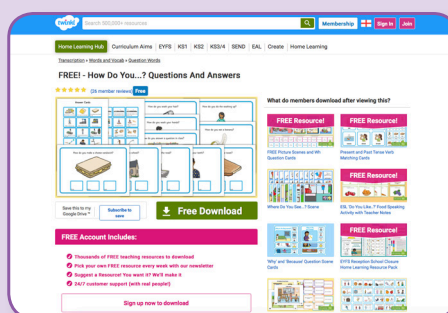
Getting Ready Routines <https://do2learn.com/picturecards/howtouse/reminderstrips.htm>

Sesame Street Daily Routine Stories <http://autism.sesamestreet.org/daily-routine-cards/>

Visual Timetable Resources <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/specialeducationalneeds-sen-cognition-and-learning/sen-visual-timetables-and-routine/sen-daily-routine>

Self Care/Getting Ready Routines <http://www.livingwellwithautism.com/how-to-use-picture-cards-and-schedules/self-care-visual-helpers>

Sequencing a routine activity <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resource/t-s-625-how-do-you-questions-and-answers>





Visuals for Communicating

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

<https://pecs-unitedkingdom.com/pecs/>

Objects of Reference <https://www.totalcommunication.org.uk/objects-of-reference/>

What is Important to Me ECC Talking Mat direct download <http://www.essexlocaloffer.org.uk/sites/default/files/What%27s%20important%20to%20me%20%28Using%20Talking%20Mats%29.pdf>

Communicating feeling unwell <https://www.twinkl.com.au/resource/t-t-3912-parts-of-the-body-communication-cards>

Lego Face Emotions and communicating sensory overload http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-gnfrVRA0t7M/Tf_DaVa2YJI/AAAAAAAAANU/gWzMLt6lj_Y/s1600/Feel+PECS.png

Emotional Resources <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/resources/specialeducationalneeds-sen-communication-and-interaction/sen-autism-spectrum-disorders/sen-autism-spectrum-disorders-emotions>

The Zones of Regulation is a full curriculum aimed at teaching children and young people to identify, communicate and regulate their emotions. <http://www.zonesofregulation.com/free-downloadable-handouts1.html> It is designed as 18 lessons which are to be taught in order, to get the most benefit from the programme. However even without the lesson plans there are a lot of helpful resources for identifying and discussing emotions and building a "toolkit" of strategies to help regulate feelings. You can find a huge amount of resources by searching Zones of Regulation online or on Pinterest.

OBJECTS OF REFERENCE
make the connections

DID YOU KNOW.

Objects of Reference are objects that are systematically and consistently used with a person to represent people, places, objects and activities. They are used alongside the spoken word.

They can be:

- Whole object – A cup to represent "drink".
- Parts of objects – A piece of a seatbelt to represent "car seat" or "going on a car journey"
- A miniature version of the object – A toy train to represent "a real train"
- An item that smells, feels, sounds or looks like the actual object, event or person – a small container of perfume specifically used to represent the person that uses it.
- An item that has no obvious connections to the activity but through using it cautiously and frequently can come to represent the activity – e.g. Lego people to represent school assembly.

They should be:

- relevant to each individual

Specialist Teaching and Preschool Service
One Plan Project
Essex County Council

Finding out "What's important to me?" **USING TALKING MATS**

Talking Mats are a way for children and young people with significant communication difficulties to identify their likes and dislikes. Symbols or photos are used instead of words. The child or young person places the symbols/photos onto a mat underneath the picture depicting either:

- I like
- Not sure
- I don't like

This provides a visual record of the child/young person's views, and a photograph of the completed mat can be kept as a record of the interaction, and presented at the One Planning meeting if required.

A child needs to be able to understand what symbols or photos represent. To use Talking Mats effectively, the child needs to be able to understand sentences containing three key words or more.

What you need to do:

- Cut out the faces and activities cards. Place the cards onto a fabric mat or A3 laminated card attaching with either velcro or Blutac.
- Present the topic and some symbols appropriate to the child's age and interest ... say "we're going to talk about activities and other things that you like and don't like". Point to the corresponding symbol as you say it.
- Use open questions to guide the conversation, for example "how do you feel about maths?", or "what do you think about maths?", rather than "do you like maths?". Ask about actions and/or behaviours that the child likes or dislikes.

