

AIMS

- To help pupils navigate their way through a routine task.
- To help embed the routine so that the pupil becomes independent.
- To minimise anxiety and potential distress associated with routine tasks.

WHAT IS IT?

A visual schedule shows the order of steps in a routine task. It is also a way to show a child the beginning of a task and the end of the task. It might use real photographs, drawings, cartoon pictures or symbols. Visual cues that show a specific task can be beneficial for many children of all ages, abilities, and cognitive levels. Visual cues are helpful in teaching the steps of toothbrushing, toilet training, getting changed for P.E., getting ready for Home Time etc. It should contain visual cues that can be removed or ticked when each step is completed.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD IT BE USED?

Whenever a specific routine is required. Pupils will initially need to be prompted to use their schedule. The amount of guidance will depend on their level of confidence in using the schedule. Gradually withdraw support.

IMPLEMENTATION

- 1) Create visual cues (3cm x 3cm is ideal) of all the steps within a routine task. Communicate in Print is a useful tool for creating visual cues, but Twinkl is also a good resource. It is important that pupils understand what the visual cues mean. Depending on the age and stage of the pupils, photographs or their own drawings may be preferable.



- 2) Use a A4 (or A3) sheet, fold in half lengthways, cut into a strip and put the title of the routine at the top. Laminate and place a long Velcro strip vertically down the middle. Cut the accompanying piece of Velcro into approximately 1cm squares and adhere to the back of each visual cue. Some pupils may benefit from a template on which to place the visual cues. The number of squares is determined by the number of steps in the routine. Be guided by what works best for the pupil. For older pupils, consider using post-it notes or simply a bullet-pointed list of steps.



- 3) If possible, work together with the pupil to place the visual cues onto the schedule and talk about the steps. Rehearse the routine in a quiet place where no other demands are made of the pupil. After a step is complete, take that picture off the schedule (tick place a tick by the step with a whiteboard marker or put a cross through the step on a post-it note) to help the pupil know where they are up to.
- 4) Once the routine has been rehearsed several times, encourage the pupil to work out what the steps are by asking questions such as "What do you think you have to do first/next/afterwards?" etc. If the pupil is not sure, suggest that they look at their schedule to find out.

- 5) Encourage the pupil to use the schedule whenever it is needed. Support them at first, using a mediated learning approach and gradually withdraw the level of support using a backwards chaining technique – support the pupil with the first 3-4 steps and encourage them to do the last one independently.