

Setting Up Activity Schedules

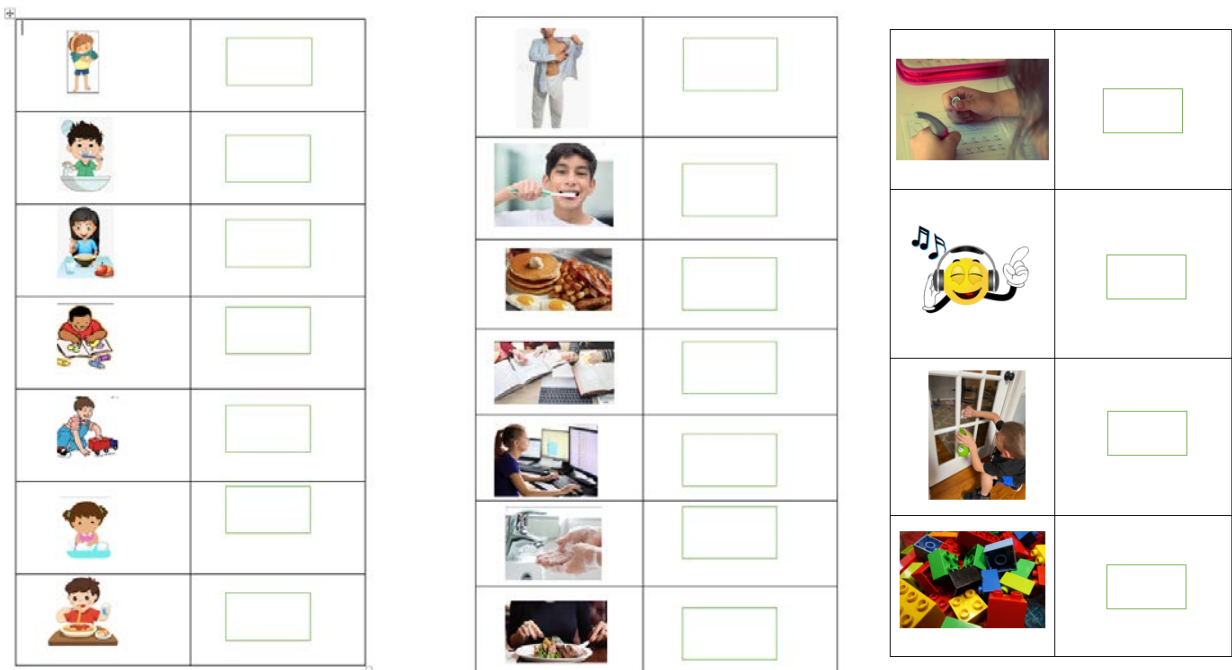
An activity schedule is a set of pictures or words that cue the child to do a set of activities in sequence. Getting your child to use an activity schedule may promote independence and teach self-management skills. Here are some guidelines to help you set up an activity schedule for your child at home:

Skills the child needs to start an activity schedule:

- Identifying pictures. It helps if the child can say the names of the pictures, but the minimum requirement is that the child can touch the picture when it is named.
- Matching (identical objects and pictures, picture to object/object to picture).
- The ability to complete some tasks independently.

Setting up the schedule:

- Prepare the materials:
 - The materials should be organized to allow the child to independently follow the schedule:
 - Pictures on a background that can be moved from left to right or flipped over as each task is completed.



- For children who can read, you can use a written list that can be crossed off or checked as each activity is completed
- Start with only a single task. As the child learns to follow the picture schedule, you can continue adding other activities and chores.
- In the beginning, start with tasks the child prefers to do. You can build the schedule to include less preferred tasks as the child learns to follow the system. Some examples of tasks to be scheduled include preparing a snack, putting together a preferred puzzle, or coloring a picture. You can build up to tasks that are more complex such as making the bed, folding cloths, or taking care of a pet.
- Gradually increase the number of activities on the schedule and vary the activities to allow the child to be more flexible in responding to day-to-day changes in routines.

Having Your Child Complete Independent Activities

Plan how you will reinforce:

- Select reinforcers that are valuable. At first, this will involve directly providing the child with some preferred item or event following completion of the activity. As the child learns more skills, a token system may be used. The child must first learn that the tokens are useful for trading for the preferred things they like. If your child has learned to value tokens, such a system may make delivery of reinforcement a little easier.
- It is best to provide reinforcement when the child completes the schedule. The goal is for them to get through the sequence of steps or activities independently. This is why it is helpful to start with few, short, easy, and preferred tasks to set them up for success and reinforce completion of longer or less preferred activities.

How to prompt/help and fade to independence:

- Use physical manual guidance to teach them to follow each step. For example, gently guide the child's movements to complete each step. To teach independence it is usually best to avoid telling the child what to do at each step. This is because when we use verbal prompt (for example, saying "go to the next step" or "go to the next picture") we teach the child to wait until they are told what to do rather than working independently.
- Fade your guidance as much as possible.
- Fade your presence by increasing distance between you and the child
- In some cases, you can fade your presence to a completely different room. One example would involve having your child complete tasks in their bedroom while you are in another room. In other cases, you will fade to where you can still monitor your child, but be engaged in something else. For example, your child may be completing tasks at the counter while you are preparing a meal.