

Visual Schedules and Visual Rules

Tip Sheet

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Routines

Children and adults cannot learn if they don't first feel safe and connected. Routines build safety by telling everyone what is expected where and when, providing consistency and predictability. Often, we expect children (and adults) to already know how to meet expectations. However, this sets many up for failure if they haven't already been taught how to meet these expectations. Clearly conveyed routines that include time for practice set everyone up for success.

A Note on Visuals

Young children's brains use images (mental models) to govern behavior. Visuals are also very effective in communicating with adults and can be very useful in the overall center environment.

M = Model your procedures and expectations with children

A = Add visuals

P = Practice, practice, practice

Visual Schedules

Daily schedules are essential for young children. Children use them to tell time and regulate their internal clocks. It teaches them to predict what will happen next and be empowered to tackle the next task.

Putting your daily schedule in pictures allows it to be accessible to children, increasing the sense of safety. The goal is to post key daily events in your schedule rather than every minor moment. Using pictures of your current students increases the power of the visual schedule.

Review the schedule with all children multiple times a day and make changes to the schedule as needed. Students who need more support may need an individualized schedule to better meet their needs.

For the Classroom

- Materials Needed:
 1. Family Communication – to be sent out prior to starting a visual schedule (or before any major changes to the schedule)
 2. Pictures that illustrate each event in the schedule
 3. Velcro (to allow movement of daily events as needed)
 4. Display area accessible to children
 5. Helpful – pictures of your current students that illustrate the events on the schedule
- Steps to Success:
 1. Send out family communication prior to starting or changing the visual schedule in your classroom. Communicate in as many ways as possible: meetings, letters home, emails, phone, text, etc.
 2. Review the schedule with the children multiple times a day (before instruction, before snack, recess, lunch, etc.) to help children internalize the order of events.
 3. Encourage children to reference the schedule themselves to answer their questions, starting by doing it with the child (“When is lunch? Let’s go look at the schedule.”)
 4. Change visuals as needed if they don’t seem to be meeting children’s needs.

Visual Rules

For rules to be effective they must be clearly communicated. Adding visuals to your rules helps convey exactly what expectations mean and how they can be met. Visuals are always more powerful when they incorporate pictures of your current students and staff. Visual rules are effective for the classroom and the center level.

Visual rules come in two different forms:

1. Pictures and words displayed in the room and referred to frequently by children and adults.
 - a. e.g. A rule posted that says “Walking Feet” along with a picture of children walking.
2. Modeling by adults. Done frequently and repeatedly. (“Do as I say AND as I do”)
 - a. “We walk in the classroom to stay safe. Walk like me.” (adult models walking and encourages child to practice walking with them)

For the Classroom or Center

- Materials Needed:
 1. Family and Staff Communication – to be sent out prior to starting or changing the visual rules
 2. Pictures that illustrate each rule
 3. Display area accessible to children
 4. Helpful – pictures of your current students/staff that illustrate the events on the schedule
- Steps to Success:
 1. Send out family and staff communications prior to starting, or changing, the visual rules. Communicate in as many ways as possible: meetings, letters home, emails, phone, text, etc.
 2. Review the visual rules with children/staff frequently.
 3. Model rules for children/staff consistently
 4. Change visuals if they don’t seem to be meeting needs.
 5. Tip: Do not have children (or adults) go find the rule they have broken.
This is a time for modeling and teaching, not judgement.

Resources

- Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms by Dr. Becky Bailey
 - Chapter 3 – The School Family
 - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/book-portal/chapter-3-school-family/>
 - Chapter 4 – Composure
 - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/book-portal/chapter-4-composure/>
 - Chapter 5 – Assertiveness, pages 152 - 156
- Creating the School Family: Bully-Proofing Classrooms Through Emotional Intelligence by Dr. Becky Bailey
 - Chapter 6 – Visual Rules and Routines
- Visual Schedules
 - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/resources/visual-daily-schedule/>
 - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/e-learning/webinars/visual-morning-schedule/>
 - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/how-to-create-a-daily-schedule-for-young-children/>
- Visual Routines
 - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/shuberts-classroom/daily-routines/>
 - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/sophies-classroom/daily-routine/#howto>