

Visual Routines

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 Routines

Visual routines promote a felt sense of safety by clearly communicating expectations. We often assume others know how to do basic routines (e.g. hanging up a jacket or lining up quietly). However, if a skill or routine hasn't been taught or hasn't been internalized through sufficient practice, a person can't be successful at it.

A routine is not a rule. A rule is enforced, and there are consequences if a rule is broken. A routine is simply the way you expect something to be done. It is a procedure which can bring order and predictability to the classroom if followed consistently by everyone.

Routines must be taught in much the same way as any academic skill. If a child can't/won't follow a routine, we must assume that additional information or a different way of presenting the information is needed (i.e. more concrete modeling, more specific visuals, more practice). If a child still doesn't follow the routine, then it is a relationship issue. Disconnected children are disruptive.

For the Classroom

- **Materials Needed:**
 1. Family Communication – to be sent out prior to starting a visual routine (or before any major changes to routines)
 2. Pictures that illustrate the routine you want to visualize
 3. Display area accessible to children near where the routine is to take place
 4. Helpful – pictures of your current students that illustrate the routine
- **Steps to Success:**
 1. Send out family communication prior to starting or changing the visual routines in your classroom. Communicate in as many ways as possible: meetings, letters home, emails, phone, text, etc.
 2. Determine which routines you would like to visualize first. Hint: Look for times of chaos in your room. This is a clue that a visual routine is needed.
 3. For each routine, break the routine down into as many clear steps as needed. Add a visual for each step
 4. Post the routine in the area it is to take place.

5. Model the routine for children consistently.
6. Change visuals or steps as needed if they don't seem to be meeting children's needs.

Resources

- Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms by Dr. Becky Bailey
 - Chapter 5 – Assertiveness
 - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/book-portal/chapter-5-assertiveness/>
- Creating the School Family: Bully-Proofing Classrooms Through Emotional Intelligence by Dr. Becky Bailey
 - Chapter 6 – Visual Rules and Routines
- Visual Routines
 - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/shuberts-classroom/daily-routines/>
 - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/sophies-classroom/daily-routine/#howto>
 - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/resources/visual-routines/>
 - <https://consciousdiscipline.com/resources/learning-routines-for-children/>