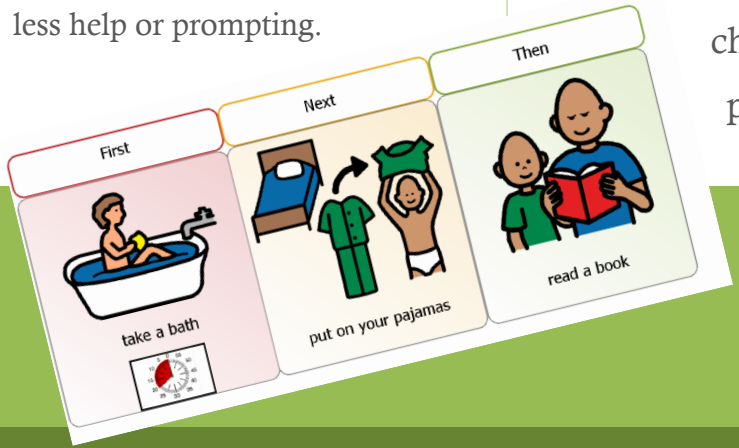
Visual Schedules

Visual schedules are picture representations of a series of events. There are a variety of formats and they may be used to help your child understand and manage daily events.

Visual schedules can:

- Improve behavior related to changes in routines or completing less-preferred tasks.
- Reinforce or teach abstract concepts, such as time (e.g., next, later), actions, and prepositions (e.g., open, put in,
- Break down multi-step tasks into smaller, more manageable parts.
- Increase your child's independence by improving his ability to complete parts of his routine with less help or prompting.



Children with Down syndrome have a relative strength in visual processing skills. Presenting information visually helps to improve your child's understanding of what you say. Visual schedules can be used to help prepare for and complete an upcoming activity or event. They help to establish expectations, increase comprehension of routines, and decrease anxiety or behaviors related to changes in a routine or completing less preferred tasks.

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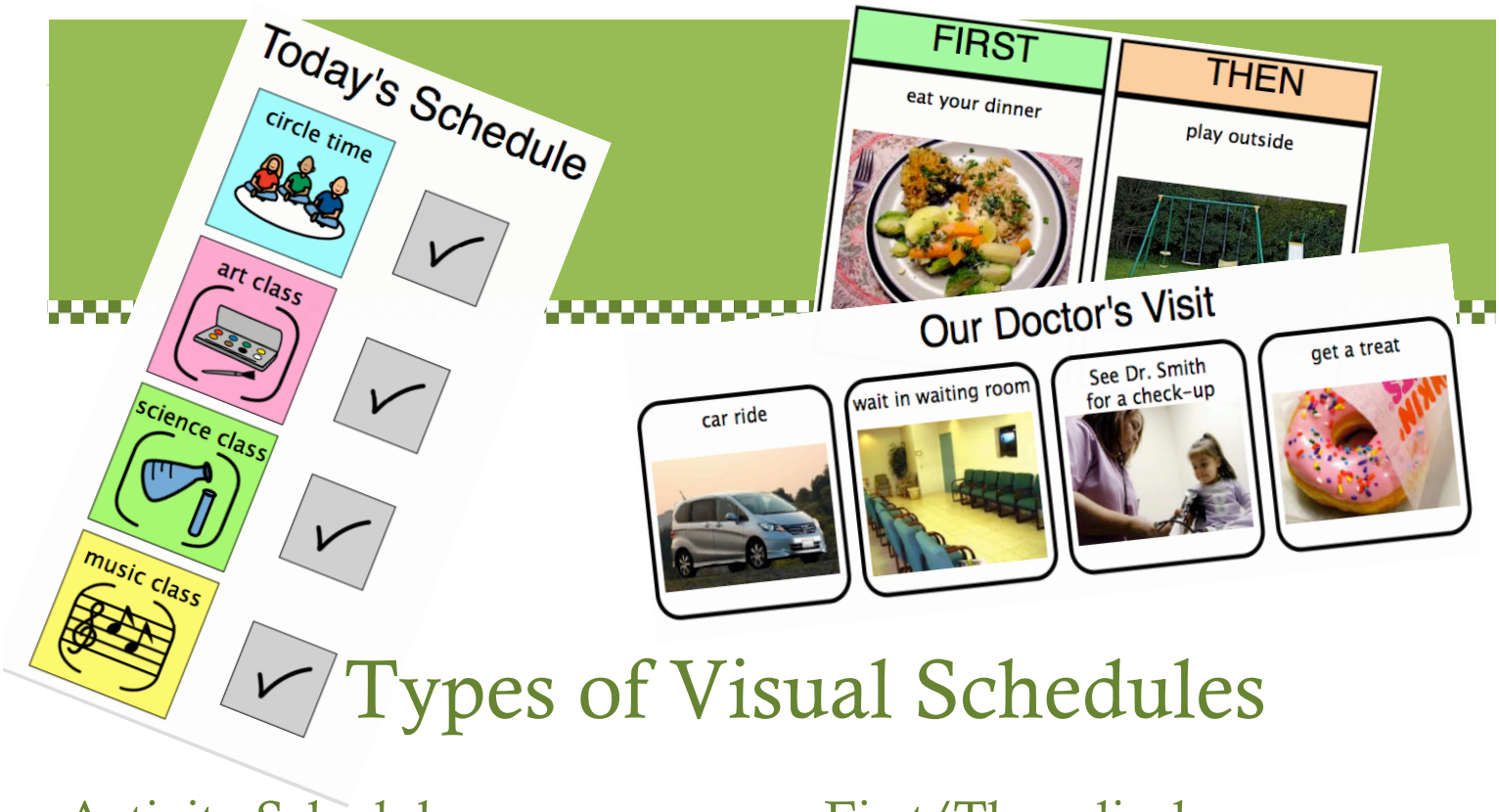
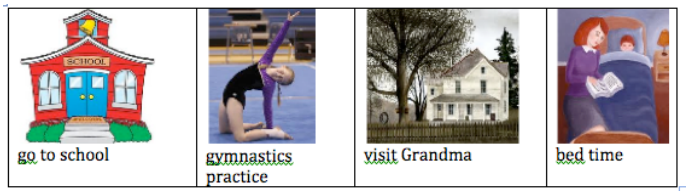


Types of Visual Schedules

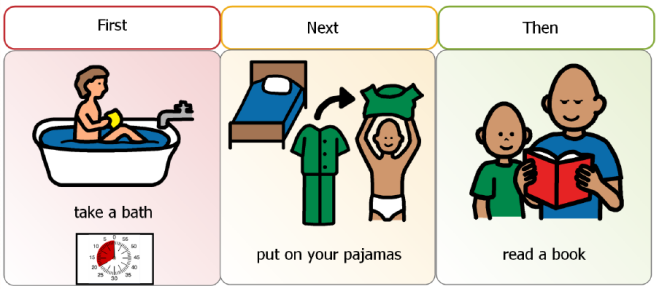
Activity Schedules

These displays typically represent multiple parts of a single activity or events within a day. These can be used within the classroom to outline the schedule for the day, at home to break down the steps to common routines, or to prepare for non-routine events (e.g., visit to the doctors, plane ride, etc.).



First/Then displays

These types of displays typically depict two activities, with the second activity commonly representing a reward. They can be used to break down a task into two or three parts. They may also be used to help your child complete a non-preferred activity, in which she can visually see what reward she is earning.



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How to Create Visual Schedules

Identify routines or tasks

These may include daily routines at home or school, or uncommon/less preferred events. Also, consider positive behaviors that you want to encourage. Examples include:

- Getting ready for school in the morning
- Getting ready for bedtime
- Visit to the doctor's office
- Change in a regular routine
- Meal times

Where do I get pictures to use on the schedule?

- A **digital camera** or the camera on your smart phone/device.

Various websites:

- **www.google.com/images:** Google images has a wealth of searchable images.

- **http://www.visualaidsforlearning.com/:** This is an excellent resource that includes many pre-made schedule elements and templates (e.g., night routine).

- **http://www.do2learn.com/:** Another good resource that includes a variety of pre-made visual schedule templates.

- **http://childrenwithspecialneeds.com/index.php/downloads.html:** Many free downloadable images.

Determine format

Determine the best format for the display based upon the goal of the task (i.e., help the child complete a less preferred task or complete a multi-step event). Determine how the completion of the activity will be completed (i.e., "all done" basket, check marks, etc.). Decide if you want the pictures to be removable from the display or not. Gather supplies needed (e.g., Velcro, contact paper, pictures, etc.).

What program should I use to make the displays?

- **Microsoft Word or PowerPoint:** Use the "Tables" feature to create custom schedules

- **-http://connectability.ca/visuals-engine:** Free website, allows you to design and print communication boards from 1-16 images per page. You can use their pictures or upload your own.

- **http://lessonpix.com/:** Subscription-based website, includes a searchable image library and various templates including visual schedules, first/then displays, and many more. ($2/month)

- **http://www.pogoboards.com:** Subscription-based program, create custom boards with access to a robust symbol library. ($9.95/month, 14-day free trial)

- **-http://www.pictoselector.eu/index.php:** Free Windows download, create custom boards with large symbol library and ability to import your own photographs.

Apps for Visual Schedules

There are several applications available for creating a variety of types of visual schedules ***(a few examples as of October 2012***). The following list is a sample of some applications available on iDevices (iPod Touch, iPad) and should not be viewed as an exhaustive list:

Choiceworks, $9.99

- Create custom routine boards, 'waiting board' with timer, and other types of visual supports.

First Then Visual Schedule, $9.99

- Create simple list-based schedules

Video Scheduler, $12.99

- Create visual schedules with the option for including videos to depict a task.

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