

VISUAL SCHEDULES

What They Are, and Why They work

By [Rachel Marie – Learning and Behaviour Consultant](#)



The Morning



The morning starts with arts and crafts. This is a **fun activity** for the child. Because they like it they **can do it independantly**, and will be in a positive mood after they are done.



Partway through the morning is a **snack break**. They child may be **hungry** at this time again. This also will **help the child transition** to the next activity which they do not enjoy as much.



After their snack the child is asked to do some reading. This is still a quieter task, but is **more academicy focused**. It will help the childs mind **move from fun to schoolwork**, which they will be doing in the afternoon.

Primary focus: quiet activities which do not require a lot of energy / focus, **help the child "get started"** and mentally prepare for more demanding tasks later in the day

The Afternoon



After lunch, the child watches an interesting video. This specific **video is related to the science lesson planned later** that afternoon. The child is then interested and **excited to learn more**.



After a quiet morning and a video, the **child is getting "antsy,"** so a physical break is planned. The child **goes outside to play** at the nearby playground, which helps **burn energy**, have a **positive social interaction** with other kids, and is **calming because it's outside**



The **child is hungry again**, so another snack is planned. It also helps the child **move from the active state** they were in outside, **to a relaxed alert state** needed for schoolwork. The parent and child eat together, because they will be doing the next lesson together as well.



The last activity that afternoon is a science **lesson** which is the **most academically demanding task** of the day. This is a particular curriculum the parent is following, and the **activity is parent led**. The child is already interested because they watched a video earlier in the day.

Primary focus: This is the **time of day the child has the most focus and energy**. Therefore, this is when the bulk of the child's **schoolwork** is done, as well as some sort of **exercise**.

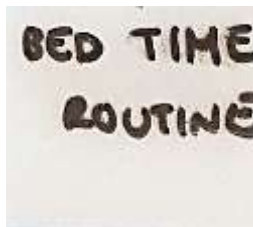
The Evening



The child has a chore **they need to do** (tidy up their toys). They also **see the next activity** planned is video games which **is their favourite activity**. *If* they put away their toys **then** they get to play video games



Seeing both together, the child **quickly puts away their toys** so they can **play video games** as soon and **as long as possible** before bedtime. The child plays games alone and / or with another family member



This child has a routine / **set of activities they follow to wind down before sleeping**. Each night they: put on PJS, eat a small snack, read a bedtime story, listen to quiet music in bed, then turn off the lights. This routine is put up in the child's room with pictures that show each step.

Primary focus: Most daily tasks are done, so evening is a good time to plan **chores / jobs** that your child needs, as well as **free time / rest time**. Evening is also a good time to plan **social activities** with **friends** or **family** because it's when most people are free and together.

How it's Organized

The visual schedule **shows** the child **everything that is happening in their day**. Each day is **seperated** into chunks of time **by natural breaks** that regularly occur:



Waking up



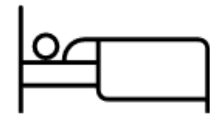
Breakfast



Lunch



Dinner



Bed Time

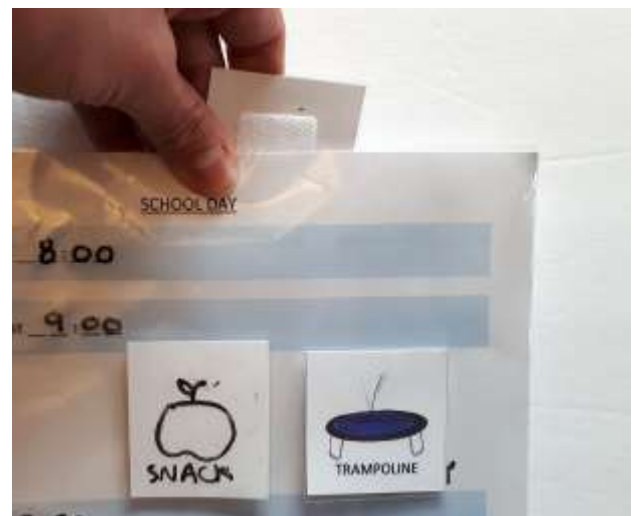
These **natural breaks act as transitions** between activities planned before and after them.

Snacks are also used as a transition. The *type* of activity planned during each chunk of time is different, because the **child's energy** and **focus** will be **different at different times**. As much as possible, the **child energy and type of activity are matched** in each timeslot

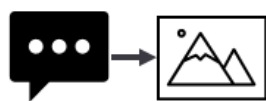
How it's Used

Picture cards are used to represent each activity the child does in a day. In the morning, all the days activities are **put on the schedule in order**; each card is put on the schedule in the spot when it is happening.

When an activity is done it is taken if off of the schedule and put it away:



Benefits of Using a Visual Schedule



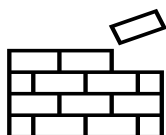
They use **concrete visuals instead of verbal instructions** / reminders. Verbal is often missed or forgotten vs. the visual is permanent



The child has an **ongoing visual reference** of what “has”, “is”, and “is going to” happen, they can check any time they’re lost and know “this is where I am right now in my day”



It **communicates** important information **between parent and child** (ie what has vs needs to be done). This decreases the need for reminders / “nagging,” which makes both of you happier



Creates **structure and predictability** for the child. They know what to expect each day and understand what is happening.



Grows the child’s independence in task planning, management, and completion. Fewer reminders are needed, and as they get used to using the tool, and can do more and more of it on their own



Ensures the child’s **physical / sensory needs are met**, meals, body breaks, social time, rest time are all pre-planned so they happen



Cues child of important tasks / events occurring that day. They can see important events and **prepare for them mentally and practically**, there are no “surprises” for them later which can lead to meltdowns

Want to Make One Yourself?



1. Download our [Schedule Template](#)
2. Print off all the pages, and put them together using the instructions
3. Check out our blog [Visual Schedules: How to Use them, Steps to Success](#)
4. Set yours up and start using it!

Got questions? Let us know www.heartandhomeconsulting.com/contact/