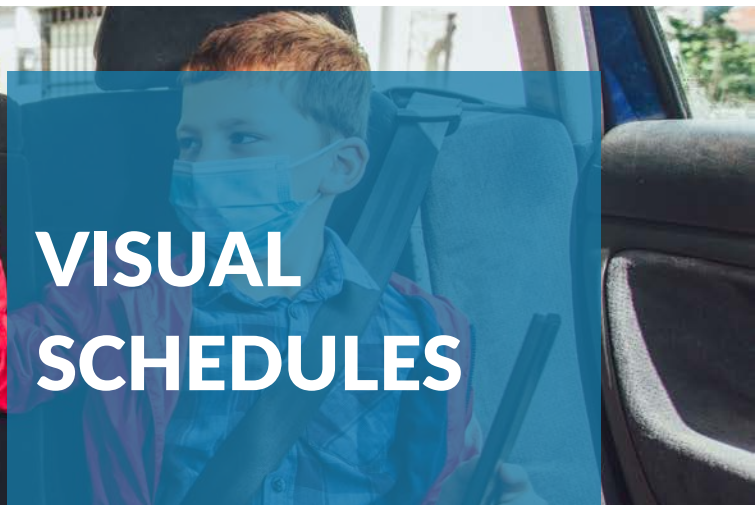


# TRAVEL TOOLKIT



For caregivers traveling with neurodiverse children



## VISUAL SCHEDULES

### How can a Visual Schedule help?

Since strictly keeping your everyday routine during a trip can be challenging, creating a Visual Schedule will allow your child to develop an understanding of a new routine for your trip. Your child can predict what is going to happen next and will be relieved of some of the anxiety that can come from being in a completely new place.



A Visual Schedule is a graphic representation of scheduled tasks and activities, and is useful for breaking down tasks that have multiple steps, or to illustrate the timing and location of events. Visual Schedules are best tailored to a child's unique communication level, and may involve using objects, photos, pictures, line drawings, or words. The series of visually presented tasks are arranged in the schedule in the order they take place. Visual Schedules can include a series of separate tasks that are part of a routine, or they can be used to teach a new skill by breaking down a single activity into smaller steps. Visual Schedules are especially helpful when planning for travel with children who are neurodiverse.

## Who benefits?

Using a Visual Schedule can be an effective organizational tool for all, but they are particularly helpful for children and individuals with ASD or other neurodiversities. Visual Schedules may help to reduce anxiety by providing consistency while also reducing resistance that could accompany certain activities by clarifying expectations.



## First ID your child's visual stage to best tailor the schedule

Remember that children with neurodiversities may communicate and understand at different levels. Identify your child's visual stage to tailor the Visual Schedule:



- **Object Stage:** Use actual objects and items for communication needs.
- **Photo Stage:** Use real photographs (photo, digital, scanned, magazines, catalogs, etc.).
- **Picture Symbolic Stage:** Use colored line drawings (hand-drawn or commercially produced) for communication needs.
- **Line Drawing Stage:** Use black and white line drawings (hand drawn or commercially produced) for communication needs.
- **Text Stage:** Use written words and/or numbers for communication needs.

## Tips to Create An Effective Visual Schedule

### Identify the Skill and Steps.

Identify the skill or routine you want to teach, and determine the simple steps that are involved in the activity.

### Choose the Length.

Choose a length appropriate for your child and adjust as needed. Young children may benefit from a "First/Then schedule," to complete a new activity first, followed by a preferred or familiar activity. Others may benefit from a half-day or full day schedule.

### Keep it Personal.

The more the child can relate to the visual schedule, the more they are likely to understand it. Consider including photos of the child or individual completing steps or incorporate preferred interests within the schedule.

### Give Cues.

When it is time for an activity on the schedule to occur, cue your child or the individual with a brief, verbal instruction. For example, say "Check the schedule." This helps your child pay attention as the next activity begins.

### Mark it Complete.

Include a way for the child or individual to indicate when steps have been completed, such as filling in a check box, moving images from the "to do" side of the schedule to the "done" side of the schedule, turning the pictures over, or removing the objects from the schedule.

### Celebrate!

Provide praise and reinforcement when your child or the individual completes activities on the schedule.

## Visual Schedules Make Traveling Easier

Traveling with any child can be difficult. Traveling with children and individuals with neurodiversities may bring some additional factors to take into account. Fortunately, with some solid preparation, many of these concerns can be alleviated, allowing for you and your whole family to enjoy your vacation. Some tips are provided below for things to consider ahead of travel when preparing a Visual Schedule.

### Practice Makes Progress.

Practice using the Visual Schedule as part of your daily routine activities. It may also be helpful to review the trip-specific Visual Schedule in advance of your travel.

### Make it Portable.

The schedule should be able to follow your child or the individual throughout their day. This is especially important when traveling.

### Anticipate Changes.

Travel can be unpredictable and delays may happen. It may be helpful to avoid time-based cues as part of the schedule in the event of unforeseen delays.

Making extra stops to check out a roadside tourist attraction may sound like fun to many people, but to some children and individuals with ASD and other neurodiversities, those unpredictable events may feel overwhelming.



### Schedule for Downtime.

This could be directing to the schedule to start a preferred activity, such as screen time. For children who have limited leisure skills, plan an activity schedule specifically with a sequence of several activities to pass the time that is separate from the travel schedule events.

### Support Communication Needs.

Some children and individuals with ASD may have difficulty communicating their needs, particularly when disruptions to routines have occurred.



These strategies do not replace information provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For information and resources for traveling during the COVID-19 pandemic, visit [CDC.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

Find more resources at [Autismcenter.duke.edu](https://www.autismcenter.duke.edu)

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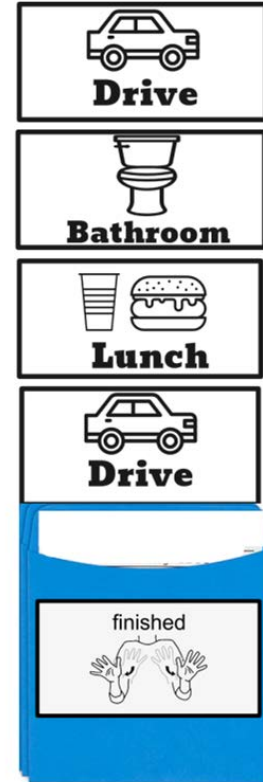
## Visual Schedule Samples

Ideally, Visual Schedules are tailored to meet the unique needs of the individual(s) using them. Many helpful examples can be found online. Below are some that may help you get started creating a Visual Schedule that meets your family's needs.

### Maria's Airport Trip

- Early wake up – take shower and get dressed
- Breakfast
- Check suitcase with mom
- Drive to Raleigh Durham Airport
- Take shuttle bus to Airport – Face mask on
- Check-in counter and drop off suitcase
- Security line
- Restroom break
- Find our gate and wait to board
- Board the plane and find our seats
- Break time
  - o Listen to podcast (headphones on!)
  - o Look at Nature magazine
  - o Have a snack and drink – Hand sanitizer and face mask off
  - o Animal Crossing on iPad – Hand sanitizer and face mask on
- De board the plane
- Restroom break
- Pick up luggage
- Meet grandma outside of Detroit Airport
- Drive to grandma's house – Hand sanitizer and face mask off

### Ezekiel's Schedule



### Shawn's Schedule



Find more resources for creating Visual Schedules at:

<https://do2learn.com/picturecards/VisualSchedules/index.htm>

<http://card.ufl.edu/resources/visual-supports/>

Eckenrode, L., Fennell, P., & Hearsey, K. (2004). Tasks Galore for the Real World. Raleigh, NC: Tasks Galore.