

Promoting Learning and Positive Behaviour at Home

# Home Routines for Children and Young People with Additional Needs

## Resource 2



This resource is part of a series of seven booklets on Promoting Learning and Positive Behaviour in the Home developed by the NCSE Behaviour Practitioner team. The series is for parents of children and young people with additional needs.

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## Booklets in the series

Resource 1: Behaviour Support Pack for Children and Young People with Additional Needs

**Resource 2: Home Routines for Children and Young People with Additional Needs**

Resource 3: Using Reward Systems for Children and Young People with Additional Needs

Resource 4: Behaviour Contracts for Children and Young People with Additional Needs

Resource 5: A Total Communication Approach for Children and Young People with Additional Needs

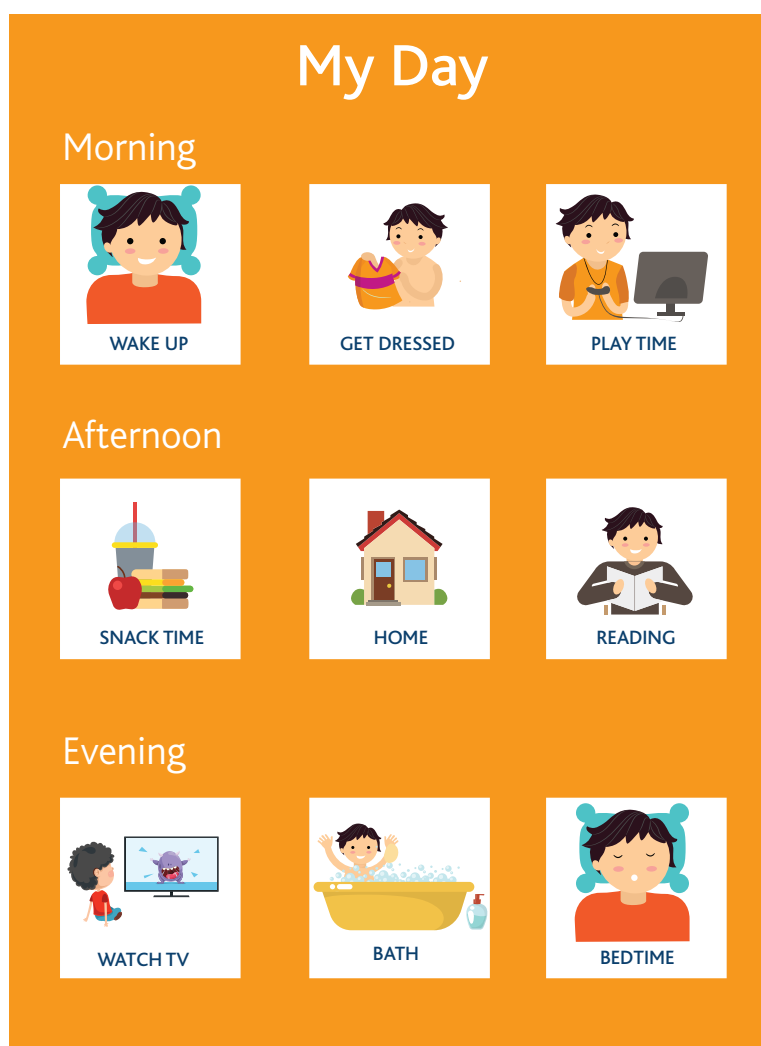
Resource 6: Life Skills for Children and Young People with Additional Needs

Resource 7: Transitioning for Children and Young People with Additional Needs

# Structure, routine and visual supports

Structure and routine are especially important for children and young people with additional needs. Structure helps them to organise their day and routine helps them to know and see what is coming next. Following a routine also gives children and young people information on what they need to do and when they need to do it. It helps them to be more independent and gives them a sense of calm. An effective way to set up structure and routine for children and young people with additional needs is by using visuals. Visuals which are clear help children and young people to understand the routine and structure.

Using visuals in a visual schedule can show parts of the day or it can show the full day. Pictures, words or pictures and words can be used, depending on your child's age and ability level. Schedules, unlike timetables, rarely extend beyond a day. See below, some examples of visual schedules. All members of the family can be involved in the design of schedules that best suit your child and your family. It is important to use a visual schedule every day so that your child can learn to identify the words and/or pictures used.

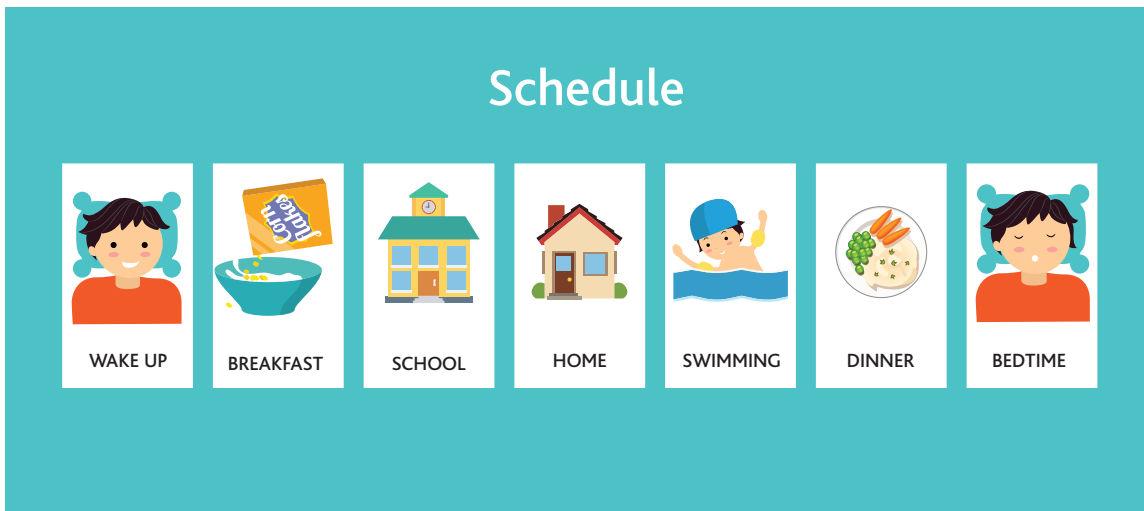


## Steps for designing visual schedules

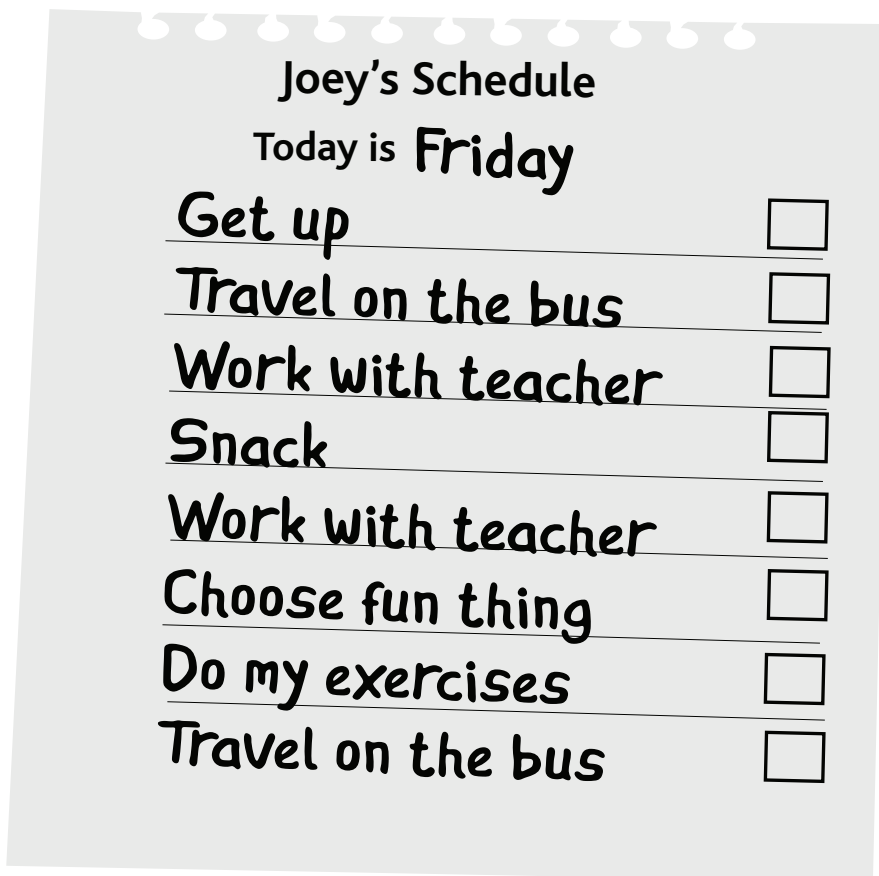
1. Choose pictures that show the activity / task / place. You can make (use phone or draw) your own pictures. You can also use pictures from google images or Boardmaker™, and Pics for Pecs™.
2. Choose clear pictures that your child can understand easily.
3. Cut out, laminate or glue to cardboard (e.g., from a cereal box).
4. Attach the pictures to a board.
5. This board can then be attached to a wall/press/wardrobe/table/desk etc. Velcro is very useful, if available.
6. Place the pictures left to right.
7. Decide on the main activities that your child will complete, for example, the afternoon schedule shown below. Then arrange the pictures to show that part of the day.



Or you can show the entire day on your schedule.



8. Some children might like to write out their schedule. They can use it as a checklist when a task or activity is finished.



- 9 Include some pictures of activities that your child likes, as well as activities that you want them to do. For example, see play and choose a fun thing above.



10. Some children might like to take their pictures off when they are finished. You can have a finished envelope/box to put the picture into.



## Top Tips!

- Use pictures that are clear and easy for your child to understand.
- Visual schedules will help your child more when used daily and consistently.
- Some children become rigid about routines. To help your child, you can change the layout of activities each day or every second day. Don't forget to praise your child for staying calm when things have changed.
- Schedules can be detailed or simple. Make the schedules work for you.
- It also helps children and young people to stay calm and reduces anxiety.

### Sample Morning Checklist

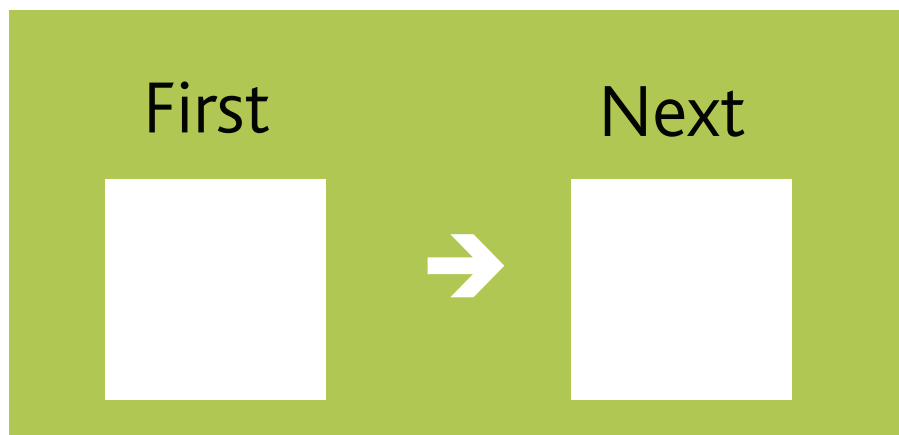
- Wake Up
- Put on clothes
- Eat breakfast in the kitchen
- Clean up breakfast
- Morning workout/exercise
- Put workout clothes in hamper
- Take shower
- Hang towel
- Put on deodorant
- Brush teeth
- Make bed



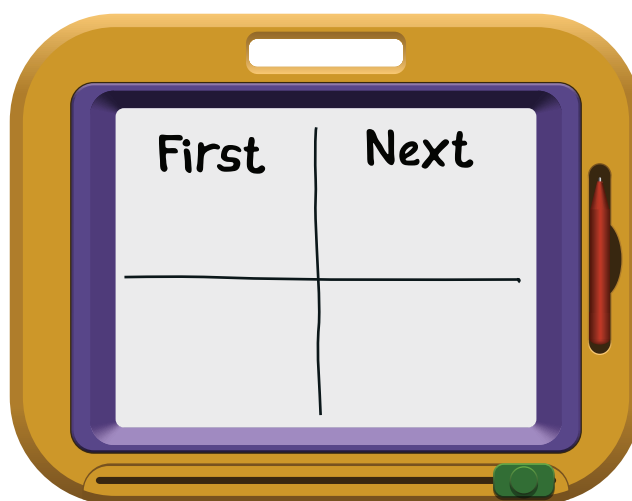
## Breaking your visual schedule down to a First-Next or First-Next-Then

Using a First-Next board with your child at home is like using a mini visual schedule. For example, "First, let's have breakfast. Next, let's get dressed". You can also look at it like a contract or rule, for example, "First, put away your dishes. Next, you can play on the iPad". You might find this useful if your child has difficulty using a larger schedule or if you need to support him or her in doing something that is difficult.

Your First-Next board can also be very helpful during transitions. Refer to the booklet on Transitions for more information.



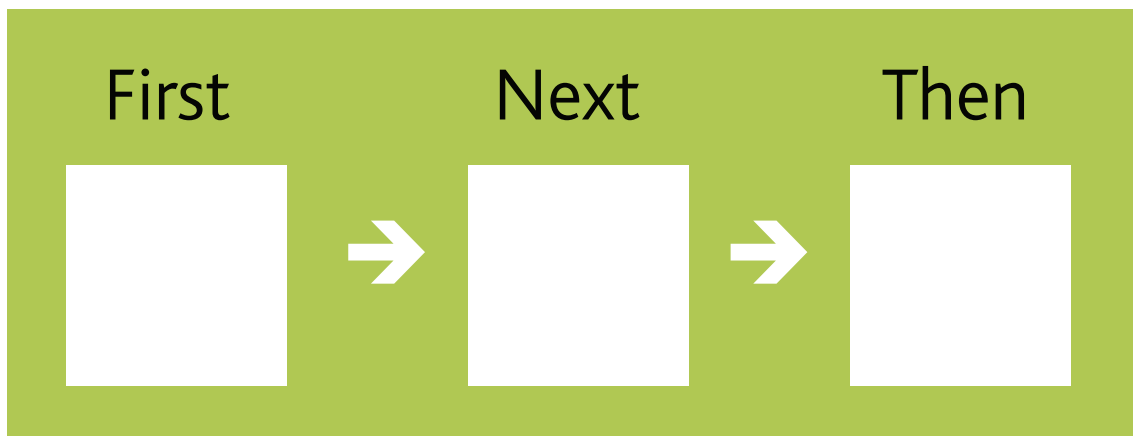
Your First-Next board can be made from whatever you have available at home. It does not have to be made with a laminated print out. You can use a small white board, pen and paper or even an erase away board (see example below).





If you have decided to use tokens with your First-Next board, please refer to the booklet on Using Reward Systems for more information.

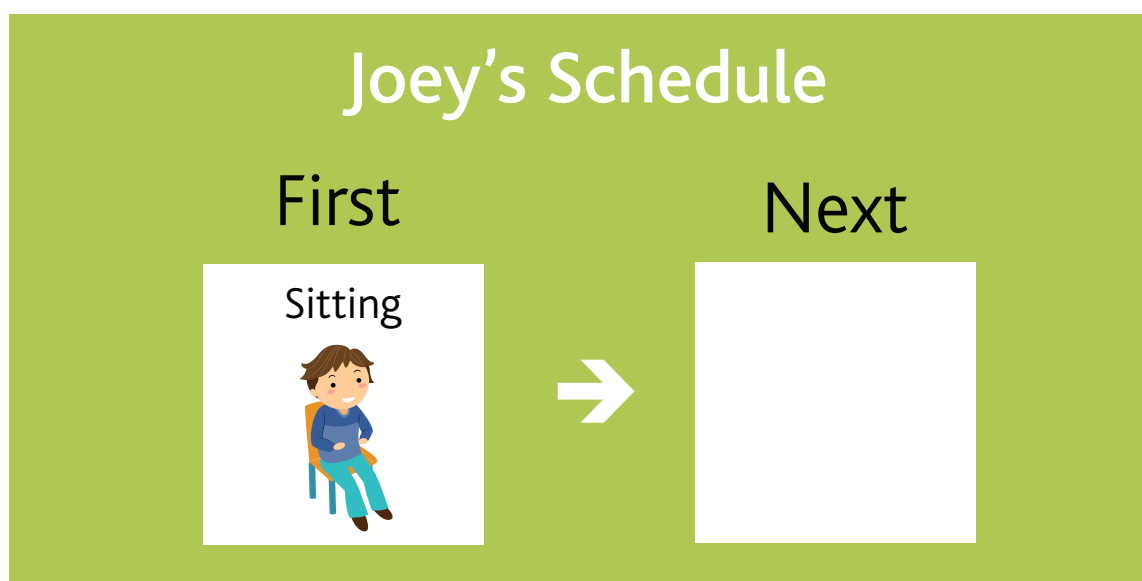
If your child has the skills for a more a complex schedule, you can add to your First-Next board and make it First-Next-Then. The same tips will work for the First-Next-Then board.



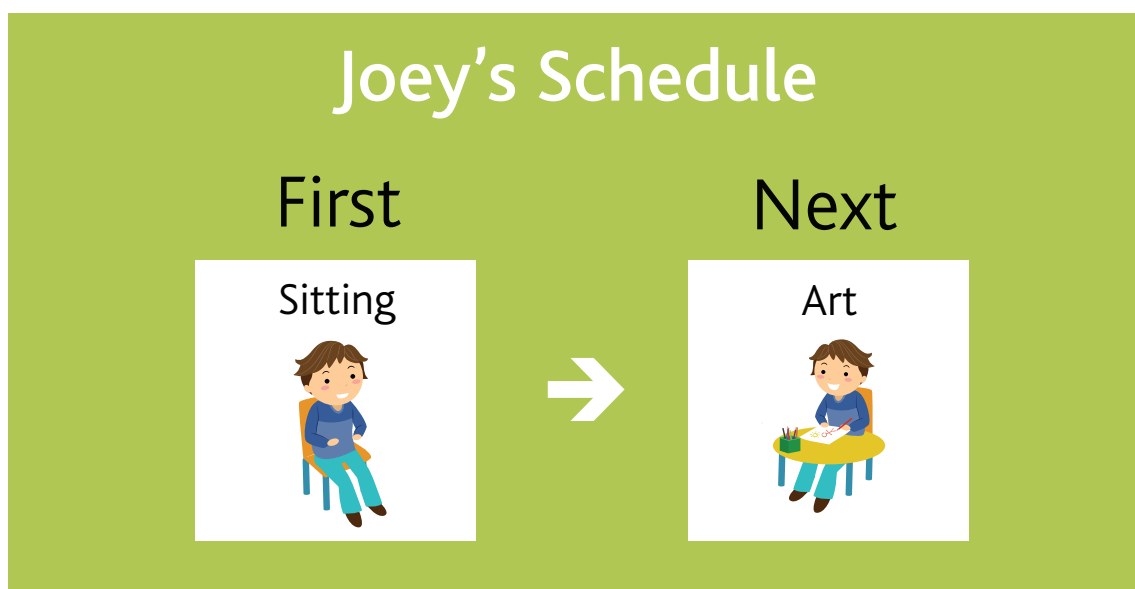
It is important that your child is motivated by the item that is placed in the “Then” box. Refer to the booklet on Using Reward Systems for more information.

## Top Tips!

- Decide on what activity you would like your child to complete.
- Place a picture/write the word/draw a picture in the FIRST section.



- Allow your child to select the activity that he/she would like to do when he/she has finished your activity.
- Place a picture/write the word/draw a picture of their choice in the NEXT section.



- This process can be repeated as often as is necessary.
- A First-Next or First-Next-Then schedule will help your child more when used daily and consistently.

**Make sure to use First-Next-Then boards when your child is feeling calm and positive, not only when your child is already refusing. They should be used every time you are supporting your child to do something. Refer to the booklet on Using Reward Systems for more information.**

### Helpful links:

- [www.goboardmaker.com](http://www.goboardmaker.com)
- <https://www.abaresources.com/free2/>
- <https://www.twinkl.ie/>

### References:

- <https://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/visual-supports.aspx>
- <https://www.autismspeaks.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/Challenging%20Behaviors%20Tool%20Kit.pdf>
- National Council for Special Education (NCSE) (2015), Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Schools – NCSE Policy Advice Paper No. 5. Accessed at [https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/1\\_NCSE-Supporting-Students-ASD-Schools.pdf](https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/1_NCSE-Supporting-Students-ASD-Schools.pdf)



