



**NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S**  
*When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.™*

## Helping Hand™

*Health Education for Patients and Families*

# Behavior Support: Using a Schedule

Using a schedule helps you and your child know what to expect. It gives structure to your day. It also helps prevent problems because it lets your child know when the fun things will occur.

## What you will need

- kitchen timer
- activities for your child to do
- reward items for your child to earn
- schedule items (objects, pictures, written)

## What to do

1. First, decide which type of schedule your child needs. This should be based on a short list of things your child could achieve on their worst day. Use a timer as a tool to help your child understand the amount of time set aside for an activity.
  - **Object Schedule:** These are best used for children with few to no language skills. Use items that are related to the task. For example, lay out a diaper, a spoon and a coloring book. Hold up the item that is next, hand it to your child, and begin prompting the activity. In this case, the activities are diaper change, eating and coloring. Make sure the items you use stay the same each time so your child learns what they represent.
  - **Visual Schedule:** Use a visual schedule when your child can match pictures. The pictures used can be photos, computer-made pictures or pictures that you draw yourself. Point to the picture or have your child match an identical picture and then give the instruction to start the task. You can cross off or remove each picture as you complete it.
  - **Written Schedule:** Use this schedule for children with reading skills. The list can be written or typed. Read to your child or have them read the next item. When each activity is done, cross it off the list.

2. Next, decide how long your schedule should be. You want to start with a short schedule and increase the length as your child succeeds.
3. Choose how you are going to remind your child to check the schedule. This can be done by saying “time to check your schedule” or by handing a card to your child so they know it is time to check the schedule. For activities that may be challenging for your child, consider providing a reward item when they complete an activity. Make sure to let your child know what reward they can earn before they start the item on the schedule.
4. After each activity, have your child go back and check the schedule again for the next activity. Alternate preferred activities with more parent-driven activities. You can start by having an all-preferred schedule to help your child learn the concept.
5. Monitor how your child is doing with the schedule and how independent the child is becoming with the schedule.
6. Change the schedule as needed as your child changes and grows.

## Recommendations for you

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