

Strategies for Routines and Classroom Schedules

Children who are engaged in activities with materials, a classmate or an adult are less likely to be engaged in challenging behaviors...so classroom schedules and routines should be designed with child engagement in mind. If your schedule is predictable and the children have been taught the daily routines, your classroom will run more smoothly and fewer behavior problems will occur.

Schedule Review: Children are more likely to be engaged if your daily schedule has a balance of types of activities throughout the day. Looking at your daily schedule, record the number of minutes your daily schedule includes of the following types of activities:

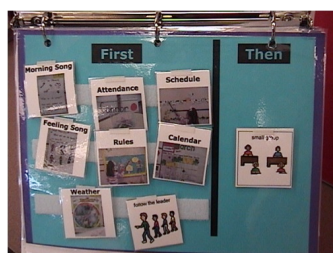
- teacher-directed activities and child-directed activities
- time for children to be active and time for children to play quietly or rest
- indoor play and outdoor play
- time to work in groups and time to work alone (or with one friend)

If this review shows that your 'balance' is off, be creative! Work to adjust your schedule so children don't spend too much time each day in one type of activity, which can set the stage for misbehavior.

Visual Schedule: Children, and many adults, like to be able to predict what will happen next. Knowing the order of the events each day helps children feel safe in your classroom. You can create a visual schedule to help young children understand the flow of the day. To make a picture schedule you will need pictures, photos, icons or drawings to represent the typical events in your day (lunch, outdoors, circle, nap, etc) and velcro. Place a long strip of velcro on the wall or bulletin board at child eye-level, and put small circles of velcro on the back of each activity picture. Place the pictures in order (following your schedule) on the velcro strip. When an activity is completed you can remove it from the strip. Children particularly like picture schedules that include photos of actual events in their classroom. Take time each day at circle to review the picture schedule with the group.



Mini-Schedules:



Some children may need additional help to understand all the steps involved in a scheduled activity. Try creating a mini-schedule that visually illustrates all the steps or components of the activity. For example, your circle time may always include certain things (sing songs, read book, review rules, etc) that could be included as pictures on a mini-schedule. As you go through circle time, you can remove the completed activities and children can see which activities still remain in circle time. You can also add a section about the upcoming activity so children can see that first we do these activities at circle time and then we move to the next activity.

Scripted Stories: Another way to help children learn routines is to create a scripted story, which guides children through the steps involved in a typical routine using pictures and minimal text. For example, you could create a scripted story that outlines, one page and one picture at a time, the steps involved in getting ready for nap. Typical steps before nap might include: get your blanket, select a stuffed animal and/or book, take off your shoes, lay down, listen quietly to a story or music, sleep. You can create this resource using photos of children in your classroom going through these steps. Read the story at circle time or prior to nap for a few days and leave it in the book area for children to review on their own. Within a few days your transition to nap will be noticeably calmer!

