

What is a visual timeline?

Visual timelines are made using symbols or pictures of everyday activities or events. The symbols/pictures have hard Velcro on the back and attach to a laminated strip that has soft Velcro attached. This can be used to provide a visual account of the routine for the day (best going from top to bottom):



OR can also be used as a mini schedule to break down an activity into smaller steps, e.g. washing hands (best going from left to right):



VISUAL TIMELINES AND FIRST-THEN BOARDS

Visual timelines are useful for all children and help children in a number of ways for example to:

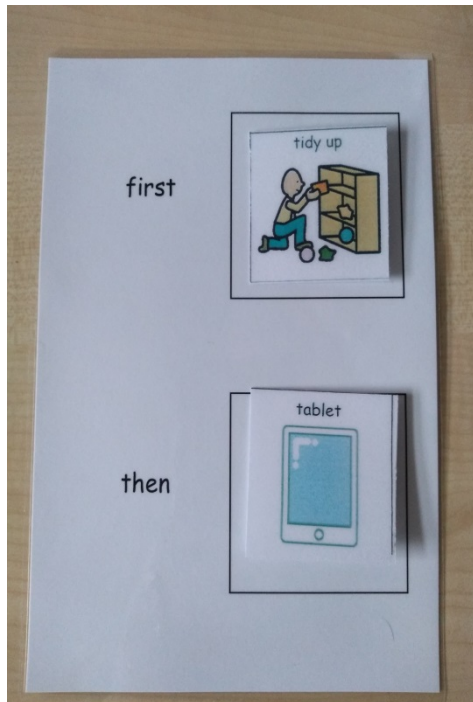
- Predict and understand the daily routine
- Help them transition from one activity to the next
- Support understanding of spoken language
- Reduce anxiety around change.

How do I use a visual timeline?

- Place it so that it is visible to everyone in the setting
- Show what is going to happen on the timeline, naming each symbol/picture as you point to it
- When the activity is finished, take the symbol/picture off (or ask a child/young person to take off) and post it in a box or envelope with the finished symbol on it. Reinforce this by saying, e.g. “computer finished”.
- Visual timelines can be used for the whole setting or can be individualised
- Visual timelines need to be used consistently throughout the day and referred to regularly.

First – Then board

This is usually a laminated A4 sheet with two pieces of hard Velcro attached and ‘First’ and ‘Then’ clearly written at the top.



It is used with symbols or pictures that have soft Velcro attached to the back.

Both the First-Then board and symbols and pictures need to be easily accessible.

First – Then boards can be used to:

- Support and develop attention and listening skills
- Help children move from one activity to the next
- Encourage children to participate in adult-directed activities

How do I use a First-Then board?

- Decide what task you want the child to complete first (what goes in the “first” box) and the preferred item or activity (what goes in the “then” box)
- Choose the symbols/pictures needed and put them on the board
- Show each symbol/picture and say: “First story, then computer”
- Take them to the ‘First’ activity – if they find it difficult to attend, point to the ‘First’ symbol again and remind them: “It’s time for story”
- Once the ‘First’ activity is finished, give them the ‘Next’ activity/item
- Aim to gradually increase the length of time at the ‘First’ activity