

THE AUTISM TOOLKIT

SEE PAST THE LABEL.
FOCUS ON THE ABLE.

INTRO

Here at PS Academy, our goal is to help children with autism thrive. We aim to help everyone see past the label and focus on the able.

This guide is created to empower parents by providing practical tools they can use every day. It is not only full of tips, tricks, and how-to's for common everyday obstacles; it also has printable checklists and other extra resources.

Let's dive in!

- Visual Schedules
- The Importance of Routine
- Daily Routine Checklists
- Autism & Sleep Disorders
- Bedtime Routine Checklist
- Bedtime Passes
- Introducing Life Skills
- Chores
- Social Stories
- Autism & Digestive Issues
- Healthy Eating Checklist

VISUAL SCHEDULES

ENHANCING DAILY INDEPENDENCE

In essence, visual schedules are a straightforward yet powerful tool that can lead to significant improvements in daily life, providing a visual roadmap to guide individuals through their day with greater confidence and independence.

They are a great foundation for building independence and are perfect for:

- Easing transitions between activities.
- Reducing stress and anxiety.
- Promoting smooth shifts from one task to another.

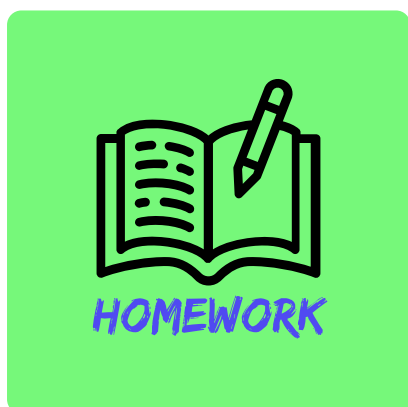
Visual schedules are a powerful tool for creating predictable and structured environments to help kids thrive. They can offer a roadmap for approaching day-to-day tasks and reinforce life skills such as organization, planning, and responsibility.

Visual schedules are helpful because they transform abstract concepts of time and order into clear formulas that kids can use to work independently tracking their progress throughout the day.

VISUAL SCHEDULES

EXAMPLE FORMULAS

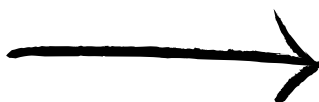
IF ...



THEN ...



FIRST ...

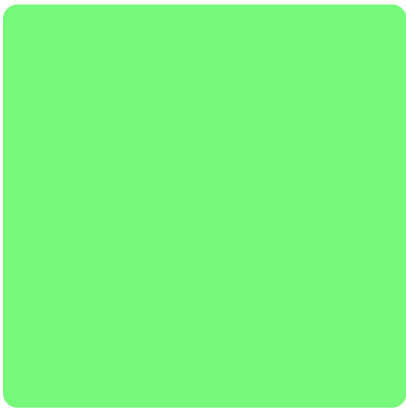


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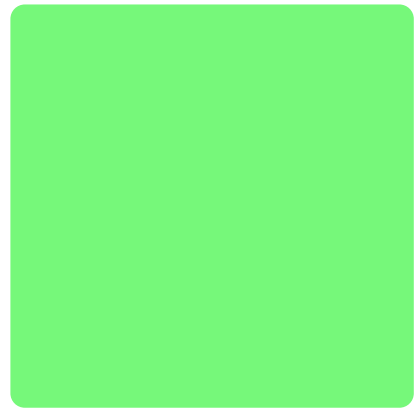


VISUAL SCHEDULES

IF ...



THEN ...



FIRST ...

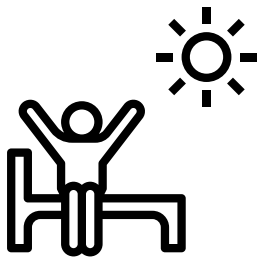


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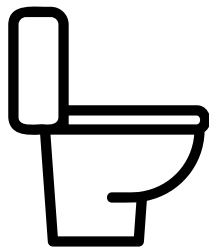


VISUAL SCHEDULES

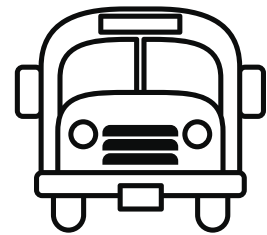
USE THESE IMAGES TO HELP YOU BUILD VISUAL SCHEDULES AND ROUTINES



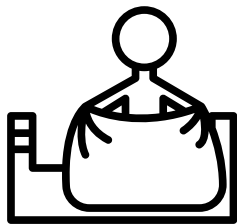
WAKE UP



TOILET



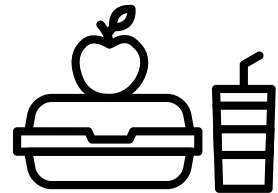
GO TO SCHOOL



MAKE BED



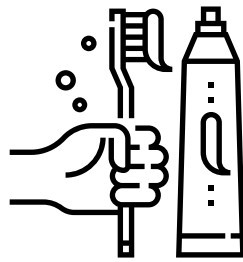
WASH



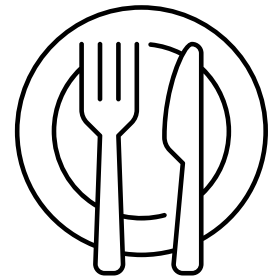
LUNCH



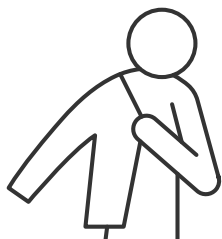
BREAKFAST



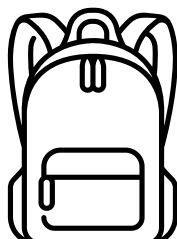
BRUSH TEETH



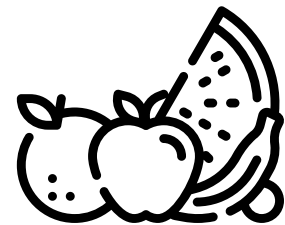
DINNER



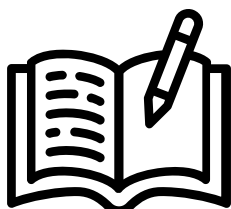
GET DRESSED



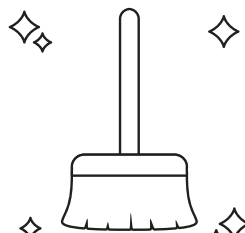
PACK BAG



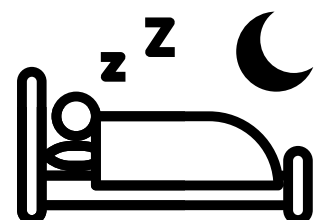
SNACK



HOMEWORK



TIDY UP



BEDTIME

THE IMPORTANCE OF ROUTINE

IT HAS BEEN PROVEN...

Developing routines can be highly beneficial for children with autism. The probability of having an anxiety disorder is much higher in those with exceptionalities. The stability of a consistent routine can help children engage positively with the people around them.

Every child is unique, but knowing what they should expect to happen at any given time can work wonders to prevent problematic behavior. Plus regular routines can help kids feel confident when carrying out daily tasks.

A good way to create this feeling of stability for your child is to develop routine checklists for different parts of their day.

The number and style of the checklists should be based on each student's age and cognitive ability, as well as what type of visual aids they respond best to. You can use our model routines on the next few pages, or develop your own with visual schedule images.

This is an excellent opportunity to engage in a creative learning activity with your child. Encourage them to identify the critical components of a successful daily routine and get them to help put together their routine. Checklists can be adjusted to increasing complexity as they become more comfortable sticking to a routine.

AUTISM & SLEEP

60% TO 70% OF CHILDREN STRUGGLE WITH SLEEP

It's estimated that between 60 to 70% of children with ASD have sleep issues. These usually take the form of difficulty falling asleep, waking frequently, or poor quality sleep. Consequently, parents of children who suffer from disrupted sleep patterns can see increased behavioral problems, irritability, depression, hyperactivity, or lower performance at school.

This is not to say that parents must accept their child having a disrupted sleep schedule. Many steps can be taken to alleviate the most severe of symptoms and improve their child's overall mood, emotional stability, and academic performance.

The first course of action would be to create a bedtime routine checklist like the one we have included. As a general rule of thumb, the entire routine should not take more than 30 minutes in total and shouldn't have too many different parts.

When introducing the bedtime routine, parents must ensure they are consistent in enforcing the routine and rewarding good behavior. It should always be left in the same place and be easily visible to the child.

BEDTIME ROUTINE & THE MAGICAL PASS



To complement a solid bedtime routine, stimulating activities like watching videos, doing exercise, or completing homework are best before the early evening.

Likewise, relaxing activities that promote rest, like reading or listening to calming music, should be left until closer to bedtime.

Stimulating several senses at once, for example, snuggling and using calming scents, can create positive associations with going to bed. Using weighted blankets has also proven highly beneficial in encouraging restful sleep.

Apart from establishing an effective routine, creating a "Bedtime Pass" is a great idea, especially for children who get up after being put to bed.

The Bedtime Pass is valid for getting up out of bed once per night. If the child manages to stay in bed all night without using their pass, then they will receive a reward in the morning, accompanied by lots of praise.

If they use their pass, they receive no reward but can get out of bed.

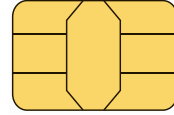
Once they've used up their pass for the night, they will be told to go to bed and given minimal attention should they get up again, with potential consequences in the morning.

This is to discourage getting up through the night.

BEDTIME PASS CARD



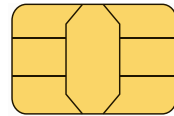
This is good for
one special request
after bedtime.



BEDTIME PASS CARD



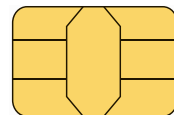
This is good for
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after bedtime.



BEDTIME PASS CARD



This is good for
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after bedtime.



INTRODUCING LIFE SKILLS

EMPOWERING CHILDREN AND TEENS WITH AUTISM

Life skills are an essential component of personal development and independence. From personal hygiene to household chores, social interaction and regulating emotions. Teaching kids and teens life skills is key to empowering them to lead fulfilling and meaningful lives.

So how do you teach your child to navigate the challenges of daily life comfortably and confidently? Establishing routines like the ones earlier in this guide will help give them a framework to manage their homework, extracurriculars, hygiene routines, or self-care. But there are other ways you can help to equip your child with the tools they need to be more self-reliant, adaptable, and socially engaged.

Household chores, provide kids with a foundation for greater independence and a sense of belonging in their families. While social stories will help prepare them for the range of social scenarios that we face in our daily lives.

CHORES

PS

BUILDING RESPONSIBILITY AND INDEPENDENCE

The concept of chores may seem mundane, but its importance cannot be overstated. For kids and teens, learning how to complete chores is a vital step toward adulthood and becoming more self-sufficient and responsible individuals.

Through chores, we learn essential life skills like time management, organization, and problem-solving. You can begin with simple habits such as tidying their rooms. Later they may be able to tackle more complex routines such as helping cook dinner, running errands, or doing their own laundry.

Chores are a key part of life, and completing chores will prepare your child for the future and give them an important sense of achievement.

SOCIAL STORIES

NAVIGATING SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

In our daily lives, simple tasks like grocery shopping or scheduling a dentist appointment may seem effortless. However, for individuals on the autism spectrum, these seemingly mundane activities can trigger feelings of anxiety and confusion.

This is where social stories come into play. Social stories are concise, illustrated narratives that describe social situations and provide guidance on how to navigate them. They serve as essential tools for helping children and adults with autism prepare for unfamiliar scenarios and understand complex concepts. These stories not only enhance safety by teaching appropriate behavior but also foster emotional regulation.

Key Elements of Social Stories

- **Singular Goal:** It targets a specific situation or event.
- **Informative and Descriptive:** It offers clear and detailed information.
- **Positive Language:** It employs realistic, positive language to explain concepts.

On the next page, we'll give some examples of what makes a good social story.

SOCIAL STORIES

HOW TO CREATE A GOOD SOCIAL STORY

Top Tips

- **Keep It Simple:** Use straightforward language and avoid overwhelming details.
- **Visual Aids:** Incorporate illustrations or visuals like the ones from the visual schedules section in this toolkit.
- **Personalization:** Tailor the story to your child's interests and unique needs for better retention.

Ideas for social stories:

- **Meeting New People:** Teach your child how to introduce themselves and engage in conversations.
- **Field Trips:** Prepare your child for new environments and sensory challenges during outings.
- **Recess Play:** Encourage communication, sharing, and fair play with peers.
- **Doctor Visits:** Explain what to expect during medical appointments and how to manage discomfort or fear.

While social stories should feature clear, descriptive sentences and relevant illustrations, don't shy away from creativity. Use photos or drawings to make the story engaging and practical, helping your child feel more at ease and confident in social situations.

AUTISM & DIGESTIVE ISSUES

CHILDREN WITH ASDs 4X MORE LIKELY TO HAVE DIGESTIVE ISSUES

Children with ASD are up to 4x more likely to have digestive issues than children without, with frequent trips to the doctor for constipation, diarrhea, and general discomfort.

This can be compounded by the tendency of those with ASDs to be highly restrictive or selective eaters, generally preferring highly processed foods and struggling to eat fruits or vegetables. At times children may not be able to describe their discomfort, leading to problems in diagnosing the cause of the digestive issues. While many studies have suggested a link between gut bacteria and autism, nothing has been conclusively proven as of yet.

All parents would like it if their child ate a varied, nutritious diet, but the reality is that this can be difficult to achieve. Consulting with a dietician who can make an in-depth assessment of their current diet is a recommended step. They can then work with you to overcome food selectivity barriers and prepare nutritionally balanced meals.

A weekly food chart that tracks daily food intake and sets up rewards for meeting healthy eating goals can encourage kids to incorporate sustainable diet habits into routine.



FOOD CHART

PS

WHAT'S IN YOUR BELLY?

Each week, fill out this chart by drawing the fruits and vegetables you have eaten in the squares! Then add your points at the end of the week & try to beat last week's score!



= 5 points



= 10 points



= 20 points

M. T. W. T. F. S. S.

NOTES

M.	T.	W.	T.	F.	S.	S.	NOTES

LAST WEEK'S SCORE:



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WHAT'S NEXT?

Alongside consistent routines, regular sleep, and healthy eating patterns, the correct educational environment is a make or break for the success of any student.

For more information about the differences between public and private schools, and the effect of school on children with autism, or how to get free tuition for your student with autism, download part one of our Guide to Autism for Parents by visiting our website at PSAcademyarizona.com.

If you have a teenager with autism, be sure to check out our Lyfe Launch Transition Program, which prepares our students for life beyond secondary education by arming them with the tools they need to live independently and make strides into the working world. Learn more at PSacademyarizona.com.

The logo for PS Academy is centered on a background of overlapping, semi-transparent triangles in shades of blue and green. The letters 'PS' are contained within a white circle, and the word 'Academy' is written in a white, sans-serif font to the right of the circle.

PS Academy