

First ensure the room is a 'symbol friendly' environment.

- Have two identical sets of symbols.
- Attach one symbol to the toy, activity or routine (for example, fix a 'paint' symbol to the easel and an 'outdoor' symbol to the door to outside area)
- Show child the corresponding symbol that represents the toy, activity or routine that he is accessing.
- Remember to give him constant verbal reminders as you point to each symbol to help him make the correct association. It may take several weeks for the child to understand that the symbol has meaning.

Using symbols in your setting - A Simple Guide

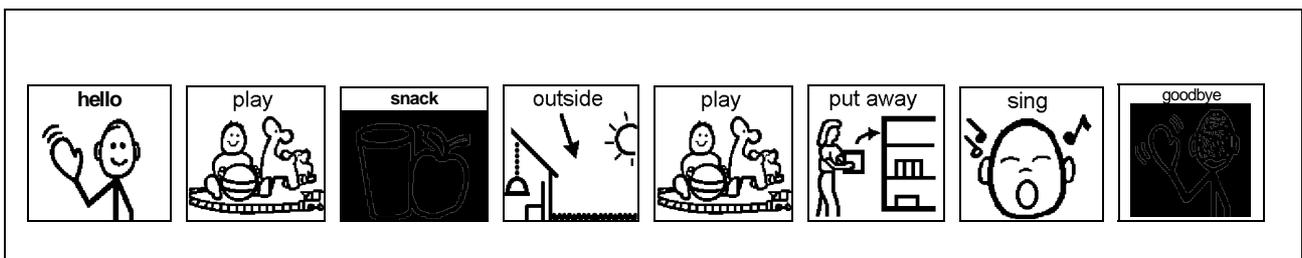
A 'Visual timetable'

What is a visual timetable?

- A visual timetable uses photographs and/or symbols to depict the daily routine of the nursery. It should be within the children's sight but preferably out of their reach. For every symbol displayed on the timetable there must be a corresponding symbol attached to the relevant area/routine, where possible. For example, there must be a 'wash hands' symbol fixed above each sink and a 'snack symbol' attached to the snack containers.

Some children with additional needs might be given their own individual timetable.

What does it look like?



How does it work?

Each photograph/symbol could be removed then posted into a finished box (or simply turned over) to show that, that part of the day has finished. Alternatively, it could just be on display to provide children with information about what is going to happen next.

Who might benefit from a visual timetable?

It is possible that **all** children in the nursery would benefit from knowing the order of the day. It might particularly benefit;

- Children with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (A.S.D.)
- Children who are extremely anxious
- Children with a language disorder
- Children new to nursery and who need constant reminders about when it is time to go home.

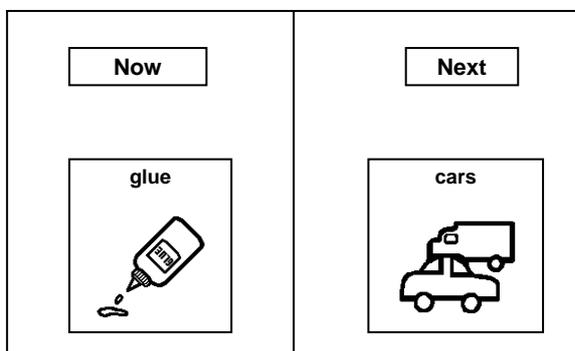
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A 'Now and Next' board (sometimes referred to as 'First and Then')

What is a 'Now and Next' board?

The board has the words 'Now' on the left-hand side and 'Next' on the right-hand side with a space underneath to add a symbol or photograph. It could be described as a miniature version of a visual timetable and helps a child to move on from one activity to another.

What does it look like?



Who might benefit from a 'Now and Next' board?

- A child who has difficulty finishing one activity and starting another.
- A child who is reluctant to participate in a particular activity, for example messy play (in this case the second item on the board would be something which you know the child really enjoys)
- A child with limited attention skills.

How does it work?

- Place a symbol on each side of the board. It's a good idea to place an activity that really motivates the child on the 'Next' side of the board. This acts as a 'reward' something for the child to aim for.
- Show the child the board, point to each symbol individually and support the child by saying "glue now....cars next". Reduce language by using key words only
- When the child has engaged with the gluing activity for some time the adult should inform the child by saying "gluing finished... now cars" whilst pointing to the next symbol.
- If the child finds it particularly difficult to move on, then consider either posting the symbol into a box or turning it over before moving onto the next activity.

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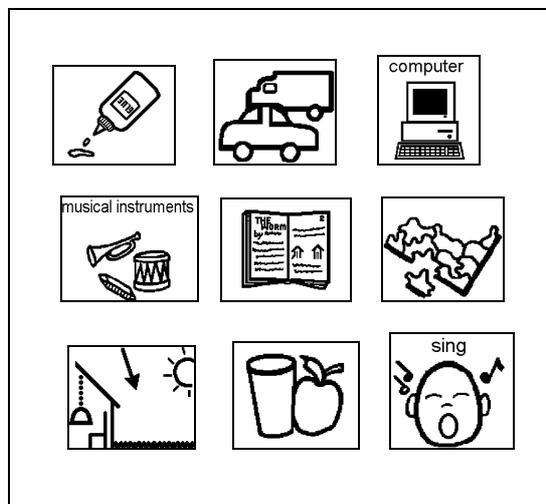
A 'Choices' board

What is a choices board?

- A 'choices board' is made up of photographs/symbols showing the choice of toys and resources available in the setting. As above, there must be a corresponding symbol attached to the appropriate toy or activity. For example, there must be a 'painting' symbol fixed to the easel or table where the children can paint or a 'book' symbol attached to the bookcase.

What does it look like?

- This is a small example but it can contain any number of symbols.



How is it different from a visual timetable?

- The photographs/symbols are generally smaller in size in order to distinguish them from those used on a visual timetable.
- It is for the children to access freely whereas a visual timetable is used by the adult to inform the child of the order of the day.

How does it work?

- Children must have free access to all the symbols on the board. They should be allowed to remove the symbol of their choice from the board and take it to an adult.
- For a child who might find it difficult to choose from a large selection it is advisable to start by selecting just two activities that you know the child enjoys.

Using symbols in your setting - A Simple Guide

Who might benefit from a choices board?

It should be available to **all** children in the nursery but might particularly benefit;

- Children who are extremely shy, or electively mute.
- Children with communication difficulties.
- Children with unclear speech or a language disorder.

PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System)

PECS is a full communication system, in other words it's the 'Child's voice'. Just having symbols in your setting does not mean that you are fully equipped to support a child who is using PECS and it is recommended that you at least access a PECS awareness course.

Further information available on request