



Using Schedules and Routines at Home

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What is a routine?


- *A standard or regular way of doing something
- From French - the route or path we take to do something



*Merriam-Webster

- A plan for carrying out a process or procedure, giving lists of intended events and times

[illegible]



Why they are important according to research:

- Routines are linked to better health, academic success and even resilience * [Trisha Pasricha, MD](#), Washington Post, December 1, 2025
- Allow for smoother transitions
- Evidence-Based Practice for Autism
- Support learning and emotional regulation
- Help people feel safe and supported

Predictability

- Reduces stress and anxiety
- Helps support independence
- Supports social interactions and connections
- Consistency promotes learning mastery



Why is it important to help our children learn to use routines and schedules:

- Encourage independence and interdependence
- Build autonomy and self-determination
- Help our children become responsible adults
- Avoid “Learned Helplessness”



The Importance of Building Independence and Responsibility:

3 Critical Factors

1. The **opportunity to participate** and perform as independently as possible
2. The degree in which an individual's family and significant others **encourage attempts** to become independent
3. The extent to which the person is **included in typical experiences** and environments as same-age peers



Self-Care



■ Chores

Examples: laundry, setting the table, making the bed, clearing and/or washing dishes, general housework, taking out the trash

■ Personal Hygiene

Examples: brushing teeth, using mouthwash, putting on deodorant, hair brushing and styling, dressing, sanitary care, hand-washing, nose-blowing, shaving, toileting

■ Feeding/Food

Examples: self-feeding, serving self, pouring liquids, dining manners, food choices and food preparation

Living Arrangements

- Finding a place to live
- Paying bills
- Filling out forms
- Maintaining the home
- Getting along with roommates (including relatives!)



Transportation and Mobility

- Pedestrian skills
- Using public transportation
- Reading and **understanding** transportation signs
- Following sequential directions
- Planning trips
- Contingency plans



Community Interaction

We want our children to know...

- Who to go to for help
- Which strangers are safe to talk to...and what should you say?
- How to cope with crowds
- How to have a social life outside of home and school
- What resources are available



Community Use



The more exposure to community experiences, the better in the long run!

Examples: playground or park, grocery store, mall, theaters, religious and cultural centers, sporting events, library, restaurants, metro train, museums, recreation centers

Recreation and Leisure

- Play skills foster growth and development
- Children learn valuable motor and sequential skills
- Physical activity promotes physical and emotional health
- Children can participate in the same activities as their peers



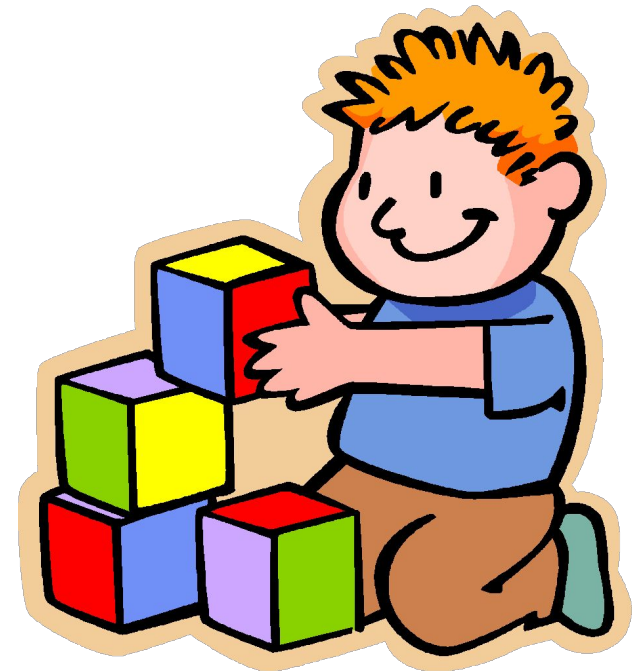
Ok, now we know **what** we
need to do, the question is,
how do we do it ?!?!?



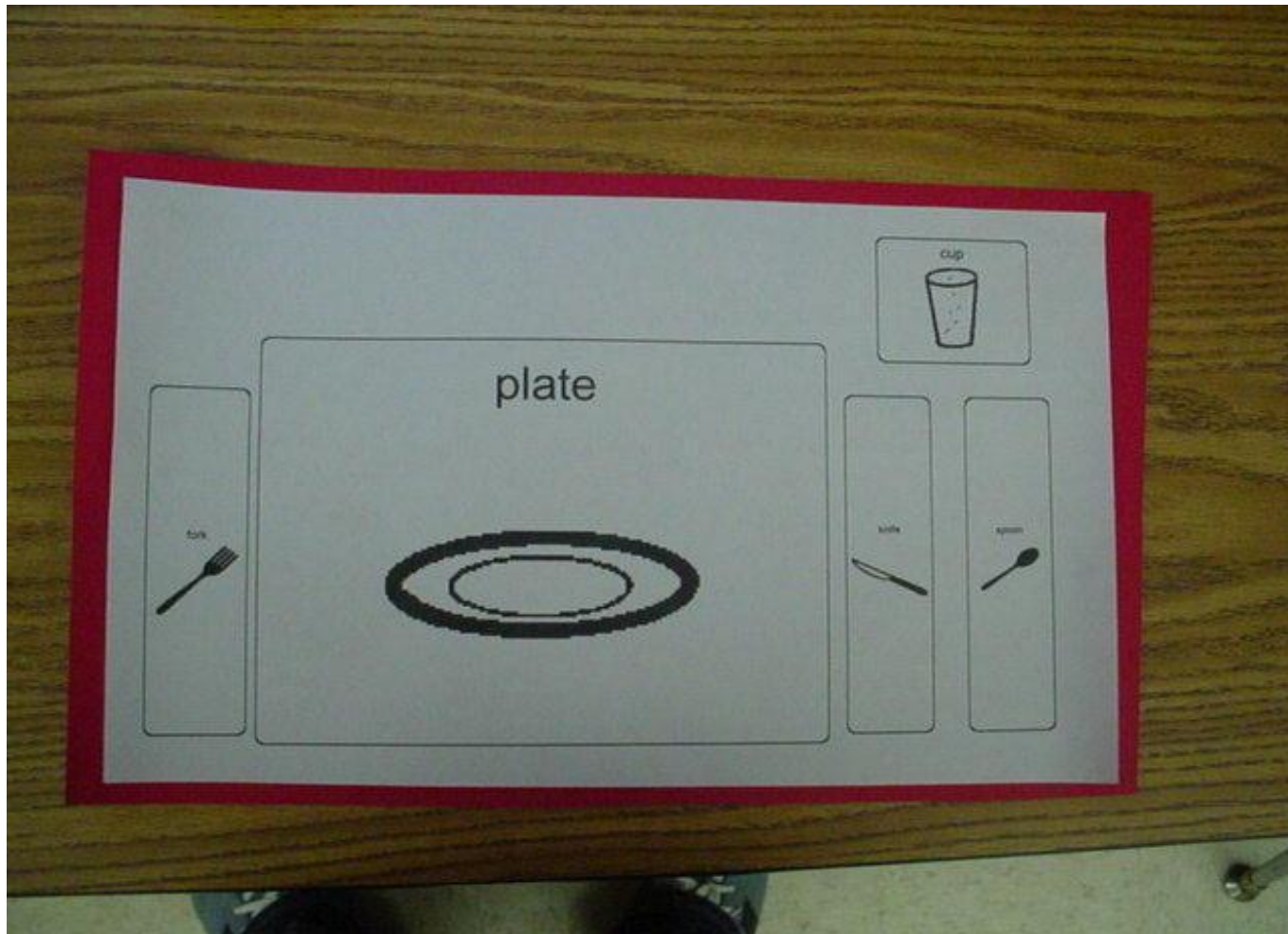
Incorporating **Structure** and **Visuals** Into Daily Routines

- The three “musts” for children with ASD:

1. **Visual Cues**
2. **Predictability**
3. **Structure**



Visual Cues

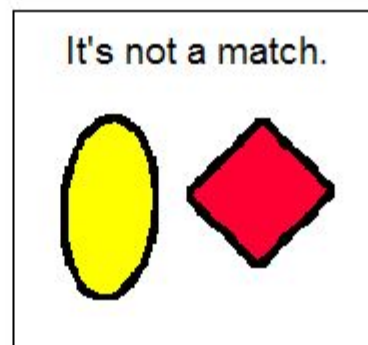
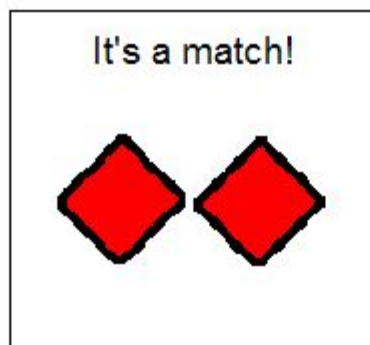
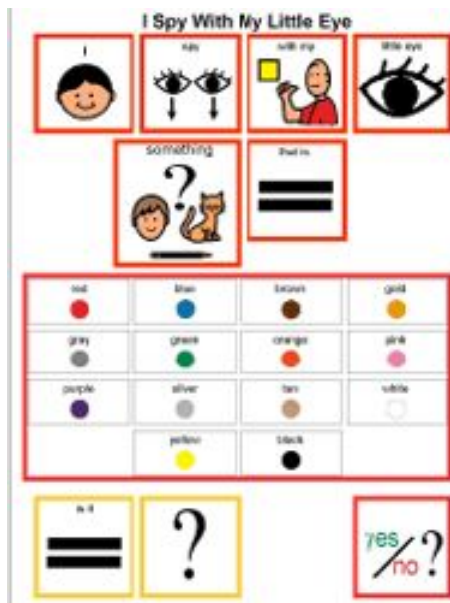


Placemat template, for setting the table



Labeling a cabinet with pictures, so child can independently find items and put them away

Visuals for Playing Games



Predictability: Schedules and Routines

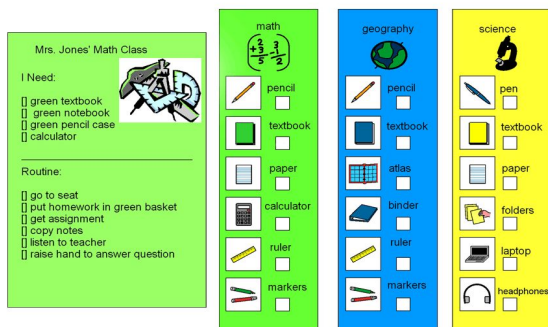
■ Object

■ Photo

■ Picture Symbols

■ Written

■ Smart phones



Megan's Daily Schedule

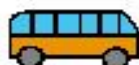
Monday



done



arrival


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circle


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language Art


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snack


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PE


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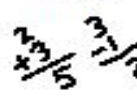
lunch


☐

recess


☐

math


☐

Social Studies


☐

dismissal


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EASY MORNING ROUTINE



WAKE UP



BATHROOM TIME



GET DRESSED



BREAKFAST TIME



PACK BACKPACK



SHOES & JACKET ON



LEAVE FOR SCHOOL



our morning routine
















	Go Potty
	Brush Teeth
	Get Dressed
	Eat Breakfast
	Shoes/Jacket/Hat & Mittens
	Lunch/Schoolwork/Backpack
	Off to School

Practice the unexpected

- Fire drills
- Getting teeth checked by dentist
- Getting on a plane
- Hair cuts
- Waiting



Checklist

Getting ready for school.. 			checklist	
1	<u>go to the toilet</u>		<input type="checkbox"/>	→ 
2	<u>get washed</u>		<input type="checkbox"/>	→ 
3	<u>get dressed</u>		<input type="checkbox"/>	→ 
4	<u>have breakfast</u>		<input type="checkbox"/>	→ 
5	<u>brush teeth</u>		<input type="checkbox"/>	→ 
6	<u>brush hair</u>		<input type="checkbox"/>	→ 
7	<u>pack schoolbag</u>		<input type="checkbox"/>	→ 

Structure

- Make things consistent, part of daily routine
- Use color-coding and familiar materials
- Organize and label
- Use task analysis*

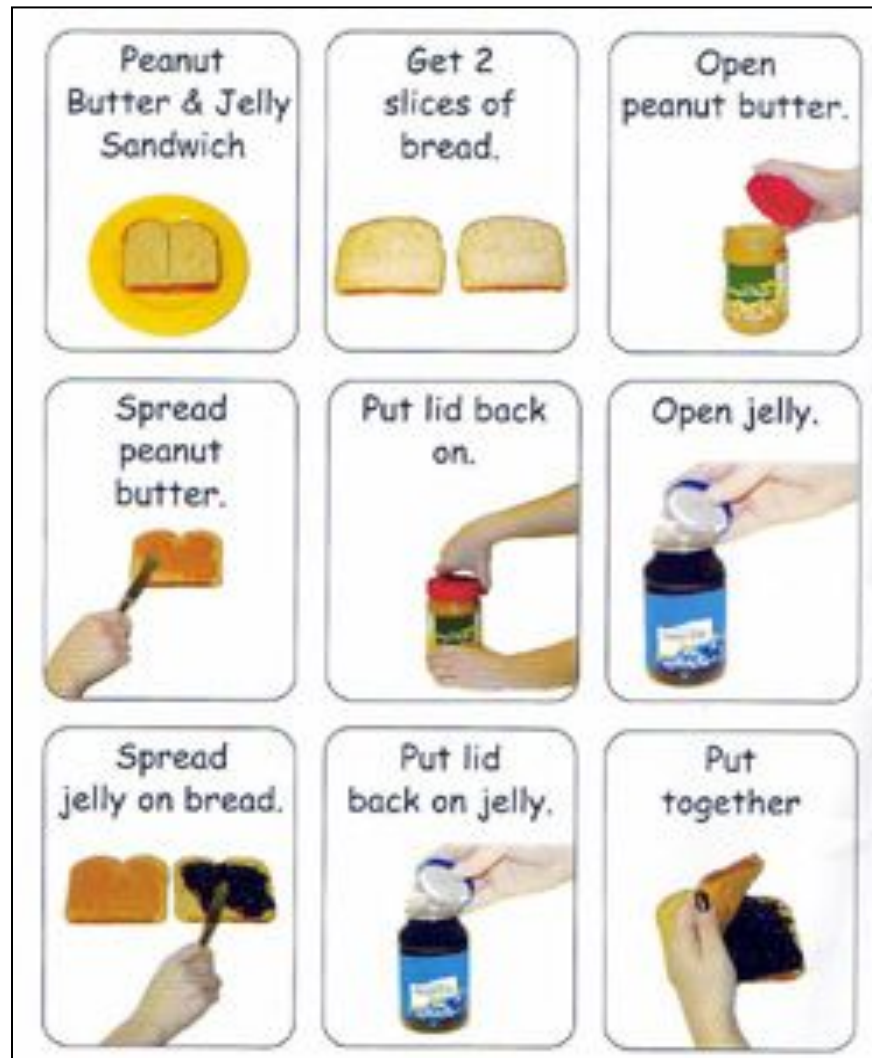


Task Analysis How-To

1. **Decide what task you want your child to perform**
2. **Determine what steps are needed to get to the end result**
3. **Determine how tasks will be presented (written, photo, object)**
4. **Model steps for student with visuals**
5. **Guide them through the steps until they can do it on their own**



Task-analysis of a peanut-butter sandwich



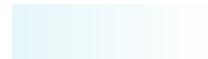
Answering the Phone

1. Say “hello” in a nice calm voice.
2. Wait for the person to say who it is:
 - “This is _____.”
3. If the person does not say who it is, say; “May I ask who’s calling?”
4. Wait for them to answer.
5. Ask, “Who would you like to speak to?”
6. If that person is there:
 - Say “One moment please.”
 - Give the phone to that person.

Or

7. If the person is **not** there:
 - Say, “_____ is not here.”
 - Say, “I’m going to give the phone to an adult to take the message.”
 - Give the phone to an adult.





Combing Your Hair

1. Get out everything you need.
 - comb
 - gel
 - spray bottle
 - towel
2. Look in the mirror and spray 5 squirts of water onto the top of your head.
3. Rub it in.
4. Pour a **small** amount of gel into your hand.
5. Rub your hands together.
6. Rub the gel into your hair.
7. Look in the mirror and comb your hair:
 - 3 strokes on the right
 - 3 strokes on the left
 - 3 strokes in the middle
8. Dry off your hands and shirt with the towel
9. **Don't touch your hair!**



Provide Visuals for Time



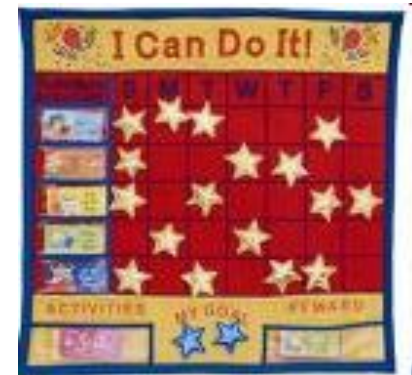


“All this is great, but how do I motivate my child to do all this stuff?”



Some behavior management strategies

1. **Reward good behavior**
2. Tell the child what you **want them to do**, not what you don't want them to do
3. Use fewer verbal directions and **more visual ones**
4. Stick to **schedules** and **routines**
5. Anticipate and **plan** for problems before an activity begins
6. Stick to **priorities**



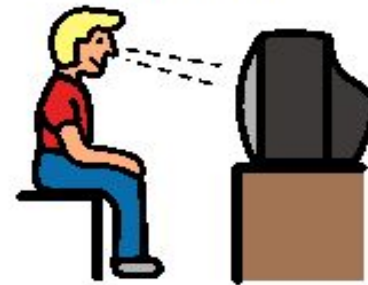
First

clear table



Then

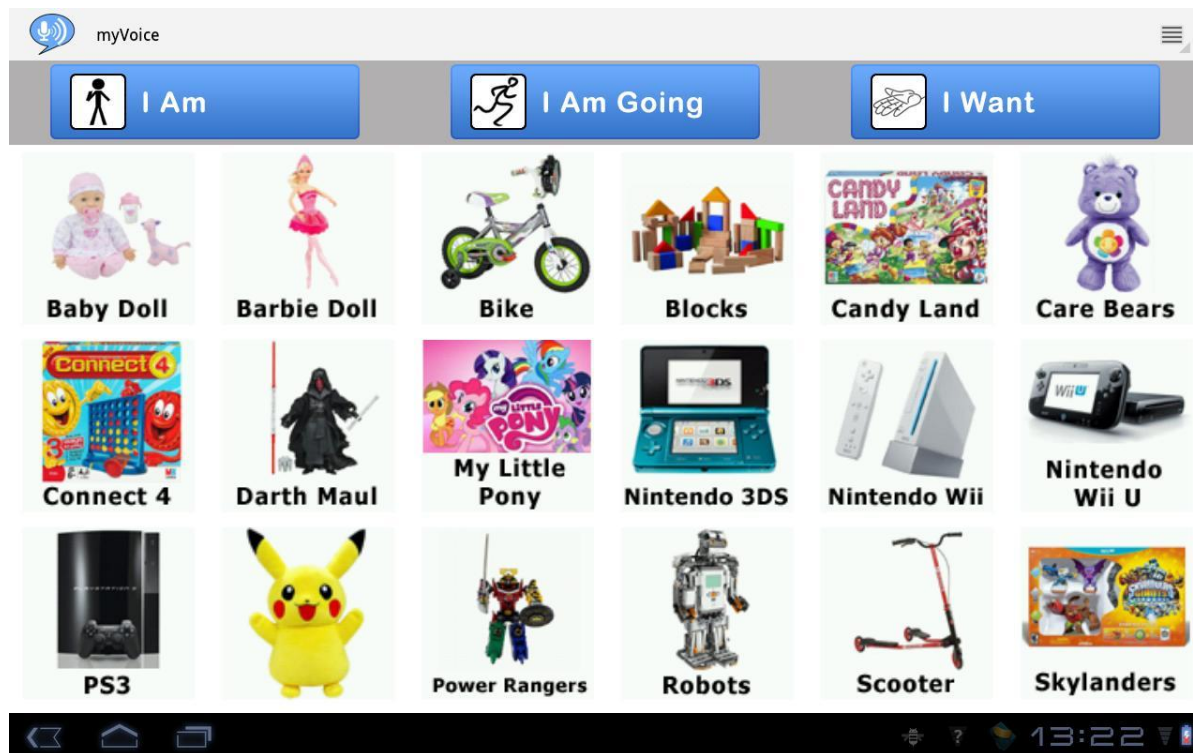
watch TV



Use “**First, Then**” statements or pictures to let child know sequence of event: **first a task, then a reward**

Have child choose reward

First math homework, then computer game



Give **time** limits and expectations

■ Examples:

- *Work on math homework for 30 minutes*
- *You have earned 10 minutes of computer time*
- *I will be in the bank for 7 minutes*
- *Brush your teeth until the timer dings*



Let child know:

1. What to expect
2. What reward will be given afterwards for making good choices



Doctor Checkup

get weighed

☐

look in mouth

☐

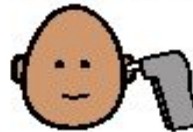
take blood pressure

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take deep breath

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take temperature

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listen to chest

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look in eye

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lollipop

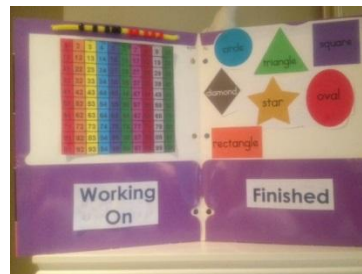
☐

look in ear

☐☐

Additional Tips for Homework Routines

- Have a designated homework place with a comfortable chair, good lighting, and few distractions
- Be consistent about time of day and put homework on child's visual schedule
- Make sure child isn't hungry or thirsty
- Withhold rewards until child has earned them
- Work "left to right" – work to do goes on the left, finished work goes on the right



Additional Tips for Bedtime Routines









- Create and use a visual bedtime schedule
- Place difficult or more stimulating activities earlier in the evening (earlier on the schedule) & calmer, more relaxing activities closer to bedtime
- Be aware of sensory needs. What is calmer for one child, may be over-stimulating for another.

■ “Bedtime Pass”

■ Sleep Tips

Bedtime Routine
After completing each bedtime task mark it below

	 Brush your teeth	 Use the potty	 Wash your hands / Take a bath	 Read a book	 Lights out	 Stay in bed until morning
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						
Saturday						
Sunday						

Praise your child when they do what you want them to do!

“I like the way you...”



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Resources

Book	Author
Getting Real Program	Semple, Debbie
Taking Care of Myself	Wrobel, Mary
Preparing for Life	Baker, Jed
Community Success	Bastian, Dan
How to Teach Life Skills to Kids with Autism	Myers, Jennifer
Functional Routines for Adolescents and Adults:	Plass, Beverly
Activity Schedules for Children With Autism: Teaching Independent Behavior	McClannahan, Lynn
Hygiene and related behaviors	Mahler, Kelly



Additional Resources

- The Arc of Northern VA: Tech for Independent Living
- LessonPix website
- ChoiceWorks App



Thanks for Coming!

Questions?

