

Know What's Next

A calm, predictable-day kit for the classroom and home

Surprises are harder than they look. When a child can see what is happening now and what comes next, the day feels safer, and a safe child has room to learn and to be themselves. Print these boards and cards, point to them, and let the pictures do the talking.

The idea in one line

Show what's now. Show what's next. Warn before every change.

✧ Now / Next

show the one thing now, and the one thing coming

✧ Visual day

let the child SEE the shape of the day

✧ Gentle warnings

a heads-up before every change

How to print, use and make it last

- Print at A4 or US Letter on normal colour settings - that's all you need.
- Laminate the cards (or use a wallet) and add a strip of soft hook-and-loop tape, so cards stick on and lift off the boards again and again.
- Write or draw on the blank cards to match your own day, your own room, and the words this child knows best.

Fitting the day to the child is not 'giving in', it is good support. A predictable day helps even when it doesn't make every hard moment disappear.

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The Now and Next Board

Just two pictures - the one thing now, and the one thing coming

The simplest visual support there is. Cut out the board, then write or draw the one thing happening now and the very next thing. Two only. When NOW is done, NEXT slides across.

NOW

draw or write one thing

NEXT

draw or write one thing

Spare cards - make your own

Put one picture or word in NOW, and the very next thing in NEXT. Keep it to two. When NOW is finished, slide NEXT across into NOW. Pair this with gently practising small changes too, so the day stays flexible, not rigid.

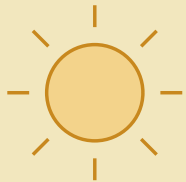
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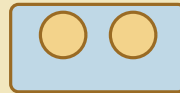
The Visual Day

Let the child see the whole shape of the day

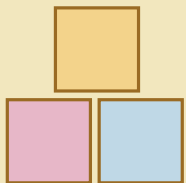
Cut out the cards and lay the day out in order, top to bottom or left to right. Take each one down (or turn it over) as it's finished, so the child can see how much is left. Two blanks are for the bits that are special to your day.



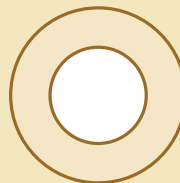
Arrive



Mat time



Play



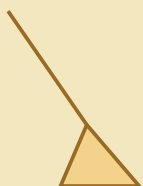
Snack



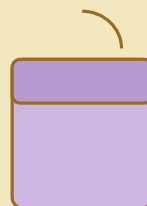
Outside



Story



Tidy up



Home time

your own

your own

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Gentle Warnings for Changes

A heads-up before every change - so nothing is a surprise

Changes are the hardest part of the day. A clear warning before each one makes the change feel safe. Cut out these cards and use them in order. Say it once, calmly, and point to what comes next.

5

Five more minutes

Hold up the card, say it once, point to what's happening next.

2

Two more minutes

A second gentle heads-up. Keep your voice calm and low.



Nearly time to finish

Name what is ending and what is coming: 'nearly time to finish blocks, then snack'.



All done. What's next?

Mark the change clearly, then show the NEXT picture.



A see-it timer helps too: a sand timer or a coloured countdown shows time getting smaller, so 'five more minutes' is something the child can watch, not just hear.

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For the Grown-Up

Make room for the child - don't try to change the child

These notes are for YOU. The kindest support fits the room to the child. Children settle best when they are allowed their own ways of staying calm, so make space for them rather than training them away.

✧ **Make room for stimming**

Fidgeting, rocking, humming and hand movements are how some children stay calm. Make room for them, rather than stopping them. A child who can move is a child who can settle.

✧ **No need for eye contact**

There is no need to ask for eye contact. Many children listen best while looking away. Let them face away, fiddle, or wander a little while they take things in.

✧ **Ease the load of fitting in**

A child who holds it together all day and lets go at home is often working hard to fit in. Ease that load: make it safe to move, stim, wear ear defenders, and take a quiet break.

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Why a Predictable Day Helps

The research behind the kit, in plain words

Everything here is built on published research about how children settle when they know what's next. We make supportive tools, not clinical advice - the notes below are accurate statements about the research, not promises about any one child.

What the research says

- Visual supports and a predictable routine are recognised evidence-based practices for helping young children know what's next and follow changes.
- When a child can SEE what is coming, surprises feel smaller and the day feels safer. Many children, including those who are neurodivergent, find this especially steadying.
- Australia's national education research body advises a calm, predictable space as a first step for hard moments (AERO, 2025).
- Making room for a child's natural ways of staying calm, and easing the pressure to hide them, is part of supporting their wellbeing.

If you have concerns

A general support tool, not medical or clinical advice. If you have concerns about a child's learning, communication or wellbeing, talk with the family and a qualified professional (a GP, paediatrician or speech-language professional).

The research behind it

National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence & Practice (2020). Visual supports & antecedent-based intervention - identified evidence-based practices (Steinbrenner et al., UNC).

Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) (2025). Practice guide on calm, predictable classrooms and supporting students' emotions.

Kapp, S., et al. (2019). Autistic adults' views on stimming - a way of staying calm. Autism.

Leadbitter, K., et al. (2021). Autistic self-advocacy and the neurodiversity movement. Frontiers in Psychology.

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