

Family Quick Guide: Creating a Visual Schedule

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Creating a schedule for you and your family while learning and working from home can help to create structure and stability. A schedule should be easy to maintain, so it must meet your family's needs and be flexible.

Choose Materials

Use what you have available to you: paper, dry erase board, Google/Word Doc, post it notes.

Make it easily adaptable day to day so that activities can be rearranged.

Remember development. Younger children may enjoy sketching images to create a visual schedule while older children may prefer to work off a document that they can highlight, strikethrough, check off, etc.

Brainstorm activities

Mimic activities that your children already do either at home or in school (e.g., independent reading, journaling, math fact practice, drawing/art, etc.).

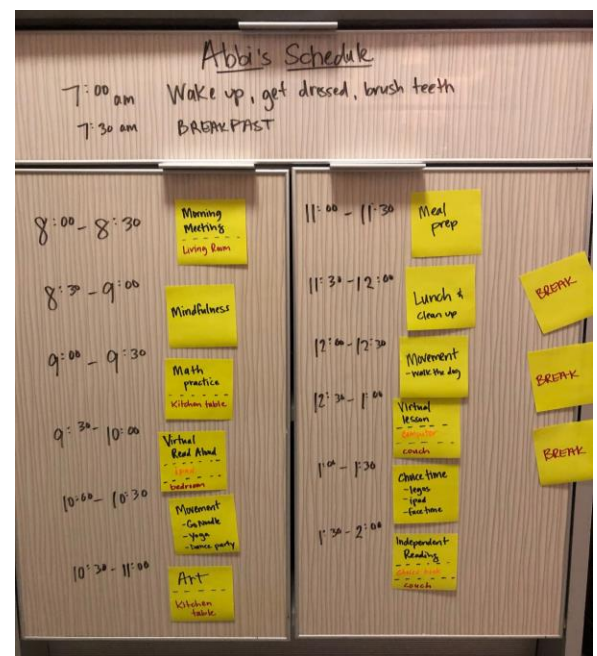
Ask for guidance from teachers and other school staff regarding how long students will need to read/write in order to maintain stamina.

Include children in the process. Let kids add their own ideas for activities, options for movement, how to engage with interests, etc.

Indicate location if applicable (e.g., Independent Reading=Bedroom/couch; Math=Kitchen table)

Include chores like helping to prepare lunch and clean up.

Allow for breaks and to create a space and system to implement them.



Put it together

Arrange the day in chunks. Duration will depend on your child's development and your needs. Older children who are used to 50 minute class periods may be able to sustain an hourly schedule with breaks in between; younger children will need shorter, more frequent shifts, likely of around 15-30 minutes.

Consider strengths, interests, and frustration tolerance. This is a new and confusing time for you and your child/ren. In the beginning, the goal is maintenance and creating structure. Keep tasks simple. Consider what students can do independently and enjoy doing.

Use what you know about your child. Does your child wake up with lots of energy? Start with movement or tasks that allow for creativity? Do they start to fade in the afternoon? Consider saving tech or additional screen time for the afternoons.

Balance and ground. If an activity or task is dysregulating, follow up with movement, mindfulness, or a break.

Include your needs. Look at your own work schedule and plan accordingly. Set students up to be independent so you can take calls, work, etc.

Take it day by day. Initially, start with a daily schedule. Over time, you can move to create a weekly schedule if your child indicates a desire to see how the whole week will go or if you know there will be changes. For instance, if one parent will be leading or absent on certain days.



Try it out

Introduce the schedule and explain its purpose. Review expectations (e.g., “We will clean up after each activity before moving on,” locations for activities). Be specific about plans.

Review each morning and check in with how everyone is feeling. Pay attention to reactions—this may be how your child is letting you know something is hard for them and they may require support.

Use timers. Giving time reminders (“Five more minutes...”) or using auditory cues such as songs can be another way to signal transition. Keep in mind timers can create anxiety for some children—only use if they work for your child.

Break tasks down. Open-ended tasks may be challenging for some students. Give specific directions and model the expectation.

Reinforce & praise... a lot! Let them know with specific praise that they are doing something for the first time and that is a BIG DEAL!

Check in often. Come back to the schedule frequently to ground everyone. You can remove, cross out, or flip completed tasks. Remember some students will be ok with changes while others will need the schedule to remain stable so be thoughtful when making revisions in the moment.

Reflect & revise

Analyze what worked and what needs revision. Creating a schedule that works for everyone will take some adjusting.

Add new activities to hold interest and use novelty to your advantage.

Ask your child/ren what they liked and didn't like. Again, involve them in the process!

