

Using Visual Supports to Better Understand Changes in Routine

Michelle King
Speech Language Therapist

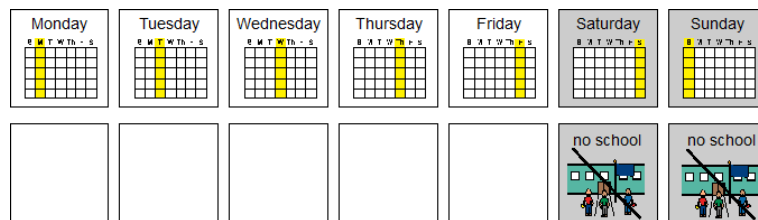
Students who have difficulty communicating, may also have difficulty understanding what is happening outside of their regular daily routines. They may find it difficult to talk about things that have happened in the past, and things that are going to happen, but are aware of changes in routine and important people in their environments.

Challenge:

A lot of early communicators can be upset by changes in routine, what's happening now, next, when a favourite thing will happen, and when they will see a favourite or familiar person again. They likely cannot communicate effectively about these things and may use behaviour, such as appearing upset, to let people know "something's wrong".

Suggestion:

You can help an early communicator begin to understand what is happening and when by showing them using visual supports such as a visual calendar like the one pictured below:



This simple weekly calendar shows a student that there is no school on a weekend. The blank spaces under each day may be filled with activity visuals such as "school day" and special activities that may happen after school such as "swimming" or "Grandma's House".

Using Visual Calendars at home:

Visual calendars can be placed on the refrigerator, a bulletin board in a common area, or on a wall in a hallway, bedroom, or another space where it's able to be frequently viewed and referred to. They can be used during particularly tricky times like the school holidays, or when someone has gone away and will be returning at a later date.

Using a calendar for school holidays:

Some families refer to the calendar each day and tick off the day just before bed time or the following morning with the child, saying something like "yesterday was....." "today is....." "yesterday is finished", (tick it off with a pen together), "today is a school holiday" or "home day". Some people prefer to use a regular calendar and modify it to suit their child's needs. Others may want some extra visual supports such as colour coding, photos, symbols and a simple layout to help support their child's understanding.

Attached is a simple layout, one month per page calendar, with colour coding and symbol support that you can use to help your child better understand the school holiday period. There are spaces above some of the symbols for you to write/draw in anything special you may be doing together on those days. Some people like to mark the day they are on with a small post it flag along with marking off the days that have passed.

Happy Holidays!

The Allenvale Specialist Team

School Holidays

July 2020

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
S M T W T h F S	S M T W T F S	S M T W T h F S	S M T W T h F S	S M T W T F S	S M T W T h F S	S M T W T h F S

		1 school 	2 school 	3 school 	4	5
6 no school 	7 no school 	8 no school 	9 no school 	10 no school 	11	12
13 no school 	14 no school 	15 no school 	16 no school 	17 no school 	18	19
20 school 	21 school 	22 school 	23 school 	24 school 	25	26
27 school 	28 school 	29 school 	30	31		