

# Teaching Independent Behavior with Activity Schedules to Children with Autism

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## Materials for Picture Activity Schedules:

Digital camera	Velcro (lots of it!)
Old toy catalogs	Cardstock
Photo albums (dollar store)	Color printer
Small three-ring binder	Dividers (for binder)
Contact paper/self-laminating sheets	File folder (for organizing pictures)
Laminator (and laminating sheets)	Poster board/oak tag

- (1) **Choosing pictures:** Determine what pictures you will need. This will depend on the type of schedule you are making and the skill level of your child or student.
- (2) **Choosing picture size:** Decide what size pictures you will be using for the schedule. You may choose 1-inch, 2-inch or 3-inch squares.
- (3) **Picture sources:** If using pictures of actual people, places and/or things, use a digital camera to take the photos you need or cut high-quality images from a magazine, catalog or circular of the items/activities you are targeting. You can also find images by doing an image search on Google.
- (4) **Digital camera:** Download the images to your computer. Then insert them into a Word document. This can be done by clicking on “Insert” on the menu at the top of your Word document and then click “Picture” and “From File”. Then select the picture file you want to use and then click “Insert”. You will be able to adjust the size of the image once it is in Word.  
**Internet:** Go to Google or Yahoo and click on “Images”. Then type the image you are looking for in the search bar. Once you find an image you like, right-click on the image and choose “Copy image”. Open a Word document, right-click on the document and then click on “Paste”.
- (5) **Adjusting image size:** Once you have copied an image or images to a Word document, you can begin to size your picture(s). To achieve a uniform size for each

one, right-click on the image and click on “Format Picture”. A box will come up. You now want to:

- (a) Click on the “Size” tab and type in “2” (for 2 inches)
- (b) Then click on “Layout” and choose “In front of text”
- (c) Then click “OK”

Your image may not be an exact square depending on the orientation (vertical, horizontal) of the original image. You may need to crop the image to fit your dimensions. To crop the image:

- (a) Right-click on the image
- (b) Choose “Show picture toolbar”
- (c) On the picture toolbar, find the “crop” button and click on it.
- (d) You can then adjust the image and cut out unnecessary or extra space in your image.
- (e) Click on the “crop” button again to end cropping.
- (f) You can still resize the image once it is cropped.

\*\*\* For those advanced Word users, you can always create a grid of squares the size you need and then copy images into each square. \*\*\*

- (6) **Adding text:** Once you have your images the correct size, you’ll need to add a caption. This again will depend on the level and age of the child. For example, a caption for a picture of a book could be “book” or “Read a book”.

It is good to pair words with the pictures to begin early word-to-picture and picture-to-word correspondence. The long-term goal will be to fade out the pictures and have the child respond to written text only.

To add text either above or below the picture you could:

- (a) type it directly on the Word document ~ you will probably need to adjust/rearrange your pictures so that they are properly aligned with the text, or
- (b) create a text box with the caption in it that you can easily maneuver and place wherever necessary. [To create a text box, click on “Insert” on the menu at the top of the screen, select “Text Box” and then hold down the left button on the mouse and drag the box to the size you want. You can always adjust it once you’ve created it.] Click inside the text box and type your caption. The text box can be easily adjusted to fit your text.

- (7) **Printing your pictures:** I suggest that you print your pictures on card stock since it is more durable than regular paper. Be sure your image is high-quality and large enough to be clear to your child or student.

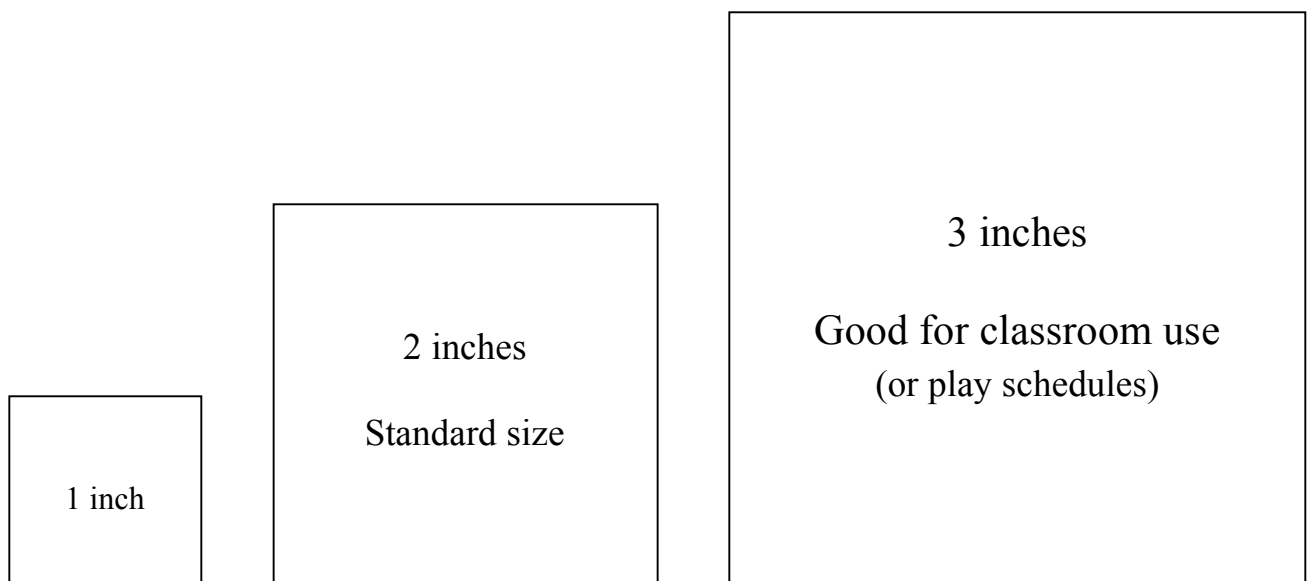
- (8) ***Protecting your pictures:*** To create long-lasting pictures that can withstand lots of use and abuse, you need to laminate them. You can purchase either contact paper or self-laminating pouches at Staples. For those who would prefer heat-laminated pictures, you could print out your sheets of pictures with captions and take them to Staples or a teachers' supply store (that has a laminating machine) and have them laminated. Typically they charge by the square foot. If you'd prefer owning your own laminating machine, you can get the laminator and laminating sheets at Staples (cheapest model runs around \$85-\$90, not including the laminating sheets).
- (9) ***Completing your pictures:*** Now that your pictures are sturdy and ready for use, it's time to add the Velcro. You can buy Velcro in large rolls, which I recommend, at Staples (no, I do not get any kickbacks for promoting Staples so much!). You can also buy the Velcro precut into squares or dots. One thing you want to be mindful of is to be consistent with how you apply the Velcro to the pictures. You should use the same texture of Velcro on ALL the pictures (i.e. use only the soft side for the pictures or only the scratchy side). I tend to use the soft side for the pictures themselves since they will be handled the most. Whichever side you choose, you need to use the other half on the schedule board, book, or bins.

**For daily schedules at home or at school:**

Cut poster board/oak tag so that you have a long strip. With this you can either create a horizontal or vertical schedule. Size and length will vary according to your pictures and usage.

**For individual play schedules:**

Get either a small 3-ring binder or a small photo album. For a small ring binder, insert dividers and add a piece of Velcro to the center of the divider. If using a photo album, you can create photo size images and insert them into the appropriate pages.



## **Resources and Helpful Links**

Lynn E. McClannahan, L.E. & Krantz, P.J. (1998). Activity schedules for children with autism: Teaching independent behavior. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House.

Bryan, L.C. & Gast, D.L. (2000). Teaching on-task and on-schedule behaviors to high-functioning children with autism via picture activity schedules. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 30, 553-567.

Dooley, P. (2001). Using an activity schedule to smooth school transitions. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 3, 57-62.

### **Websites for images, templates, products and more:**

#### Free resources

[www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

[www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)

<http://www.abaresources.com/free3.htm>

[www.speechfun.com](http://www.speechfun.com)

<http://www.angelfire.com/pa5/as/asteachersites.html>

#### Products

[www.pyramidproducts.com](http://www.pyramidproducts.com)

[www.mayer-johnson.com](http://www.mayer-johnson.com) (Boardmaker)

[www.difflearn.com](http://www.difflearn.com)

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