



HOW TO TEACH: “FIRST/THEN Board”

1516 Atwood Avenue · Johnston, RI 02919 · 401-785-2666
www.theautismproject.org · info@theautismproject.org

Understanding the concept of time, order and multiple steps is an important life skill. These skills are the foundation of organizing an activity, your day or a long-term plan. The use of a **FIRST/THEN Board** is the **FIRST** step to teaching the important skill of following a schedule.

*Teaching the **FIRST/THEN Board***

A **FIRST/THEN Board** structures a child's time into beginning steps that are manageable and clear. The two-step board teaches the child where and how to look for information on what he or she will be doing right now. It's important to remember when you introduce the tool to your child or student, you're teaching him or her how to use a very important tool that will grow into a schedule and calendar as they get older and can better track activities.

- Begin by using his or her preferred interests. **“FIRST Video/THEN Ice Cream”**. Use of preferred interests will engage the child in the process and will reduce resistance to it. The goal is for the child to “see” the tool as a source of information and to trust what's presented on it will happen.
- As the child begins to trust and understand the tool, you can begin to use it for less preferred activities too. **“FIRST Brush Teeth/THEN Read Book”**.
- **You always put the more preferred item second so that they see it and stay motivated through the less preferred activity.**
- It's important to remember you are teaching the child to look to the **FIRST/THEN Board** for information. When the child trusts you will do what is put on the board, it will help with transitions, with getting through some tough situations (**FIRST Dentist/THEN Book Store**), and will give the child an important basic skill to expand to a longer schedule.
- **NOTE:** This is a **FIRST/THEN** tool, **NOT** an **IF/THEN**. The “THEN” **MUST ALWAYS** be honored or the child will not trust the tool. For example, if the child struggles at the Dentist and the behaviors made the appointment 15 minutes longer, the child still gets to go to the book store.