

NOW/NEXT BOARDS

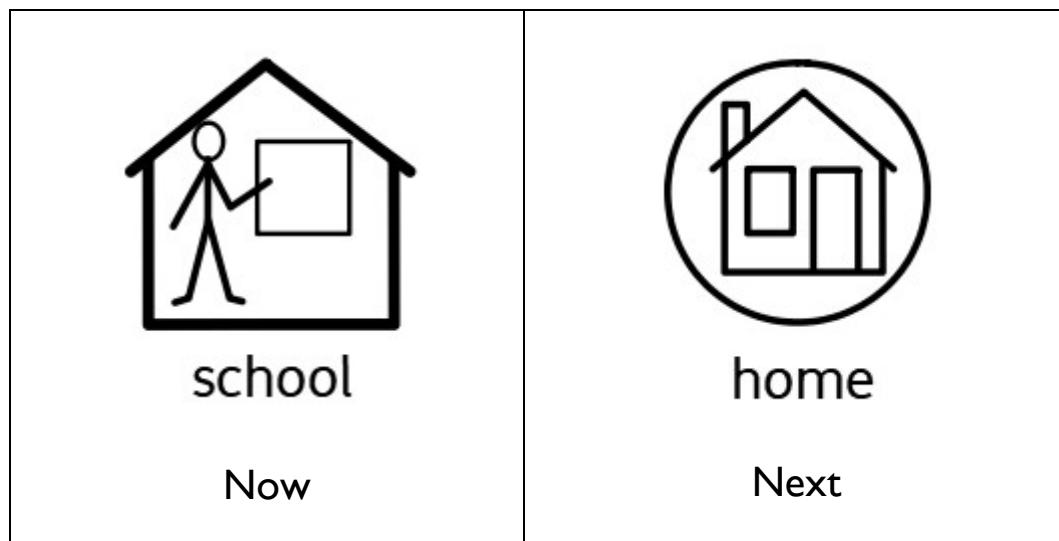
Autistic children can often find change difficult, or have difficulties knowing what is happening in their day, when something is coming to an end or what is happening next.

A Now and Next board can support children to

1. understand the structure of their day and expectations
2. feel regulated and less anxious
3. manage changes between activities (called transitions)
4. begin to engage in adult-led activities before doing something they'd prefer

Visual information is especially helpful when a child has language difficulties or finds it difficult to retain and recall information. The images reinforce what has been said, and act as a reminder.

A Now and Next board uses types of 'visuals' (symbols, pictures or photographs) alongside key words to show a child what is happening now and what will happen afterwards. They have two parts a) what is currently happening *now* and b) what is going to happen *next*.



How should I use a Now & Next board?

Place two visuals on the board. What the child is currently doing goes in the now column. The other visual is what is going to happen *next*.

Show the child the visuals, telling them, 'Now it's _____. Next is _____.'

Point to the pictures as you do this.

As the child is engaged in an activity, remind them at intervals that, 'Now it's ____ next it will be _____.'

It can sometimes be helpful to give advance preparation time for an activity coming to an end, particularly if it is something the child really likes. Sometimes visual timers can be



helpful to show a child how long is left. We tend to use the word, 'Finished.'

Once the activity has finished, say to the child '_____ has finished'. Move the visual from the *now* column and place it in a 'finished' wallet/bag/envelope. Some children can be encouraged to remove the visual themselves, increasing their independence.

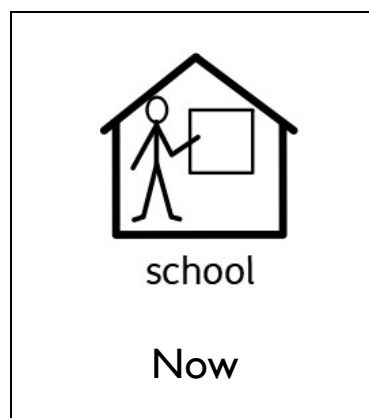
Then, move the visual from the *next* column and place it in the *now* column. From inside the folder or wherever you keep your visuals, get the next activity in your day and place it in the *next* column.

Repeat, 'Now it's _____. Next it's _____.'

It can be helpful to have the board in a ziplock wallet or a small A5 folder, with all your visuals inside. If using a folder you can even have the day set up in order, which helps the child see the whole day and again increases understanding and independence.

It is really helpful if the now / next board is portable and can be brought around with the child wherever they go. That way, should they get stuck somewhere, refuse to move, or don't understand what is expected, you always have it to hand to help communication.

Some children may find that a single Now timetable is easier to follow.



While others may be able to engage with a Now/Next/Then timetable.



Some children may respond better to photographs, while others use symbols, and others may prefer words on their timetable. Now/Next boards should be personal to each child.