How To Use A Visual Timer

Mike Woods, M.A. BCaBA

Autism and Inclusion Specialist

Evidence

- **Visual supports meet the evidence-based practice criteria within the early childhood, elementary, and middle school, and other age groups.**

  – **A variety of educational research studies can be "googled" to validate the use of this type of visual support.**

In What Settings?

- **Visual timers have been used effectively in classroom, home, residential, and church settings. Visual timer are intended to be used as one component of comprehensive programming for individuals with ASD.**

Why Use A Visual Timer?

- **The literature in the field of autism indentifies several areas that are common "trouble spots" for kids on the autism spectrum:**
  - **Difficulty waiting.**
  - **Difficulty knowing when to start or stop an activity.**
  - **Difficulty with transitions.**

Why Use A Visual Timer?

- **The one thing that all of the previously mentioned "trouble spots" have in common is time.**
  - **Time is invisible.**
  - **The visual timer helps your child or student to see and "feel" the passage of time.**
  - **The visual timer is an excellent visual aid to help your teach the concept of time and time management.**

What Can You Use A Visual Timer For?

- **To set time limits.**
- **To regulate the time at the computer, TV, lunch, etc.**
- **To prepare your child or student for a transition.**

What Can You Use A Visual Timer For?

- To measure "time out."
- To use as a memory prompt for medications, appointments, etc.
- To relieve stress or anxiety as it relates to the concept of "time."

How To Use A Visual Timer

- **Step 1: Determine "When?" information NEEDS to be presented visually.**
  - **Does the activity cause frustration or anxiety?**
  - **Does it appear that the frustration or anxiety is related to a time factor (i.e., person is surprised that his "time is up!," or person does not know how long an activity is going to last, etc.)?**

How To Use A Visual Timer

- **Step 2: Select the way in which time will be visually presented.**
  - **Select a visual timer that is appropriate for the age of the person needing this type of visual support.**
  - **For example, a young child might need a large visual timer, an older child might benefit from a digital timer, someone else might benefit from a wristwatch visual timer.**

How To Use A Visual Timer

- **Step 3: Implement the use of a visual timer during activity identified in Step 1.**
  - **The adult shows the learner the visual timer and explains it's use.**
  - **The adult models how to use the visual timer.**
- **Some children will require a more detailed approach. If so, see next slide.**

How To Use A Visual Timer

- **Step 3: Implementation during the activity identified during Step 1.**
  - **Show the learner the visual timer.**
  - **For some learners the initial time increment will need to be short (you can build to a longer length of time later!).**
  - **Stand behind the learner when prompting the use of the visual timer (you want the learner's attention on the visual timer, not you.).**

How To Use A Visual Timer

- **Step 3: Implementation during the activity identified during Step 1.**

  - **Use only as much language as needed when teaching the use of the visual timer:**

  - **"Look, you have 2 more minutes until it's time to go!" versus "Look at the visual timer, as you can see the red area indicates that you only have two more minutes until it's time for you to get ready to go home!"**

How To Use A Visual Timer

- **Step 3: Implementation during the activity identified during Step 1.**
  - Fade your prompts as quickly as possible (i.e., begin to withdraw your help as your learner becomes more independent with the concept of a visual timer.).

How To Use A Visual Timer

- **Step 4: Generalization.**
  - **Ensure that everyone uses the visual timer in a consistent manner across different people and different settings.**

Types of Visual Timers