HOW-TO
TEMPLATE SERIES

WORK SYSTEM
CREATING A SEQUENCE FOR TASKS/ACTIVITIES

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Work systems include an activity or mini-schedule and accompanying organizational system (i.e., bins, tray, binder, or shelves) for work activities and tasks. That is, the work system provides a means for organizing the work to be completed and prescribes the sequence for that completion. Regardless of the specific work needing to be completed, the individual learns that the system provides a structure as to whether to progress from left to right or top to bottom and, when completed, is checked off, pulled off, or put away as designated. The concept and application of a work system can be utilized across home, school, work, and other settings.

Work systems typically include a picture/icon schedule or checklist that is then partnered with matching visuals presented within a system of bins, trays, binders or shelves that contain the specifically assigned tasks and activities.

The schedule pictures, words, or icons designate the sequence or order of tasks to be completed. The specific mini-schedule and accompanying system (i.e., bins, trays, binders, shelves) differ depending on:
- ¤ materials assigned to the individual (e.g., tasks vs. worksheets)
- ¤ level of functioning (e.g., matching vs. checking off),
- ¤ motivation (e.g., pictures of characters vs use of letters or numbers),
- ¤ functionality (e.g., use of bins and shelving in a self-contained setting vs. binder or notebook in a general education setting),
- ¤ and other such factors.

HOW DO I SET UP A WORK SYSTEM?

The work system consists of two parts:
- ¤ The visual schedule with the order in which the activities should be completed.
- ¤ Location where activities are stored and returned after completion (e.g., bins, trays, binders, trays)

If the system will incorporate *icons* that need to be manipulated (i.e., pulled off the work schedule and matched to the appropriate tub or other location), the following steps should be completed:

- ¤ place the activities in the order to be completed,
- ¤ place a picture on each tub or other container/shelf, and
- ¤ place the another set of matching pictures on the visual schedule in the preferred order of completion.

Reminder: This is only one example.
This template may need to be individualized to meet the particular needs of a person with ASD!

If the system will incorporate more of a check-off system, then
- ¤ the containers, shelves, trays or notebook folders will be marked with letters, numbers, or pictures
- ¤ the same will be used in the check-off schedule.

The individual will then mark off when items within the system (e.g., Tray 1 [ ]) as they are completed.

Tasks that are completed may be put into a separate finished area (e.g., tub, shelf, folder) or they can be re-shelved or replaced into the tub, tray, folder from which it came.

> **TIP** You may want to create a system where all choices/cards for the work system and any other card supports use hard Velcro, and all boards use soft Velcro. This allows for ease of use of icon cards across all supports such as schedules, choice boards, and first-then boards.

DO I USE CHECK BOXES, PICTURES, OR OTHER FOR THE WORK SYSTEM?

Here are several considerations:
- ¤ *What is motivational for the individual?* For example, if an individual is motivated by trains or comics heroes, you can use them to as part of the work system. In this case, an individual would match the cards.
- ¤ *What is appropriate for the setting?* While superheroes can be motivation, but they may not be appropriate for a workplace. Consider using numbers or letters to match or use a check-off option.
- ¤ *Ease of use:* Consider how well an individual can match numbers or letters or read the schedule. Just like with a visual schedule, you want to make a work system that the individual can learn to navigate independently.

HOW MANY TASKS CAN I USE PER WORK SYSTEM?

This will depend on the individual. While some individuals can complete several activities in a row, others may only be able to handle two or three tasks or activities at a time Remember, only one task should go into each tub, tray, or folder. In addition, only the amount of the activity that is desired should be included (i.e., only include the number of materials, questions, prompts that you intend for the individual to complete). Essential to the process is to build on success, increasing expectations only as the individual shows success and independence.

> **TIP** If a task or activity is taking longer to complete than intended, suggest that you will take a turn to help to speed things up. Similarly, if the activity or task goes more quickly than intended, do not add more materials to the work system. The amount and materials included in the work system can change the next session but should not be altered once the individual is using the work system.

HOW TO USE A WORK SYSTEM?

It is important to teach the correct use of the system using a prompting hierarchy. See HANDSinAutism. IUPUI.edu for more information.

Work system can be set up either left-to-right or top-to-bottom.

If using a tub or tray system with matching icon schedule:

1. Prompt the individual to pick up the first icon from the schedule and match it to the corresponding icon on the container/organizer used

2. Prompt the individual to take the container/organizer off the shelf, remove the materials from inside the tub, place the tub back on the shelf or out of the way on the desk surface

3.　Complete the task

4.　Once the task is completed, prompt the individual put the materials back into the container

5.　Place container back on the shelf, in the tray or in the finished tub.

If using a tray, notebook, or shelf system with a check-off the schedule:

1.　Prompt the individual to identify the first task on the tray, shelf or in the notebook

2.　Prompt the individual to take out materials

3.　Complete the task

4.　Once the task is completed, prompt the individual to check off the box next to the matching number, letter or icon on the schedule.

5.　Place the materials in the tray, on the shelf, in the notebook folder, or other designated area.

6.　Praise for the work well done, desired behaviors, etc.

HOW TO MAKE A WORK SYSTEM?

Materials needed:
- ¤ Cards (matching set) or a set of cards and a schedule template
- ¤ Schedule template
- ¤ Scissors
- ¤ Hard and soft Velcro dots or spots (cut down to 1" pieces).
- ¤ Laminate and laminator (if available).
- ¤ Dry erase marker for check-off work systems.

> **TIP**
>
> You may want to create a system where all the choice for the first -then board and any other supports use hard Velcro, and all the boards use soft Velcro. This would allow to use icon cards across different schedules, choice boards, and first-then boards.

Steps to make the work system:

1.　Decide on the type of the work system you would prefer

2.　Print the appropriate board template and cards. You may need to create your own cards if preferred by the individual

3.　Laminate the board and cards

4.　Cut them out

5.　Place soft Velcro on the board to place choices. Place hard Velcro on the back of the cards.

TEMPLATES

A	B	C

A	B	C
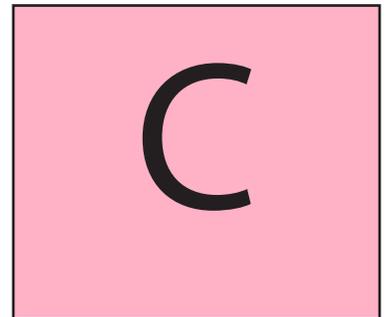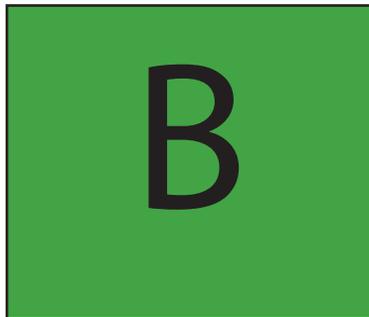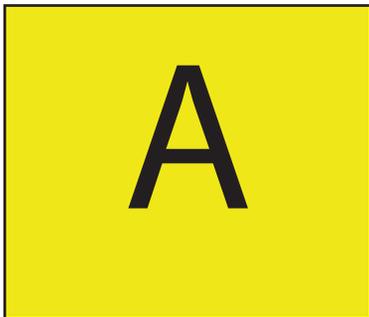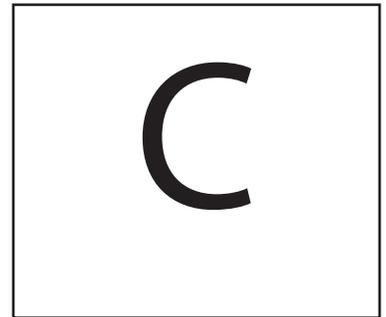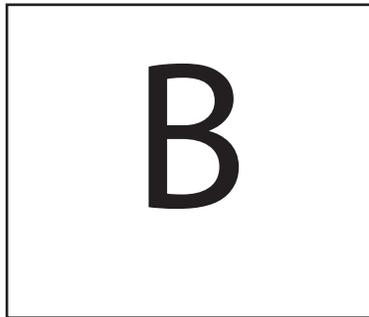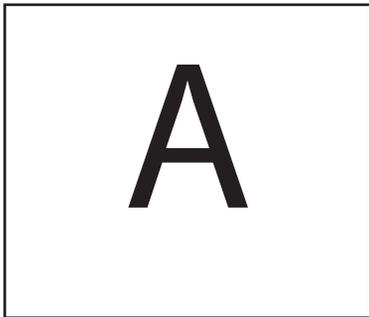
Folder A	☐
Folder B	☐
Folder C	☐

Check your schedule

A	☐
B	☐
C	☐

Check your schedule