

FIRST

THEN



FIRST-THEN TIP SHEET



What are First-Then Statements/Boards?

First-Then statements & boards describe a sequence of events that will occur. This can be helpful for showing which transitions & activities will occur and in what order.

These statements are also commonly used to motivate a learner to complete a non-preferred activity (“FIRST”), by rewarding completion of that activity with a preferred activity (“THEN.”)

- Examples...
 - “*First* do your homework, *then* you can play video games
 - “*First* wash your hands, *then* you can have a snack”
 - “*First* change into pajamas, *then* I will read you a bedtime story”

Why are they important?

First-Then statements & boards may be used to...

- Increase learner independence
- Provide predictable environments
- Clarify expectations while providing a sequence of events
- Support transitions (activity to activity or between locations)
- Reduce verbal prompts provided to learner
- Increase motivation for completing a less-preferred or difficult task/activity
- Prepare the learner for using a more complex visual schedule in the future

How do I implement First-Then statements & boards?

- Decide what items/activities/tasks are preferred & non-preferred to the learner (remember— every learner has different preferences!)
- Use pictures or words on the First-Then board, depending on what the learner understands or prefers
- A visual is not always necessary—a verbal statement may be sufficient depending on the learner
- If the learner can read, you can use words instead of pictures, or words & pictures together on an icon
- Provide choice to the learner by allowing him/her to choose task & activities to complete when possible and items/activities to earn
- Arrange tasks so that a difficult or non-preferred task occurs FIRST, before a preferred activity
- Clearly state, “FIRST ____, THEN ____” when presenting the schedule
- Once the “First” task is completed, move onto the “then” activity as immediately as possible (make sure the preferred item/activity is nearby & ready to access!)
- Ensure that the “Then” (preferred activity) is only given after the “First” (non-preferred activity) is completed (even if challenging behavior occurs)
- Utilize prompting to ensure the learner completes the first task if an independent response does not occur on the first try

Do's & Do Not's!

DO	DO NOT
✓ Put the “first” activity as a non-preferred or difficult activity	✗ Give the preferred “then” activity before the “first” activity is complete, even if challenging behaviors occur
✓ Put the “then” activity as a preferred activity that the learner likes	✗ Put extremely difficult/unknown tasks as the “first” activity
✓ Ensure the expectation is clear – <u>e.g.</u> for “Clean your room”, how clean does it need to be? Exactly what needs to be completed?	✗ Assume that a “then” activity for one learner will work for everyone –make sure it is individualized!
✓ Keep the first-then board visible	✗ Use words on the board if the individual cannot read
✓ Point to first-then board as a reminder or prompt if an independent response does not occur	✗ Repeat verbal instructions multiple times (the less verbal prompts, the better!)
✓ Provide as many choices to the learner as possible—the learner should <i>always</i> choose what is preferred to him/her!	✗ Present too many demands at once

