

FIRST/THEN BOARDS

A GUIDE

What is a first/then board?

First/then or now/next boards are a visual aid used to help children complete specific tasks.

They can be used to aid transition from one activity to another or help a child to complete work tasks in the classroom or at home. The 'first' is a non-preferred activity, and the 'then' is a motivating activity.

Some services recommend now/next. Services such as the Hanen Programme recommend first/then as it is versatile - you can build this up to a child telling a story or using a more comprehensive timetable e.g. 'First we..., then we..., then we...'



How do I use it?

With help from your speech and language therapist, determine whether the child understands:

- real objects
- Objects of Reference
- True Object Based Icons (TOBIs)
- photographs
- or symbols

Create a first/then board using card or laminated paper, with Velcro to attach the object/photo/symbol.

Place the object/photo/symbol for the activity that is happening now in the 'first' box, and the activity that is happening next in the 'then' box. Tell your child what is happening 'first' and what is happening 'then' using simple language and signs (e.g. 'first bath, then bed' or 'first work, then snack'). You may need to repeat this several times especially for children who have difficulties understanding verbal language.

First	Then
 work	 trampoline

When you first start, make sure the 'now' activity is something short. It might be a bite of their meal before pudding, or one turn on a game before using the trampoline. Gradually build the amount of time up.

The 'next' activity should be something highly motivating. It can be gradually downgraded to any activity if the child is able to tolerate this. Make sure the 'then' activity is given straight away so the child makes the connection between the visual and the item.

This resource can travel with the child as they travel from one activity to another.

Top Tips

- Have a 'finished' tray or pocket that you can put the used visuals in.
- Keep your objects/photos/symbols in an easily accessible place and always return them there.
- Use this strategy as often as possible as it may take a while for the child to begin to understand this.
- Put the word for the activity underneath the photo/symbol so everyone uses the same language.

- Children will need adult support to engage and respond to the visuals – they will not know how to use it alone.
- Gloucestershire uses a specific symbol set across the county called Widgeo which is available to all settings.