

Structured Teaching

Creating Predictable Learning Environments

That Promote Independence

Presented by:

Shea Walter and Tracy Cropley

Turn and Talk

If you were a brand-new student entering one of these classrooms, which would help you know what to do—and why?



Structured Teaching

Creating Predictable Learning Environments That Promote Independence

- Based on evidence-based practices for students with autism
- Effective for all learners
- Reduces anxiety while increasing engagement and independence

What is Structured Teaching?

Structured Teaching is an evidence-based approach that organizes the environment, instruction, and routines so students understand:

- What to do
- Where to do it
- When it is finished
- What happens next

Goal: Increase independence while decreasing anxiety and challenging behaviors.



Benefits of Structured Teaching

Students are more likely to:

- ✓ Stay engaged
- ✓ Complete tasks independently
- ✓ Transition successfully
- ✓ Reduce challenging behaviors
- ✓ Improve communication
- ✓ Build confidence
- ✓ Generalize skills



Why Structure Matters

Students with disabilities often experience difficulty with:

- Executive functioning
- Organization
- Transitions
- Understanding expectations
- Processing verbal directions

Structure helps by providing:

- Predictability
- Consistency
- Visual supports
- Clear expectations



Four Components of Structured Teaching

1. Physical Structure
2. Visual Schedules
3. Work Systems
4. Visual Structure



These components work together to support independence.

Component 1 – Physical Structure

Physical structure answers:

- Where do I go?
- What happens here?

Arrange the classroom into clearly defined areas such as:

- Group instruction
- Independent work
- Teacher table
- Sensory/calming area
- Centers
- Leisure

Physical Structure Examples

Include photographs or diagrams of:

- Clearly labeled areas
- Bookshelves used as dividers
- Carpet squares
- Defined workstations
- Visual labels
- Minimized distractions

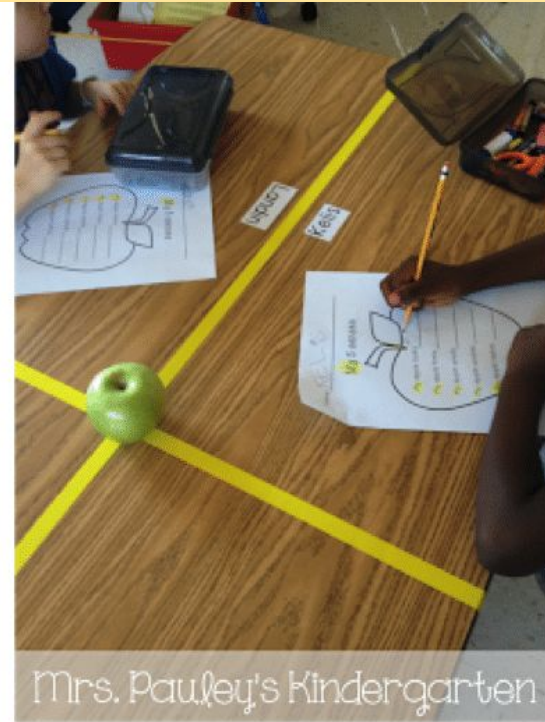
Remember: The classroom should "tell students what to do."

Physical Structure Examples

- Furniture Style:
 - group similar style or same color chairs within each center
 - helps to clarify which center is which



Physical Structure Examples



Physical Structure Examples

- Masking tape can help provide clear boundaries



Physical Structure Examples



Component 2 – Visual Schedules

Visual schedules answer:

- What am I doing today?
- What comes next?

Schedules can be:

- Objects
- Photos
- Icons
- Words
- Digital schedules



ME EXPLAINING MY SCHEDULE TO OTHERS

Component 2 – Visual Schedules

Visual schedules answer:

- What am I doing today?
- What comes next?

Schedules can be:

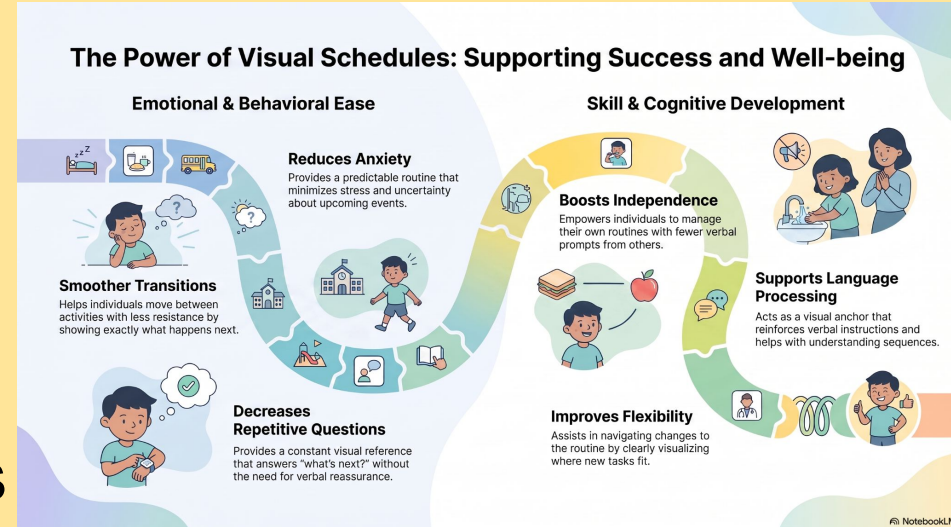
- Objects
- Photos
- Icons
- Words
- Digital schedules



Why Visual Schedules Work

Visual schedules:

- Reduce anxiety
- Improve transitions
- Increase independence
- Reduce repetitive questions
- Improve flexibility
- Support language processing



Examples of Visual Schedules

Examples:

- Individual schedules
- Whole-class schedules
- First-Then boards
- Mini schedules
- Choice boards

Discuss matching schedules to student ability.

Examples of Visual Schedules

HOURLY SCHEDULE	
READING UNIT BREAKDOWN	
45-65 MINUTE CLASS PERIODS	
TIME	SUBJECT
WARM-UP 5-10 MINUTES	• Daily Bell Ringer: Vocabulary, grammar, root words and affixes, etc. • Or Mentor Sentences to teach Grammar
MINI-LESSON 10-15 MINUTES	• Whole Group Literature or Non-Fiction Lesson (Interactive Notebooks) • Read aloud of current whole class novel
TEACHER MODELING 10-15 MINUTES	• Activity relating to current novel or whole group lesson • Modeling a reading response • Implementing a Socratic Seminar
WORKSHOP 15-30 MINUTES	• Students are silent Reading • Students are writing reading responses • Students are participating in book clubs or literature circles. • Teacher can do small groups or individual reading and writing conferences.

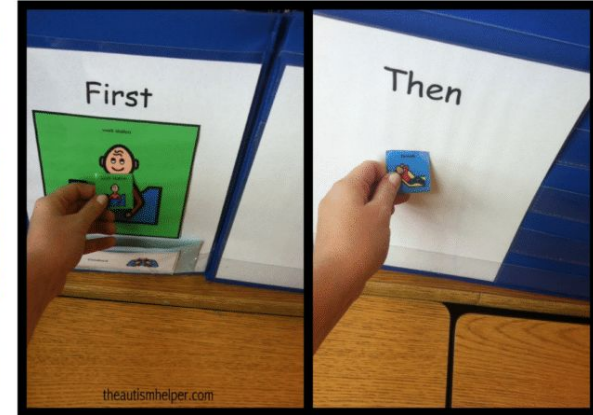
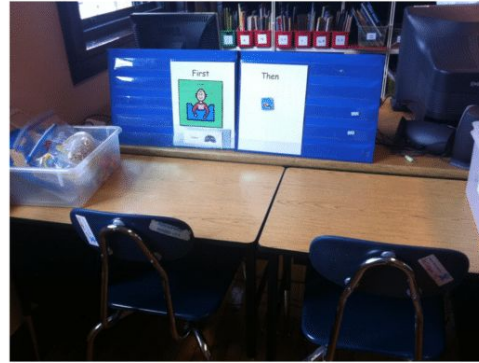


©PARTIAL CHILL - THE HUNGRY TEACHER

Examples of Visual Schedules

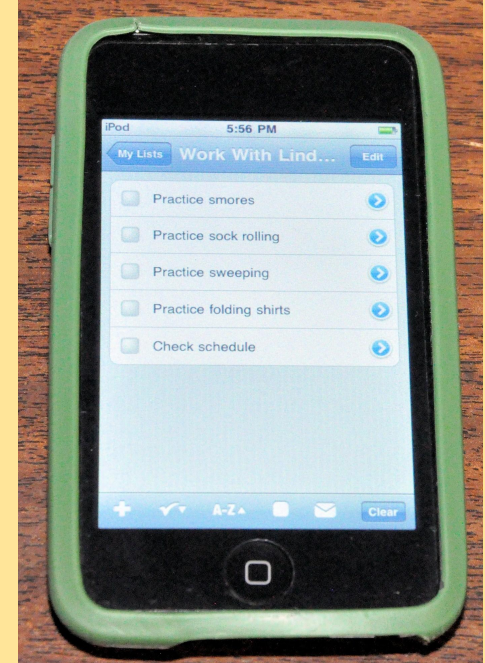
ELA in 55 Minutes a Day			
Reader's Workshop/ Fluency Work	Monday-Thursday 10 minutes	September - June - Self-selected reading with conferencing - Fluency practice (if necessary)	
Book Talk/ Read Aloud	Monday-Thursday 2 minutes	September - June - Give one or two book talks - Read an interesting article, quote, or social media post - Read a picture book	
Word Work/ Grammar	Monday-Friday 10 minutes	September - June Grammar Practice	October - June Greek and Latin Roots (only a minute or two each day)
Mini-Lesson	Monday-Thursday 10 minutes	September - June Reading or writing lesson for the day	
Practice	Monday-Thursday 20 minutes	September - June - Students will practice whatever was covered in the mini-lesson that day - Small groups if needed.	
Assessments	Fridays 20 minutes	September - June - Greek and Latin Roots - Grammar - Reading comprehension or quick writes	
Article of the Week	Fridays 20 minutes	September - June - Return graded AoW and review - Introduce new article; completed AoW will be due the following Friday.	
First Chapter Friday	Fridays 10 minutes	September - June Read the first chapter of a great book every Friday in place of Reader's Workshop + Book Talk/Read Aloud	

Examples of Visual Schedules



Examples of Visual Schedules

Byron's Weekly Schedule				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Daily Work	Daily Work	Daily Work	Daily Work	Daily Work
Math Meeting	Math Meeting	Math Meeting	Math Meeting	Math Meeting
Reading	Reading	Reading	Reading	Reading
Teacher Time	Teacher Time	Teacher Time	Teacher Time	Teacher Time
Language	Language	Language	Language	Language
Work	Work	Work	Work	Work
Break/ Music	Break	Break/ Library	Break	Break/ Art
Recess/Lunch/ Bathroom	Bathroom	Recess/Lunch/ Bathroom	Recess/Lunch/ Bathroom	Recess/Lunch/ Bathroom
Read Aloud-403	Recess/Lunch	Read Aloud-403	Recess/Lunch	Read Aloud-403
Table Time-403	World Language	Table Time-403	World Language	Table Time-403
Math-403	Math-403	Math-403	Math-403	Math-403
Math Binders- 403	Math Binders- 403	Math Binders- 403	Math Binders- 403	Math Binders- 403
Pack up-301	Pack Up-301	Pack up-301	Pack Up-301	Pack up-301



Turn and talk

A student enters the classroom and immediately asks: "What are we doing today?" They ask this question repeatedly throughout the day.

What could help?

Component 3 – Work Systems

A work system answers four questions:

1. What work do I do?
2. How much work?
3. How do I know I'm finished?
4. What comes next?

Types of Work Systems

Examples include:

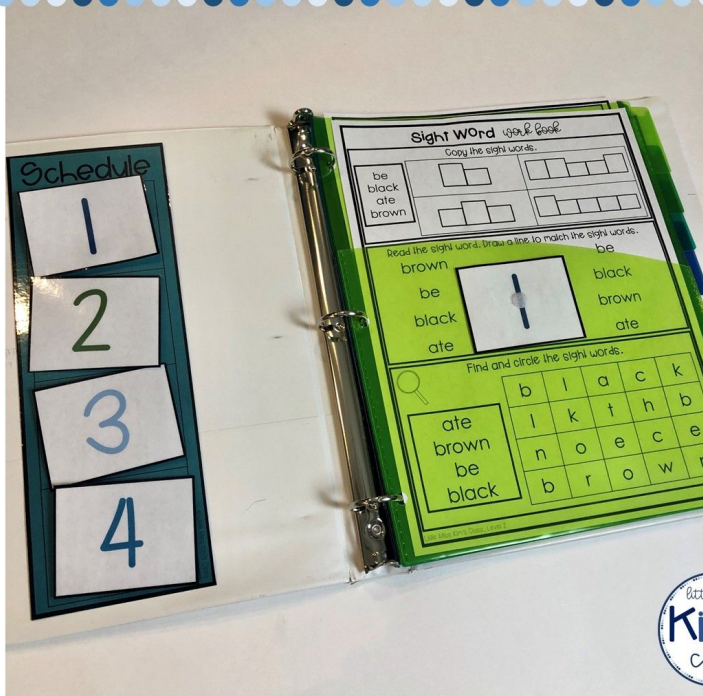
- Left-to-right bins
- File folders
- Numbered tasks
- Color-coded tasks
- Digital task lists

Goal:

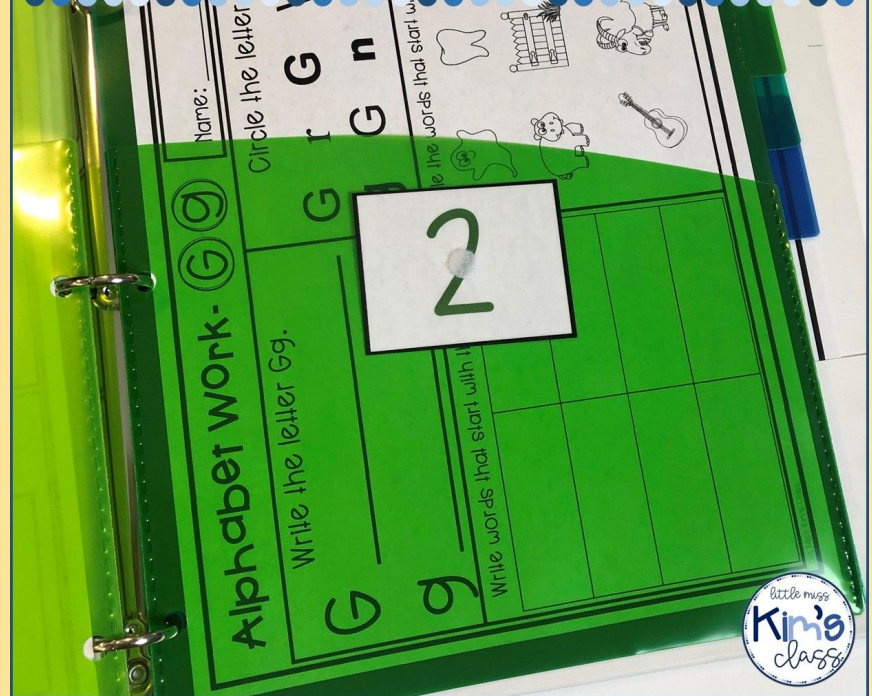
Students complete work independently without constant adult prompting.

Work System Example

ideas for making structured work systems
portable & practical in any classroom

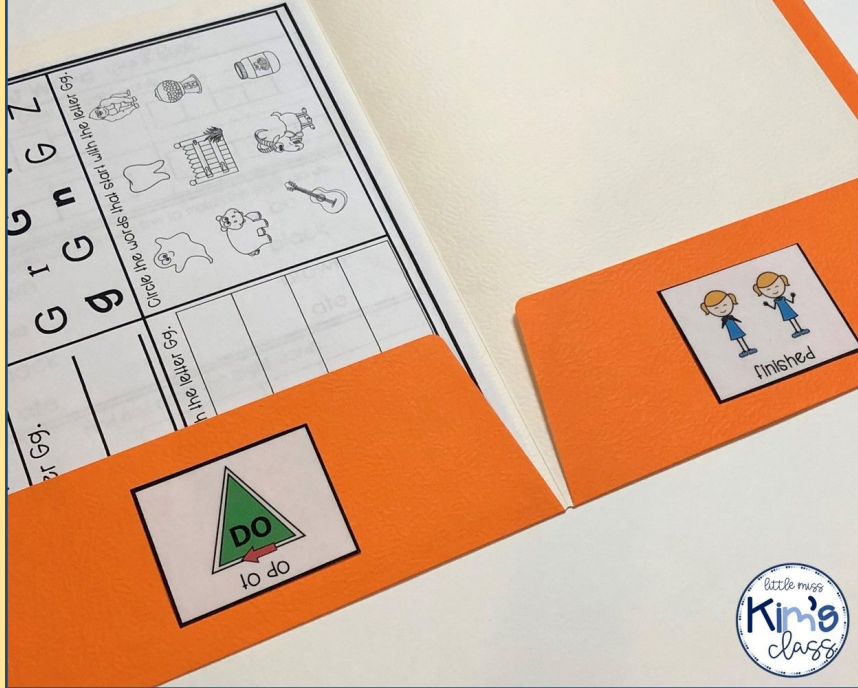


ideas for making structured work systems
portable & practical in any classroom



Work System Example

ideas for making structured work systems
portable & practical in any classroom



Work System Example

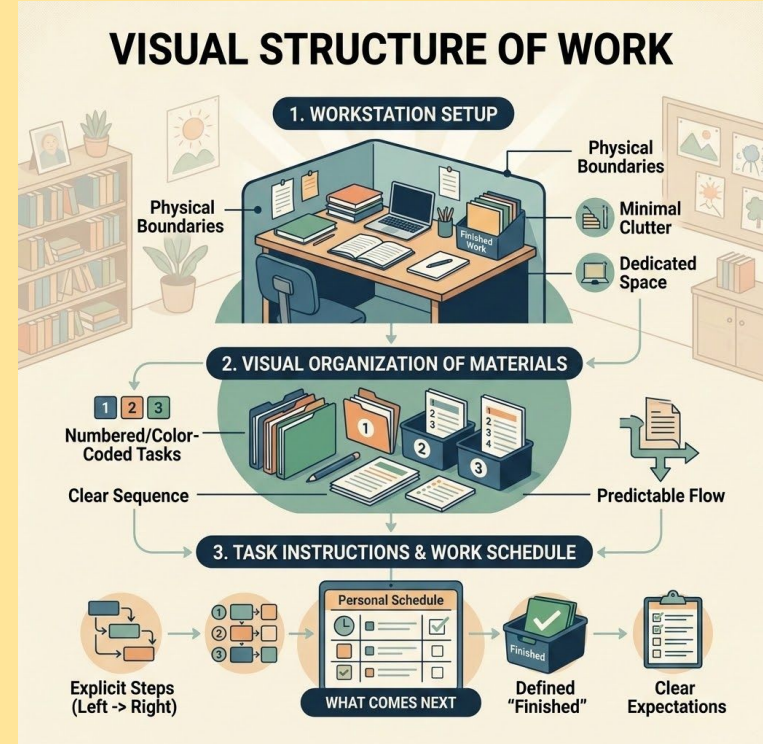


Component 4 – Visual Structure

Visual structure makes materials easy to understand.

Examples:

- Color coding
- Highlighting
- Numbering
- Matching
- Containers
- Labels
- Step-by-step visuals



Visual Structure Examples

Instead of saying:

"Complete this worksheet."

Provide:

- Highlighted problems
- Numbered steps
- Finished box
- Visual examples
- Models

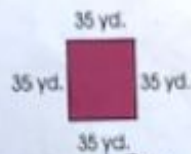
$\square$	$\square$	$\square$
71	73	76
+59	+28	+16
$\square\square$	$\square\square$	$\square\square$

$\square$	$\square$	$\square$
27	18	34
+33	+42	+47
$\square\square$	$\square\square$	$\square\square$

$$35 + 35 + 35 + 35$$

Write the perimeter of each figure on the missing side lengths.

1.

perimeter = 130 yd.

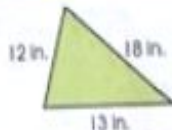
2.

perimeter = 8 in.

3.

perimeter = 20 cm

4.

perimeter = 43 in.* When finished
Put in finished
work tray

DIRECTIONS:

Write the answer on the **RED line**.

1. Something you write with _____.
2. These keep your hands warm _____.
3. This is for calling a friend _____.

Put work in **BLUE finished folder**.

An adjective is a word that describes a noun. Circle the adjective that describes each underlined noun.

15. Some prairie dogs live in large communities under the ground.

16. A mother prairie dog makes a nest of dried plants in the spring.

17. She gives birth to a litter of four pups.

18. She is a good mother and takes care of her pups.

19. ~~The pups are ready to venture outside after six weeks.~~

20. ~~The pups have many friends.~~

* Put in finished work tray when finished



FITNESS FLASH: Do 10 shoulder shrugs.

* See page ii.

How did people get the news?

Most towns had a town crier. His job was to walk through the streets and call out the news of the day.

If the town crier had special news to tell, he rang a bell or banged on a drum. Then people ran to hear what he was saying.

Another way to hear the news was to go to the village inn. Travelers from other colonies told what was going on in their towns.

There were only a few newspapers in early colonial days. The papers printed news of the thirteen colonies. There was news about what ships were sailing and what cargo the ships carried. The papers also had poems, sermons, and advertisements.



Geography

Use an atlas, a globe, or a map of the United States to find the name of each numbered body of water.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____



Mississippi River

Atlantic Ocean

Lake Huron

Lake Erie

Lake Michigan

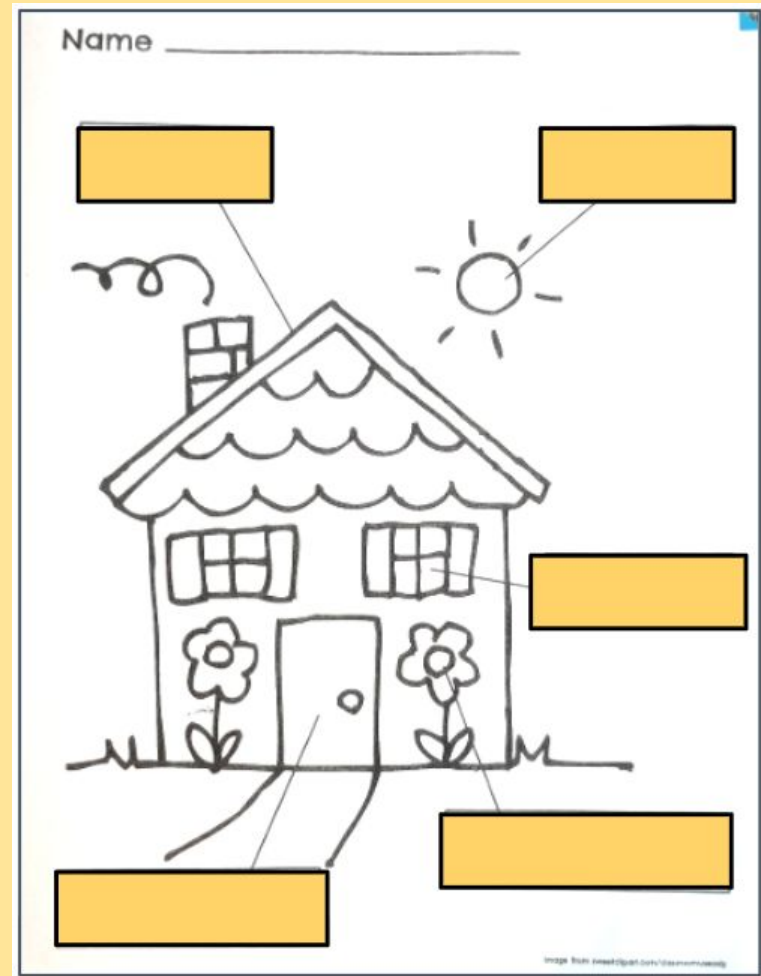
Lake Superior

Lake Ontario

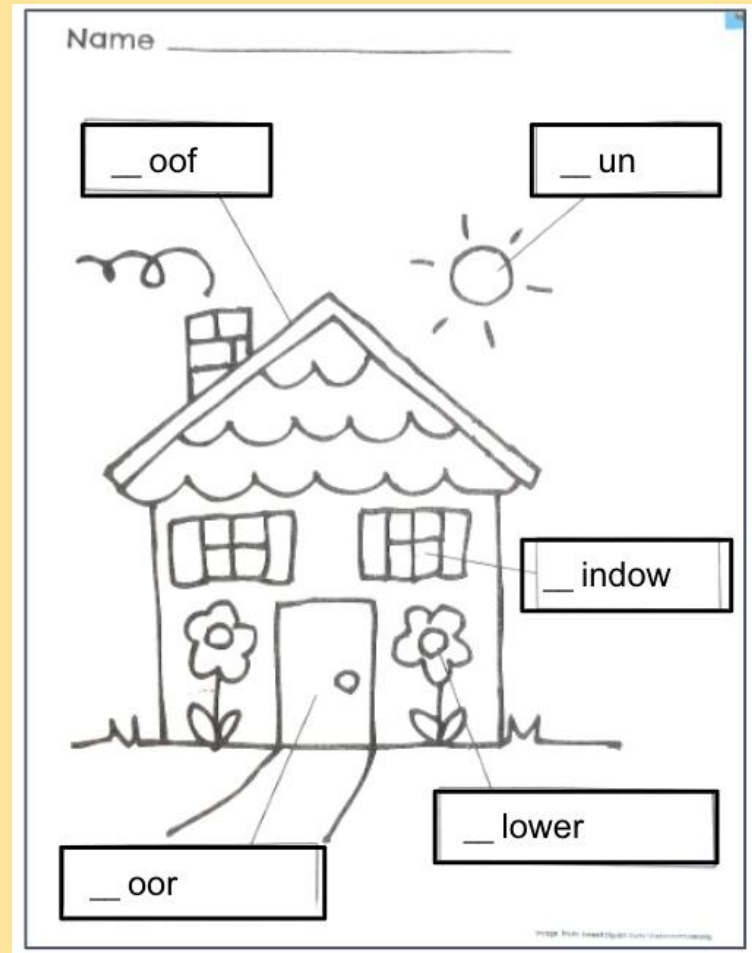
Indian Ocean

* Put in Finished Work Tray
When Complete

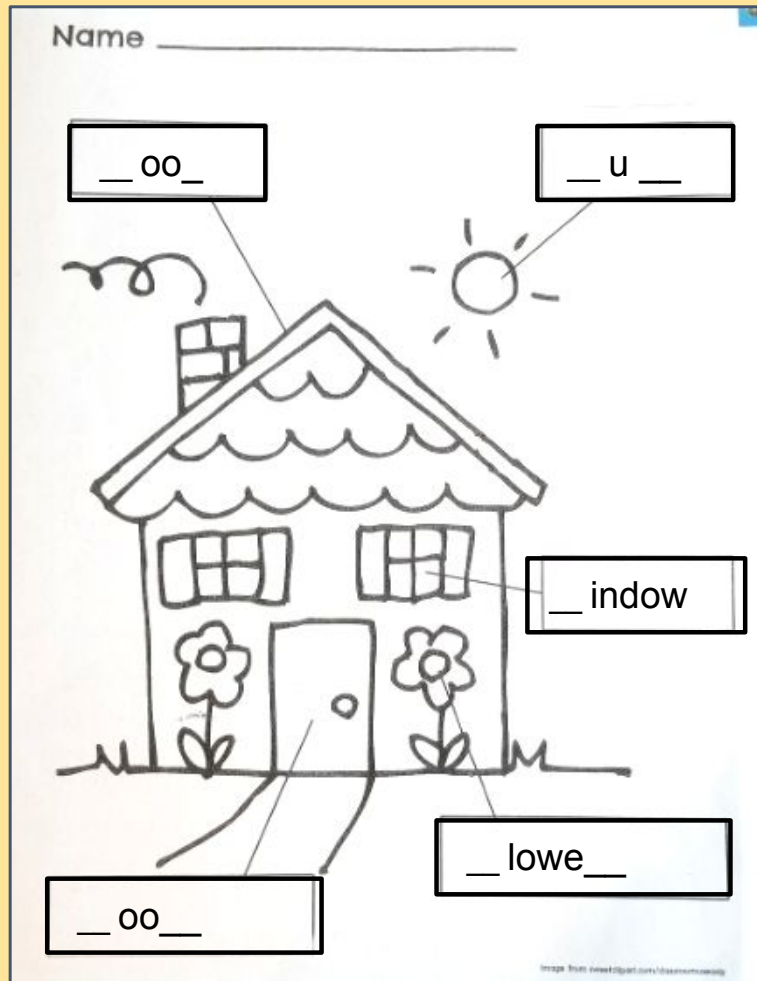
Example 1: Add Visual Clarity



Example 1: Add Visual Organization and Instructions



Example 1: Differentiate for Others



Example 5: Add Visual Clarity

Adding/Subtracting 2-Digit Numbers (A)				
Name: _____		Date: _____		
Calculate each sum or difference.				
$\begin{array}{r} 21 \\ + 41 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 75 \\ - 29 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 87 \\ - 72 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 49 \\ + 82 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 36 \\ + 22 \\ \hline \end{array}$
$\begin{array}{r} 87 \\ - 47 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 63 \\ - 39 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 31 \\ + 70 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 91 \\ + 38 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 43 \\ + 66 \\ \hline \end{array}$
$\begin{array}{r} 61 \\ + 34 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 78 \\ - 36 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 86 \\ + 24 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 35 \\ + 63 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 88 \\ - 70 \\ \hline \end{array}$
$\begin{array}{r} 26 \\ + 77 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 39 \\ + 53 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 42 \\ + 97 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 55 \\ - 46 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 43 \\ - 36 \\ \hline \end{array}$
$\begin{array}{r} 62 \\ + 80 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 76 \\ - 51 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 84 \\ + 10 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 82 \\ + 59 \\ \hline \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{r} 74 \\ - 15 \\ \hline \end{array}$
Math-Drills.com				

Example 5: Add Visual Organization

$$\begin{array}{r} 87 \\ - 47 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 63 \\ - 39 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 31 \\ + 70 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 91 \\ + 38 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 43 \\ + 66 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 61 \\ + 34 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 78 \\ - 36 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 86 \\ + 24 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 35 \\ + 63 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 88 \\ - 70 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 26 \\ + 77 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 39 \\ + 53 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 42 \\ + 97 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 55 \\ - 46 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 43 \\ - 36 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

Structured Teaching in General Education

Structure benefits everyone.

Examples:

- Posted daily agenda
- Visual timers
- Classroom jobs
- Checklists
- Graphic organizers
- Transition countdowns
- Visual expectations

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) supports all learners.

Common Classroom Supports

Visual Supports

- First-Then boards
- Choice boards
- Visual timers
- Task checklists
- Break cards
- Classroom rules with pictures
- Visual directions

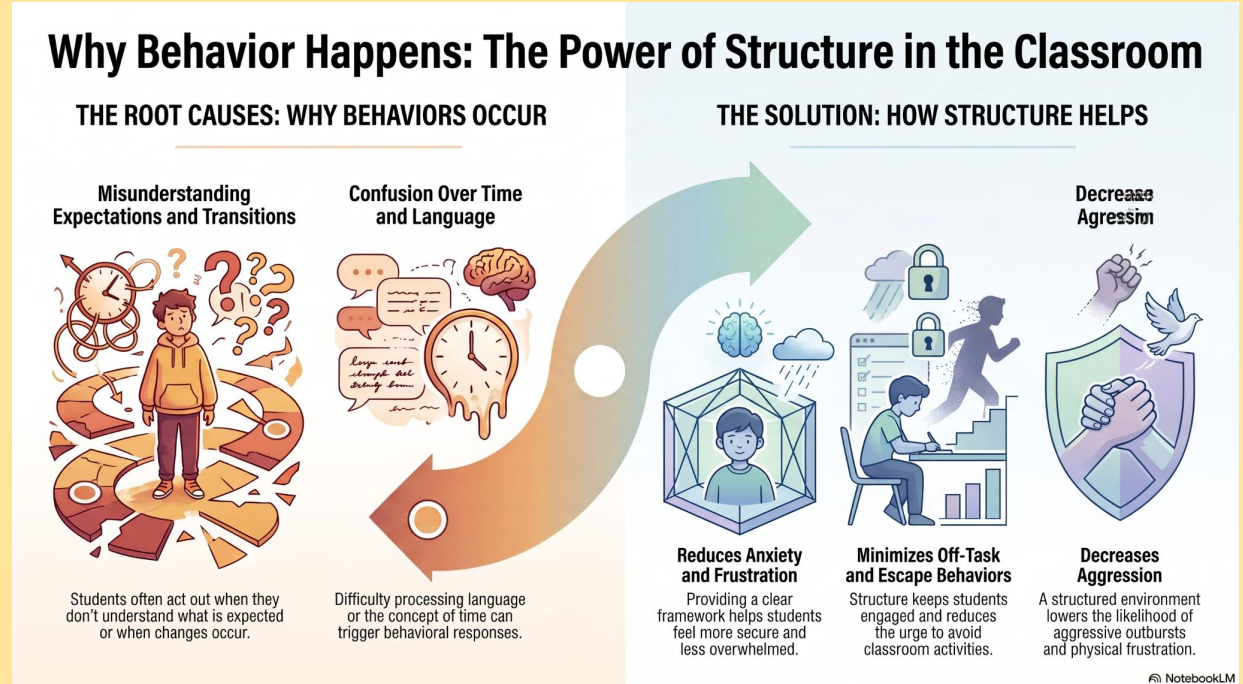
Structure Reduces Challenging Behavior

Many behaviors occur because students don't understand:

- Expectations
- Changes
- Time
- Language
- Transitions

Structure reduces:

- Escape behaviors
- Anxiety
- Frustration
- Aggression
- Off-task behavior



Before vs. After

Without Structure:

- Student asks repeatedly.
- Wanders.
- Refuses work.
- Needs constant prompts.

With Structure:

- Uses schedule.
- Completes work independently.
- Transitions successfully.
- Requires fewer prompts.



Which Component Is Missing

In your groups, read your scenario and answer the follow questions:

Which component of Structured Teaching is missing?

How would you fix it?

Tips for Success

Start small.

Choose one:

- Visual schedule
- Workstation
- First-Then board
- Visual directions

Teach the system before expecting independence.

Practice consistency

Video Example of Structured Teaching

Common Mistakes

Avoid:

- ❌ Too much talking
- ❌ Inconsistent schedules
- ❌ Removing visuals too soon
- ❌ Doing work for students
- ❌ Overprompting

Remember:

Prompt less.

Teach more.

