TURNING PAGES,
BUILDING FUTURES

LEARNING WHERE LIFE HAPPENS

Making Everyday Transitions More Predictable

**A simple First-Then strategy you can try today—
even if First-Then hasn't worked for you before.**

Start Here

A First-Then board is a simple visual that shows your child what happens first and what comes next. It can be helpful during everyday transitions—leaving the park, turning off a tablet, getting dressed, coming to the table, or starting bedtime.

Want to make one on your own? You can make one in minutes with paper and a marker. Prefer to print and go? **There's a free printable First-Then Board on page 3.**

The big idea: Predictability can make transitions easier.

Transitions can be hard when the next thing feels like a surprise or the current activity feels like it's ending too soon. A First-Then board makes the sequence clear: first something that needs to happen, then something your child is motivated to do.

Try This: Build One in Five Minutes

Make the board

Try: Draw two boxes side by side. Write FIRST over one and THEN over the other.

Fill the boxes with your child's real life

Try: Use a photo, drawing, or simple words. Choose whatever your child understands most easily.

Keep it simple

Try: Try two or three words: First shoes. Then park.

Point and say it

Try: Point to FIRST as you say it, then point to THEN. Keep your language short and consistent. This helps your child connect the words and pictures with the sequence.

Follow through

Try: Make sure the THEN matches what actually happens. Predictability is what helps your child learn how the board works.

Use It at Everyday Moments

Leaving somewhere fun

First car seat. Then music.

Turning off a screen

First dinner. Then tablet.

Getting dressed

First socks. Then cartoons.

Bedtime

First brush teeth. Then two books.

The board

Print page 3, draw your own pictures, or use photos from your phone. Keep the board somewhere your child can easily see it—or take it with you when you go.

What to look for

You don't need formal data to notice whether something is helping. Over a week or two, watch for:

- ☐ Smoother movement from one activity to the next
- ☐ Starting the FIRST activity with less help
- ☐ More predictable transitions through routines
- ☐ Pointing to the board or using “first” and “then”
- ☐ The board becoming a familiar part of the routine

You don't need to see all five. One small change is information—and a place to build from.

If it doesn't work...

If it doesn't work right away, that is not a verdict on your child - it is information. Try:

- Make the 'then' meaningful to your child - the second box has to be worth the first box.
- Make it specific to your child. Swap generic pictures for photos of your child's actual car seat, tablet, favorite snack, or other familiar things.
- Say less. Point, name it in two words, and skip the lecture.
- Let your child help choose the “then” - ownership builds buy-in.
- Practice at an easy moment first, before you need it at a hard one.
- Check yourself: if the “then” doesn't happen, the board can't work - and that is something we can adjust.

Remember: *You don't have to repeat yourself five times. Point to the board, and let it do the talking.*

Want more practical ideas?

Explore more PAGE resources for communication, learning, participation, independence, and everyday routines. Explore PAGE Resources → Or, if you'd like occasional practical ideas delivered by email, **join the PAGE list at pageaba.com.**

Need help figuring out what to try?

If you've tried a few strategies, made adjustments, and still aren't sure what to change, PAGE can help you find practical ways to build communication, participation, learning, and independence into everyday life. **Learn more or schedule a consultation at pageaba.com.**

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My First-Then Board

First:	Then:

Print and use as-is, draw or add pictures, or add Velcro for reusable cards.