



Pathways to Success

Helpful Strategies for Parents and Caregivers of Young Children

Using a FIRST-THEN Board

What is it?

A **FIRST-THEN** board is a visual tool used to help provide a child with more information about what is going to happen next. It shows two pictures: a “First” picture, and a “Then” picture. By starting with just two steps, we give the child clear information about what is happening, and allow them to focus on what is happening now, and what will happen next.

FIRST-THEN boards can also be used to help motivate children. For example, start with an activity the child may not choose on their own (such as a craft), and follow it with a favourite activity (such as playing with toy cars). In this case: **FIRST**: craft; **THEN**: cars. The child will often be more motivated to participate in the first activity if they know it will be followed by a favourite activity. This is also a great way to introduce a new task, activity or event; by following the new activity with a favourite activity.

Why should we use it?

- Provides visual information to support language
- Helps children to understand what is expected of them
- May help increase the child’s motivation to participate in a task or activity
- Helps with transitions from one activity to the next, or from one location (classroom) to the next (outside)
- Prepares the child for using a visual schedule

How do we use it?

- You may wish to start practising by using the board with two favourite or familiar activities (for example playdough and cars)
- Point to and label the sequence on the board (**FIRST**: playdough, **THEN**: cars)
- Complete both activities, making sure the **THEN** step immediately follows the **FIRST** step



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- Keep the board visible while you are working on both activities, continuing to point and label as needed
- You may wish to use a timer to show when one activity finishes, and the next activity starts

A speech-language pathologist, occupational therapist, therapy assistant or teacher can guide you in using this strategy.

