

What time is it? by Dr Wendy Uttley



Teaching children with Down syndrome
and other learning disabilities
how to tell the time

THE SECTIONS

Introduction

Labels for a clock face

1. Day to day time and learning the concept of time.
2. The clock face, minutes and hours.
3. Learning the o'clocks.
4. Learning the 5 times table.
5. Learning to tell the *past* time.
6. Introducing *1/2 past*, *1/4 past* and *1/4 to*.
7. Learning the other *pasts*.
8. Learning the *to* times.
9. Learning the digital form of time.
10. Learning about a.m. and p.m.

Worksheets 1 to 5, on CD.

Resources for each section, on CD.

Time

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INTRODUCTION

My name is Wendy Uttley and I am the parent of Sam, a 16 year old boy with Down syndrome. I am also a mathematician and the Coordinator and Trainer for the Down Syndrome Training & Support Service Ltd. Over recent years I have developed a number of training courses for both parents and professionals in the specific learning needs of children with Down syndrome.

Most of us will remember learning to tell the time and wearing our first watch. I think I was 6. For some of us it can be a tricky concept to master. The language of time itself provides a huge set of vocabulary, with many of the words representing abstract concepts. Such language is difficult to make visual, for example, what does a Monday look like?

I have been teaching Sam how to tell the time for many years. We started when he was 8 years old and I developed this programme alongside. The programme is a step by step approach starting with activities to introduce the passage of time; what does 5 minutes feel like? Moving on to telling the time using the analogue, and then the digital clock.

The length of time you spend on each activity will be dependent upon the child you are working with. Some children may work better in very short intervals, 5 minutes per day, others may be able to work for $\frac{1}{2}$ hour. Short frequent sessions are better than long drawn out sessions. There is no rush and over learning may be needed to ensure some parts are secure. Some activities may also need revisiting.

I hope that the child you are working with both enjoys, and benefits from, this programme of activities. The aim is to bring understanding of time in their day to day life. Such skills should bring increased confidence, independence and self esteem, and lead to improved inclusion in our everyday society. Something we all want for our children as they grow up.

SECTION 1: DAY TO DAY TIME AND LEARNING THE CONCEPT OF TIME

1.1 Time in general.

Days of week, before, after, morning, afternoon, a.m, p.m, evening, night, today, yesterday, tomorrow, last week, next week, seasons, months, years. The list of abstract vocabulary goes on and on!

When you are introducing new vocabulary write the new words on two flash cards and practise word/word matching games. Try, also, to have the word on display when you are in a situation that illustrates the vocabulary, eg Monday, July, winter. Such activities do happen in the early years but may need additional exposure and time to fully understand. Word - word matching also helps with clarity of speech.

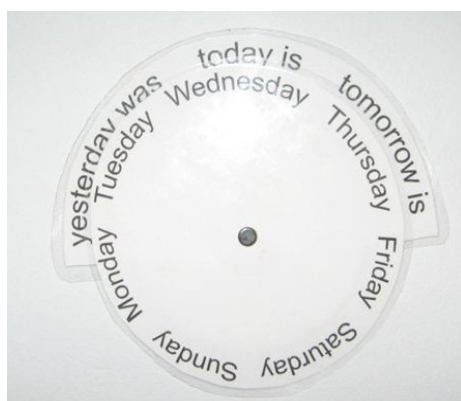
1.2 Days of the week.

Make a weekly timetable using the days of the week and yesterday, today, tomorrow. Use a picture of a moon (or bed) to signify night between each day. Attach pictures and key words for events during the week. See picture 1 and sheets 1.2i and 1.2ii of resources to help you make this. The pictures and sentences in section 1.6ii to 1.6viii may also be of use.



Picture 1

Many children with a learning disability find it difficult to understand that events are not going to happen the instant that they are mentioned.



Picture 2

1.3 Yesterday, today, tomorrow

Make a circle of the days, see sheet 1.3i and 1.3ii of resources, and display it where the child will see it every day. For example as they walk out of the classroom/their bedroom. This can then be used to work on yesterday, today and tomorrow. See picture 2.

PRACTISE THE SEQUENCE USING:

- Lift the flap.
- Singing the days of the week song.
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1.4 Morning and Afternoon

To introduce morning and afternoon make a laminated sheet of A4 for each day. See sheets 1.4i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, vii of resources. List and/or attach pictures of activities done each day dividing them into morning and afternoon activities. The school timetable is ideal for this. Use the *today is*, *tomorrow is* and *yesterday was* labels from sheet 1.2ii to attach to the days. NOTE: The sentences on sheets 1.6ii, 1.6iii and 10.1ii may be of use.

1.5 Months

Make a calendar of the months in a similar fashion to the days of the week. Using resources on sheets 1.5i, ii, iii this can either be a list showing all months at once or a page for each month. Use a picture to represent each month. Mark on birthdays, holidays and special events.

All of the above may take years of repetition to master. It took my son 2 years to fully grasp the days of the week and to be able to answer questions relating to yesterday, tomorrow and today. You may wish to concentrate on just days of the week at first introducing months once you feel they are ready. However with older pupils who have been using days and months for many years you may wish to alternate your efforts but remember to keep focused on one target at a time.

1.6 Learning the time as a story.

Resources:

Long time and short time headings from sheet 1.6i.

Selection of brief sentences to sort into long and short time sheets 1.6ii, iii, iv.

Set of pictures if required, sheets 1.6v, vi, vii.

Discuss activities with the child referring to "how long" it takes using *short time* or *long time* as the description only.

For example getting dressed-does this take a long time or short time?

The day at school, the drive to grandmas, playtime, eating an apple, brushing teeth, sleeping. Go back to familiar stories and discuss how long things took to do, in "We're Going on a Bear Hunt" would the bear hunt have taken a long time? In "The Hungry Caterpillar" would the caterpillar have taken a long time to eat the apple? Would it have taken a long time to change into a butterfly?

The aim is to get the child to understand/have some feel for passage of time.

Included in the set are activities that take seconds, minutes or hours. At this stage you are just teaching long time and short time, so use them however you feel appropriate.

You could:

- act out some of these activities and discuss whether it has taken a long or short time.
- take a sentence, eg drive to grandmas, with you on the journey to reinforce the "long time"