

# Chatter Pack

Support with change to routine/  
school holiday transitions

Free resource

Changes to routine can be difficult for many children and young people and changes which might happen as the school term comes to an end, during the holidays and transitioning back into school, can be particularly tricky to manage. This resource is designed to help those transitions by preparing for any upcoming changes in advance.

Name the charts using a title most suited to the individual child or young person. Try to avoid using words such as 'change' which might trigger stress, or words which they might not understand, such as, 'transition'. The following are suggestions of names which have been offered by others: 'What's Next?' 'Next Steps' 'What's Happening?'

## Included in this resource

- Printable charts, examples, suggestions and tips on ways to personalise this resource based on the individual needs of children and young people.
- Images to represent home and school, and blank cards which you can draw a symbol or write words to represent an upcoming event, visitor etc.

Rather than using the images included, alternatively and if more appropriate, you could use photos of places, people etc.

## Tips when using the charts

**Travel tip!** Remember to add an image, symbol or word to the chart which indicates any changes which might happen before your trip. For example, when you will be packing suitcases.

**Visitors:** When discussing visitors, it might be helpful to also show them a photo of the person. Try to reduce the language you use during these times as they are likely to already be processing a great deal. For example, potential stress around meeting a new person, perhaps thinking of questions to ask you, and so on.

**Trips:** Try looking at websites together and search online for images to illustrate what you are explaining/describing. Or, perhaps you could contact the venue you are going to and ask if they might provide some images and information.

**Prepare a Plan-B!** For example, gather some carefully chosen items which might distract and help calm any stress. These might be sensory toys, transition items or perhaps an activity.

**Locate an area to retreat to:** A calm, quiet retreat can make a huge difference to the child's enjoyment and engagement. Sometimes, just knowing this is available can reduce anxiety which might also reduce a need to use it. Discuss the Plan-B with the child or young person and perhaps make some images of the quiet place and the Plan-B options to take with you. This would reduce the need to use too much language if the child becomes distressed.

**Keep the child or young person involved:** Giving them a 'role' during the lead up to any changes/events/trips could really help with their understanding of what is happening, which might also help reduce stress. You could make written or visual lists together, or you could make a list and ask them to cross-off the tasks when complete.

**Consider any new experiences which might happen during the change:** Sounds complicated and it certainly isn't always easy. For example, simply counting down the days until you go to the cinema might not be enough preparation if the child or young person has never been to the cinema before. They might also need preparation for the lights going down, people sitting close to them, the size of the room, etc. It might be helpful to role-play situations, or perhaps to look at videos online which might provide a better understanding.

**Make it fun!** Try playing matching games, or make a bingo game with images of any upcoming changes. This could provide an opportunity to discuss any concerns in a non-direct way. It might also provide the child or young person with a better understanding of any new vocabulary being introduced.

**When should you begin using and updating the charts?** Some children and young people require warning a long time in advance about upcoming changes, whilst others become more anxious if they have too much time to think about them.

**Make sure the child understands any vocabulary used:** You can do this by simply showing the child or young person images which represent the vocabulary, and ask them to point to, or pass each one as you label them, or play a game with them. For example, make a post box from an old shoe box and ask the child or young person to find and post images as you name them. If there is any tricky vocabulary, ChatterPack's free resource 'Building vocabulary' can help explain ways to support their learning.

## Introducing and using the charts

- Begin by preparing 4 (or more if appropriate) weekly boards.
- Place cards to represent 'school' and 'home' on the chart in the relevant sections.
- Add cards which represent 'surprise', 'visitor', 'trip', or anything else which might be a change to their routine, in the space underneath.

Changes which might cause stress are not always obvious and sometimes they can be things we might feel are fun or nice changes. For example, a family member might be home at times when they're usually at work. Or, perhaps if there different children in the classroom, a fun visitor and so on.

- When discussing how long there is until an upcoming change, rather than using 'days', try using 'sleeps' instead. For example, 'we are going to see Grandma in 4 sleeps' and point to the relevant sections on the chart whilst counting them. Using 'sleeps' often provides a much more concrete understanding for some children and young people.

It might be helpful to use a rating scale alongside the charts. ChatterPack's free resource, 'Developing an awareness of emotions and triggers' contains a numbered scale which might help. When discussing upcoming changes, try asking the child or young person to place images on the scale and rate how good/bad/happy/worried/ok they're feeling. This will provide vital information for you and without the need to use complex concepts or emotion-related words. View the resource [here](#)

- Each morning after a 'sleep', cross-off, or remove the relevant image on the chart. This will allow the child or young person to visualise how long there is left before the upcoming change.

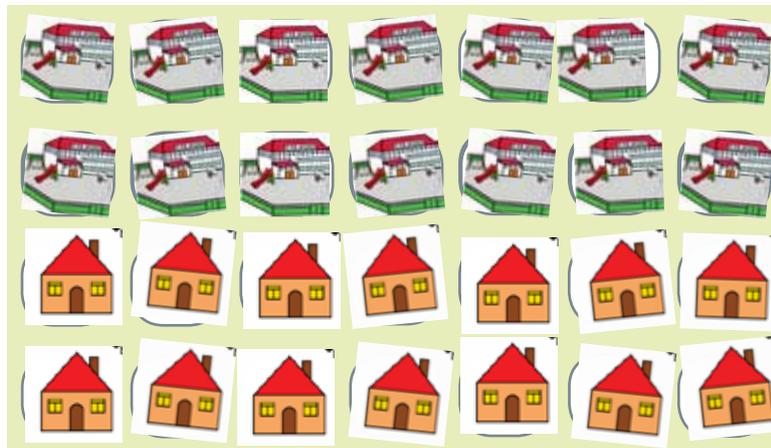
Continue using the chart for at least two weeks into the new school term. This often really helps to make the transition out of the school holidays easier. If the child or young person is better able to deal with change when using the chart, you might consider using it indefinitely!

## Examples of using the Charts

The images used below are FREE! to download at [Arasaac.org](http://Arasaac.org) This website includes:

- A huge range of images, grouped under headings such as: verbs, nouns, food, animals, travel and so on. There is also a symbol-creator option.
- An option to listen to a phrase including the word represented in the image, and there is also an option to translate the phrase into various different languages.

**Chart 1:** This example represents a 2 week period before the end of a school term and two weeks of a school holiday.



**Chart 2** is designed to be used along side **Chart 1**. After introducing **Chart 1**, introduce **Chart 2** and explain the type of information that it will show. For example, it might include information about events, trips, visitors and so on. Separating the information across two charts might support a better and more general understanding of any upcoming changes. It might also help to reduce stress around upcoming change to routine.

Adapt the number of weeks included in **Chart 1** and **Chart 2** to suit the individual needs of the child or young person.

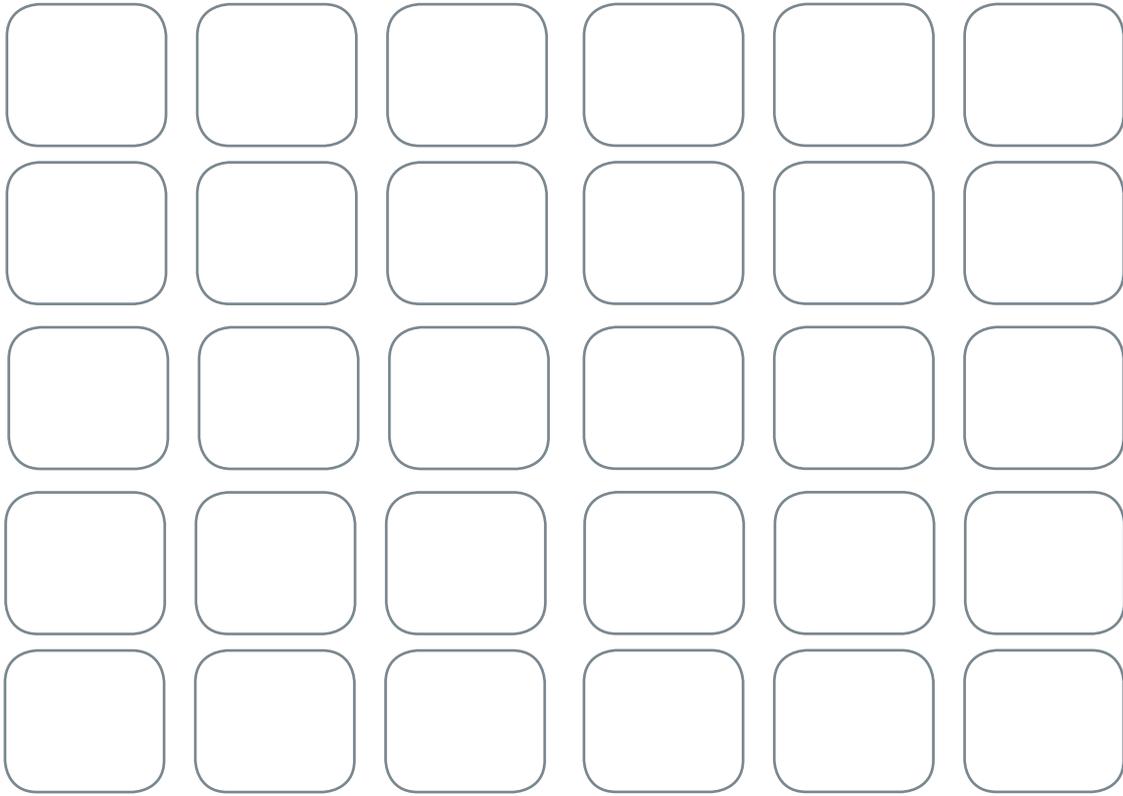


This resource is designed to be used as a part of a wider approach rather than in isolation. For more resources, information tips and advice, go to [www.ChatterPack.net](http://www.ChatterPack.net)



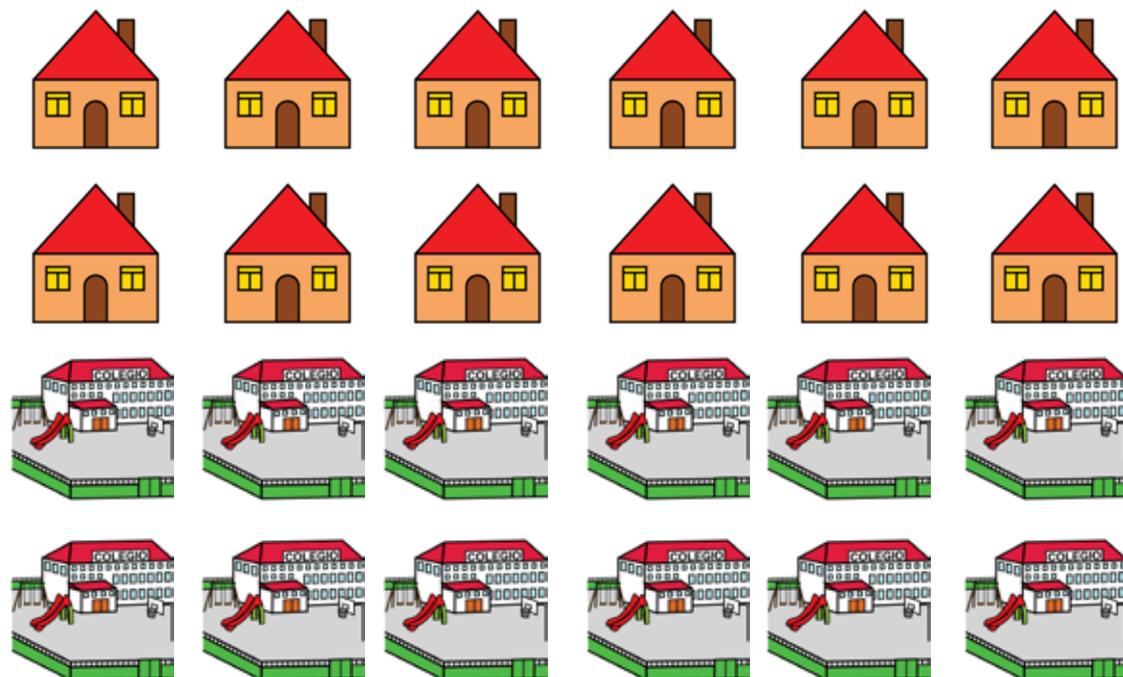


## Blank cards to personalise and use with the charts



## Images of home and school for you to use with the charts

These and many others are free to download at [Arasaac.org](http://Arasaac.org)





Free ChatterPack resource, downloadable at [Chatterpack.net](http://Chatterpack.net)  
Photocopying and sharing permitted, please credit ChatterPack.

[www.ChatterPack.net](http://www.ChatterPack.net)