



Countdown Strips

A countdown strip is a visual tool often used to help learners understand and manage time, transitions or tasks. Countdown strips can be used with individual learners or with the full class. A countdown strip:

- Shows time in a clear, visual way, helping learners anticipate when something will finish
- Supports executive functioning
- Makes time more predictable
- Can ease anxiety around transitions
- Supports focus and motivation

A countdown strip typically consists of a series of removable or markable segments (like numbers or icons) that are removed one by one as time passes, giving a clear visual cue of progress.

Prerequisite skills:

A basic understanding of:

- Cause and effect
- Number sequencing to 5

However, without this, it is still possible to use the countdown if used and applied consistently.

Protocol for use:

The numbers/icons do not represent specific units of time, but instead, variable intervals set by the adult supporting. We suggest either a 3 or 5-step countdown.

The countdown strip can be slowed down or sped up as required dependent upon how long the learner needs to support the transition, i.e. it can be used over 20mins or 30secs.

Countdowns should be used alongside a visual timetable or the individual learners 'now and next'.

1. Show the learner the countdown strip and say "[insert activity] is finishing is 5"
2. Allow the learner to carry on with the activity
3. After the decided amount of time, show the learner the countdown strip, remove the number 5 and say "[insert activity] is finishing is 4"
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 until you countdown to 1
5. When the countdown is finished, remove the number 1 and say "[insert activity] is finished, time for [insert next activity]."