

## 9. Using Timers

### What are Timers?

A sand or digital timer can be used to show an individual how long a current activity or situation will last or as a countdown to prepare them for an activity coming to an end. These can be low tech (sand timers) or high tech (iPad, digital). Digital or iPad timers can be set to the desired length of time and sand timers have different time durations for example, 3, 5, 10-minute durations. They are often used in conjunction with visual timetables/ choice boards.

### Examples of Timers:



sand timer



countdown clock



iPad

### Why are Timers used?

They are used to help an individual:

- understand how long a current situation or activity will last
- understand when an activity or situation will finish
- predict and prepare for an activity or situation to finish
- transition from one activity to another
- transition from a favoured to less favoured activity

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### How to introduce a Timer

- Decide on the purpose of the timer:
  - if the timer is being used to show the individual how long a current situation or activity will last – decide whether a 3, 5 or 10 minute period is appropriate
  - if the timer is to prepare the individual for an activity coming to an end only, decide whether a 3, 5 or 10 minute countdown is best
  - place the timer where the individual can see it. Activate the timer and for example say XXX finished in 5 minutes and point to the timer
  - remind the individual again by saying XXX finished in 4 minutes pointing to timer
  - remind again by saying XXX finished in 3 minutes and pointing to timer.
  - continue until timer is complete

## How do I help an individual to use them?

When introducing a timer an individual may:

- try to remove the sand timer
  - initially you can hold the timer until the individual is more familiar with
  - what it represents
- turn the sand timer over once the initial time is up
  - you can place a piece of Velcro on to the bottom part of the sand timer. This acts as an additional visual support and you can teach the individual that this indicates the time is finished.

## Possible next steps

- as the individual becomes familiar with this routine you can cut down the number of reminders
- the individual can be involved in setting or turning the timer

### **Other Useful Guides:**

- ✓ Using Visual Timetables with Objects of Reference
  - ✓ Using Visual Timetables with Photographs
  - ✓ Using Visual Timetables with Symbols
- ✓ Using Choice Boards with Objects of Reference
  - ✓ Using Choice Boards with Photographs
  - ✓ Using Choice Boards with Symbols