STAFF ROOM POSTER

Structured Teaching in Four Layers

TEACCH organises the environment so expectations are visible, not spoken. Four layers, each answering a question the learner would otherwise have to ask.

WHERE Physical structure

Clear boundaries that say what happens here: work, play, calm, snack. Visual clutter down, purpose obvious.

In class: The workstation faces a plain wall, shelved left, finished-box right. The area IS the instruction.

WHEN Visual schedule

What is happening now and next, in the learner's format: objects, photos, symbols or words.

In class: Top card: workstation. Next card: outside play. The schedule absorbs the anxiety of not knowing.

WHAT Work system

How much work, what progress looks like, what finished means, what comes next. Always answered visually.

In class: Three trays on the left. Work moves left to right. Empty left shelf means finished, and finished earns the next card.

HOW Task structure

Each task visually shows its own completion: matching, sorting, assembling with a clear end state.

In class: The task ends when every slot is filled. No adult needed to declare it done: the task announces it.

SETUP CARDS: CUT AND KEEP

Workstation Setup Cards

Four checks when building or resetting a workstation. The goal is always the same: independence without adult prompts.

Left to right, every time

Tasks start left, finish right. The spatial routine replaces verbal instructions.

Say: "Could a new adult see the flow without being told? Could the learner?"

Finished means visibly finished

A finished box or tray makes completion concrete and satisfying.

Say: "Where does done work GO? If the answer is nowhere, completion is invisible."

Mastered tasks only

The workstation practises independence, not new learning. New skills are taught WITH an adult first.

Say: "Has this learner done this task successfully with support at least three times?"

Motivation built in

The schedule shows what comes after work, and it is something the learner values.

Say: "What is the next card after workstation, and does it matter to THIS learner?"

QUICK REFERENCE POSTER

Visual Schedules That Work

The schedule is the anchor of the structured day. Format and habits decide whether it calms or decorates.

Match the format to the learner

Objects for some, photos or symbols for others, words for readers. Test downwards if in doubt.

In class: If symbols cause confusion, drop to photos of YOUR actual room, not clip art.

Teach the schedule itself

Using a schedule is a skill: check, do, return, check again. Model it hand-under-hand at first.

In class: Adult and learner walk to the schedule together after every activity for the first fortnight.

Show change, don't just announce it

A surprise card or change symbol makes disruption survivable by making it visible.

In class: Assembly cancelled: the change card goes ON the schedule, old card visibly removed.

Fade towards self-management

The long game is the learner checking and updating their own schedule.

In class: From adult-led checks, to prompted checks, to the learner flipping their own cards.

TEACHER CHECKLIST

Workstation Health Check

Run monthly. Workstations decay into storage corners without maintenance.

The environment

- [ ] Boundaries are visually clear and the area faces minimal distraction.
- [ ] Materials live in the same labelled places every day.
- [ ] The left-to-right flow is physically obvious.

The system

- [ ] Task quantity is visible before starting.
- [ ] Finished has a place, and the schedule shows what follows.
- [ ] Tasks rotate: mastered, meaningful, and at the right number (start with fewer).

The independence test

- [ ] The learner completes the cycle without verbal prompts (gestures count as prompts too).
- [ ] Adult proximity is fading on a plan.
- [ ] Data is kept: prompts needed per session, trending down.

CPD BRIEFING: STAFF ROOM COPY

TEACCH: A 5-Minute Evidence Briefing

What the research supports, where reviews disagree, and what that means for your setup.

Independence is the best-evidenced outcome

The most consistent finding, including a school-based single-case meta-analysis with a large effect, is improved independent task completion: exactly what workstations and work systems target.

Domain-level reviews disagree

One recent meta-analysis reports broad gains (social skills, daily living, severity); another finds consistent effects only for motor skills. The honest summary: structure reliably builds independence; wider developmental claims are contested.

Implementation quality drives results

Effects strengthen with fidelity, school-age learners and parent involvement. A workstation that is really a storage corner with trays will produce the null result.

The honest caveat

Much TEACCH research uses small samples, varied implementations and high heterogeneity. Use structured teaching as a well-evidenced scaffold for independence, keep teaching communication and social skills through dedicated approaches, and judge by your own prompt-fading data.

Evidence base

Zhou, K. et al. (2024). The use of TEACCH in schools to improve the ability of children with autism to complete tasks independently: a single-case meta-analysis. Child: Care, Health and Development.
Li, J. et al. (2025). The effectiveness of TEACCH-based interventions in improving adaptive skills in children with autism spectrum disorders: a systematic review and meta-analysis. Translational Pediatrics.
Zhu, Y. et al. (2025). Efficacy of structured teaching program for rehabilitation of children with autism spectrum disorder: a systematic review and meta-analysis. Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences.