

# Create structure in a flexible environment

A suggestion for implementing the strategy  
'Helpful classroom strategies years 9-13' from  
the Guide: [FASD and learning](#)

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## **Includes:**

- Walk in your student's shoes
- Build routines
- Provide a predictable environment
- Create structure in a flexible space
- Minimise distractions
- Useful resources

Inclusive Education

From

Guide: [Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and learning](#)

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Date

01 July 2026

Link

[inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder-and-learning/y9-13-create-structure-in-a-flexible-environment](https://inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder-and-learning/y9-13-create-structure-in-a-flexible-environment)

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## Walk in your student's shoes

Take a walk around the classroom. Use all your senses to consider how the classroom might look, sound, and feel to your student.

Consider:

- ✓ routines and ways of working
- ✓ how you will make timing of assignments and assessment tasks manageable
- ✓ the practical challenges for students, such as timetabling, and managing their time
- ✓ how the student will find and access resources
- ✓ how the classroom is laid out
- ✓ where to create a quiet place for students to work
- ✓ where your student can go if they need to calm down, and what your student needs for a calming space.

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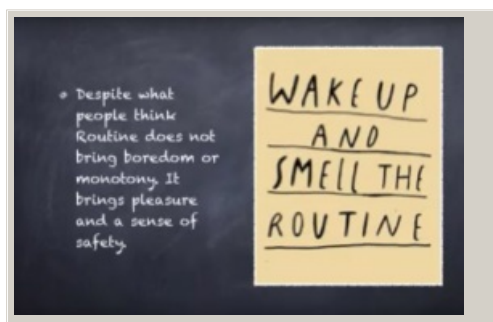
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# Build routines

Consistent routines reduce stress and anxiety for students.

Develop simple routines, which are used daily to support successful learning and transitions with the students.



Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/qpbLnTvs2EQ>

No captions or transcript

### Source:

[WRaP Schools \(Canada\)](#)

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChuAycUoRt\\_HkcbdXnKiV\\_Q](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChuAycUoRt_HkcbdXnKiV_Q)

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## Provide a predictable environment

Create predictable routines to reduce anxiety and allow students to manage themselves independently.

- ✓ Use personalised and class timetables
- ✓ Clarify expectations and teach appropriate behaviours
- ✓ Signal upcoming transitions
- ✓ Talk through last minute changes that may be startling to students
- ✓ Use task boards to break large tasks into components
- ✓ Develop strategies for times of anxiety
- ✓ Share key information across the school for example with staff, leaders and relief teachers

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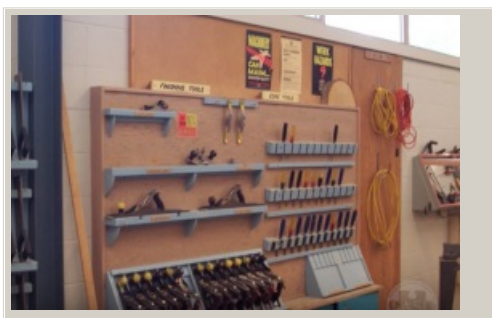
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# Create structure in a flexible space

Set up your environment to minimise students' cognitive load.

Providing support for students' specific needs enables them to work more independently.



Video hosted on Youtube <http://youtu.be/AJqaNNkqxCY>

Closed Captions

Source:

[POPFASD \(Canada\)](#)

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWRoE1YnO371Fc\\_hWx6Pnhg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWRoE1YnO371Fc_hWx6Pnhg)

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## Minimise distractions

Minimise auditory and visual distractions to help diminish the confusion and frustration some students experience, and maximise their ability to focus on the task at hand.

### Reduce visual distractions

- Strategically place the student's seat away from distractions, such as doorways and windows.
- Clear the student's desk of everything, except the lesson at hand.
- Put away (or out of view) teacher's equipment and books competing for a student's attention.

### Reduce auditory distractions

- Seat student closest to where you present information.
- Seat student next to students who do not distract others.
- Provide nonverbal cues that are familiar to the student to help them stay focused and working quietly, for example: use hand signals, move close to student.
- Create quiet spots in your classroom.

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## Useful resources



### Environment

A checklist for setting up a classroom environment that considers routines and structure, and reduces sensory overload.

Publisher: POPFASD

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