



## HOW TO INTRODUCE: “COUNTDOWN TIMER”



*1516 Atwood Avenue · Johnston, RI 02919 · 401-785-2666*  
*[www.theautismproject.org](http://www.theautismproject.org) · [info@theautismproject.org](mailto:info@theautismproject.org)*

Children can struggle with understanding of time passing. Phrases such as, “in a few minutes” “shortly” and “almost done” can cause anxiety and challenges with transition. The Countdown Timer is a visual tool that helps children see the passing of time and prepare children for transitions.

When using a Countdown Timer, the adult controls the passage of time; this is one reason why this tool is so useful in a variety of settings and situations. For example, if the child is struggling with an activity, the adult can remove the clocks or numbers quickly so the activity is completely while feeling successful. In addition, the Countdown Timer is a useful tool when transitioning a child from both preferred and non-preferred activities. As with any visual tool, it is important to remember to maintain a positive learning environment when teaching. The goal is for the child to view the tool as a source of information rather than a means for compliance.

## *Introducing the “Countdown Timer”*

1. This tool is taught best within transition times that are not challenging for the child.
2. Hold the Countdown Timer strip in front of the child so they can see it. Say, “Five minutes and **(activity)** will be all done.”
3. When it is time, cover the first clock on the strip and say, “Four minutes and **(activity)** will be all done.” *Be sure the child can see you fold over the cover to conceal the clock icon. Show the child the strip has one less clock showing.*
4. Repeat Step Three until you cover the last clock. The child will then see the “**All Done**” picture at the end of the strip.
5. As you cover the last clock on the strip say, “**(activity)** is all done, time for...” and wait with all done picture visible to the child.
6. Many children will need extra processing time to shift their thinking and initiate a new plan. Allow them the extra time. Some children will also benefit from seeing the “all done visual” paired with a visual representing what they are transitioning to