Toothbrushing picture cards

Six steps, one picture for each step













Inside: a wall schedule, cut-out cards to laminate, and ideas for parents

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My toothbrushing schedule

Sensory Lab













Point to each picture as you go. Same steps, every day.

Cut-out cards













Cut along the dashed lines. Laminate the cards, or cover them with clear sticky-back plastic.

For parents: using the picture cards

Using the cards

- Put the schedule on the wall at your child's eye level, near the basin.
- Point to each card as you reach that step. When a step is done, your child can touch the card, or turn over or move a cut-out card.
- Use the same cards, in the same order, every day.
- You don't need all six at once. Start with the steps your child needs most and add the others one at a time.

Show, practise together, then step back

1. Show me. Face to face, at your child's level, do each step yourself first, slowly: a pea-sized dot of toothpaste on your own brush, top teeth, then bottom teeth, in small, gentle circles, spit out, and put your brush in the cup.

2. Do it with me. Point to the card, then do the step at the same time as your child. If your child is happy with it, rest your hand lightly over theirs to show the movement. Never hold or force.

3. Let me try. Reduce your help a little at a time: from guiding the movement, to pointing at the card, to simply watching and smiling. Your child may still need you to help finish brushing thoroughly, and that's fine.

Step by step

- **1 Toothpaste on:** a pea-sized amount for children aged 3 and over; a smear for children under 3. You may want to do this step yourself at first.
- **2 and 3 Brush top teeth, brush bottom teeth:** small, gentle circles, including the gums and behind the teeth. About 2 minutes in total; a sand timer can help.
- **4 Spit out:** spit out the toothpaste, but don't rinse with water, so the fluoride keeps working.
- **5 Brush in cup:** putting the brush away ends the routine the same way every time.
- **6 All done:** let your child tell you they've finished in their own way: a sign, pointing to the card, a communication device or a word. Celebrate the trying, not perfection.

Making cards that last

- Cut along the dashed lines, then laminate the cards or cover them with clear sticky-back plastic. Leave a small clear border when you trim, so the edges stay sealed near water.
- Optional: stick a small piece of hook-and-loop tape on the back of each card, so your child can move each card to an "all done" strip.

Toothbrushing advice follows the NHS page "Taking care of children's teeth" (nhs.uk; last reviewed 30 June 2025), checked 31 October 2026. General education based on everyday parenting experience, not medical, dental, therapy or professional advice. Every child is different; go at your child's pace.

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