

# Children's Time Use Calendar

A child-friendly tool to assess children's time use



*Visual aid, guidance and data collection form*

This tool has been developed by the International Cocoa Initiative (ICI) to assess children's time use – how they divide their time between different activities – over the past three to five days. It was designed as a research, monitoring and evaluation tool to help children navigate time more easily than in a standard orally administered survey with closed questions.

The tool can be used to gather comparable information about when during the day or week children engage in activities that either contribute to or compromise their development, such as attending school, working in the fields, doing household chores or playing.

The Calendar can be administered in two ways, depending on the context. It can be used by a trained enumerator as a visual aid during a semi-structured interview, or as a participatory activity in which the child draws predefined symbols representing the activities carried out at different moments of the day.

This document includes three main components:

- **The Children's Time Use Calendar** – the visual aid.
- **Guidance for enumerators**, depending on which of the two administration methods is used.
- **A digital form**, which allows the information reported by the child to be recorded in a structured way for later analysis.

For an overview of what the tool is, why to use it and how to use it, see the overview document.

## Visual aid

The visual aid takes the form of a simple timetable in which each column represents a day, and each row is a specific moment of the day, which corresponds to a time unit or time block ("before sunrise", "after sunrise", "before midday", "after midday", "before sunset" and "after sunset"). These time blocks do not represent fixed durations and are not intended to be converted into hours.

To help the child better visualise time, three key moments of the day are drawn: sunrise, midday and sunset.

On the back of the visual aid, hazardous tasks are illustrated using pictures with boxes that can be checked when the child reports having undertaken one of these activities.

Figure 1: Front side of the calendar, aimed at estimating the time dedicated to several activities.




	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Before sunrise					
					
After sunrise (6-9 am)					
Before midday (9am-12pm)					
					
After midday (12-3pm)					
Before sunset (3-6pm)					
					
After sunset					

Figure 2: Back of the calendar, aimed at identifying hazardous activities undertaken by the child.



## Guidance for enumerators

As mentioned above, the Calendar can be administered in **two different ways**, depending on the context:

- As a **semi-structured interview**, where the visual aid is used by the enumerator to help the child report their activities.
- As a **participatory drawing activity**, where the child draws predefined symbols on the Calendar to represent the activities carried out during each moment of the day.

The sections below provide suggested introductions and guidance for enumerators for each of these two uses of the tool. This guidance can also be used during enumerator training.

### Semi-guided interview

When the calendar is used as part of a semi-structured interview, the enumerator uses the tool as a visual aid to guide the child through the activities carried out over the last [N] days. The child is asked to describe their activities during different moments of the day, while the enumerator uses the Calendar to help them navigate time and recall recent events.

This activity differs from the usual sequence of questions in structured interviews, which means that a careful introduction is needed to help transition from the structured questions into the exercise.

When administering this tool to the child, enumerators should:

- **Introduce** the activity to ensure the child understands the “rules of the game”, the main time-related concepts and how the different moments of the day are represented. The script below can be followed.
- **Guide** the child through the calendar. Start by asking the child about “yesterday”<sup>1</sup>. The question should be open, such as “What did you do yesterday?” Then explore the previous days, step by step, moving backwards in time.
- Use **open questions** to explore activities, rather than asking the child to select one of a list of pre-defined activities. If the child struggles to navigate time, prompt them with questions such as: “Did you play or work at any time yesterday / during that day?” “If so, can you tell me more about it and when it happened?”
- If the child declares having worked in the field or doing household chores, **ask about hazardous tasks** by using the back of the visual aid and asking whether they recognise any of the hazardous activities represented by the pictures.
- Always **confirm** the information with the child. Before recording the information, briefly rephrase what the child has reported in your own words to check that you have understood correctly. This helps ensure that the activities are interpreted and coded accurately.
- **Record** the information. Once the information has been confirmed, enter the corresponding activity or activities in the data collection application (“At school”, “Work in the field”, “Work in the household”, “Play”) for each moment of the day.

### Script

“Now, I would like you to think about the past few days. For example, yesterday. I would like you to tell me the activities you did and when you did them. By activities, I mean being at school, working in the field, doing household chores or playing. Can you give me an example of what is working in the field or doing household chores?”

To do so, we will use this drawing **[show the visual aid]**.

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<sup>1</sup> For each day explored, it is useful to ask the child to mention one event that happened this day, or to mention an event that you know happened in the community or in the family, to help the child better anchor her-/himself in time.

Do you see these two pictures? **[point the sunrise and the sunset with your finger]** They represent the sunrise and the sunset, and these parts **[point it with your finger]** are the nighttime, before the sunrise and after the sunset. What do you do generally during the nighttime? **[let the child answer]** OK, you get it! Now, can you show me where the beginning of morning is? And the beginning of the afternoon?

*If the child is unable to do so, show her/him where it is, and explain why.*

**[To help the child understand this representation of time, use the time of the interview as an example and show the corresponding moment of the day].** Today we are [Monday, Tuesday, ...], which is here **[point with your finger]**, and we are in the [early/late morning, it's noon, etc.]. Can you show me where it is?"

*If the child is unable to do so, show her/him where it is, and explain again why. Then, ask her/him to point another moment of the day [e.g. the time you woke up].*

*If the child is again unable to do so, stop the activity. Check "The child was unable to use the calendar" in the form.*

*If the child succeeds, go on:*

So, I'm going to ask you to think about the activities you did during the day. Do you remember the activities I'm talking about? **[check that the child remembers all the activities]** OK, and if you didn't do anything specific or if you don't remember, that's ok, you can tell me so.

Do you want to start with yesterday? OK, let's start. Tell me what you remember doing yesterday?"

*From this, the way you will use the answers is always the same:*

- *the child says they have done an activity → "at which moment of the day was this?"*
- *then, check what happened before: "do you remember having done some activity before this?" → what? → when?*
- *then, check what happened after → "do you remember having done some activity after this?" → what? → when?*

*If the child spontaneously mentions several activities, follow up with her/him and ask when they occurred during the day.*

## One-off drawing activity

In this approach, the Calendar is used as a participatory activity rather than as part of a semi-structured interview. The child is asked to draw predefined symbols on the Calendar to indicate the activities carried out during the last **[N] days** (see script below). When administering the Calendar in this way, facilitators should:

- **Introduce** the activity to ensure the child understands the "rules of the game", the main time-related concepts and how the different moments of the day are represented. The script below can be followed.
- **Guide** the child through the calendar. Start by asking the child about "yesterday"<sup>2</sup>, which may be either a school day (Monday–Friday) or a weekend day (Saturday or Sunday). The question should be open, such as "What did you do yesterday?". Then explore the previous days, step by step, moving backwards in time.
- Use **open questions** to explore activities, rather than asking the child to select one from a list of pre-defined activities. If the child struggles to navigate time, prompt them with questions such as: "Did you play or work at any time yesterday / during that day?" "If so, can you tell me more about it and when it happened?"

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<sup>2</sup> For each day explored, it is useful to ask the child to mention one event that happened this day, or to mention an event that you know happened in the community or in the family, to help the child better anchor her-/himself in time.

- If the child mentions having worked in the field or done household chores, **ask them to turn to the back of the visual aid** and identify any hazardous activities represented in the pictures that they carried out. The child should then check the corresponding boxes.
- **Store the drawing.** Once the child has completed the drawing, keep the visual aid so the information can be digitised later.<sup>3</sup>

## Script

**NB:** *This script can also be used to administer the calendar to a group of children (e.g., in school settings). In that case, the checks done to verify that children understand the tool should be done with different children, and the right answers can be sought from the children present too.*

“I would like to talk about the activities you did recently and when you did them. These activities are being at school, working in the field, household chores or playing.

To do so, I will ask you to draw on this paper **[show the visual aid]**.

Do you see these two pictures? **[point the sunrise and the sunset with your finger]** They represent the sunrise and the sunset, and these parts **[point it with your finger]** are the nighttime, before the sunrise and after sunset. What do you do generally during the nighttime? **[let the child answer]** OK, you get it! Now, can you show me where the beginning of morning is? And the beginning of the afternoon?

*If the child is unable to do so, show her/him where it is, and explain why.*





**[To help the child understand this representation of time, use the time of the interview as an example and show the corresponding moment of the day].** Today we are [Monday, Tuesday, ...], which is here **[point with your finger]**, and we are in the [early/late morning, it's noon, etc.]. Can you show me where it is?”

*If the child is unable to do so, show her/him where it is, and explain again why. Then, ask her/him to point to another moment of the day [e.g. the time you woke up].*

*If the child is again unable to do so, stop the activity.*

*If the child succeeds, go on:*

So, I'm going to ask you to think about what you did during the day and to draw what you've done. Do you remember the activities we want to talk about?

- If you have been to school, you can draw rounds, like this 
- If you have worked in the fields, you can draw little sticks, like this 
- If you did some chores, you can draw mountains, like this 
- If you were playing, you can draw crosses, like this 
- If you didn't do anything specific at that time or if you don't remember well, it's OK, don't draw anything.

Do you want to start with yesterday? OK, let's start. Tell me what you remember doing yesterday?”

*From this, the way you will use the answers is always the same:*

- *the child says they have done an activity → “at which moment of the day this was?”*
- *then, check what happened before: “do you remember having done some activity before this?” → what? → when?*
- *then, check what happened after → “do you remember having done some activity after this?” → what? → when?*

*If the child spontaneously mentions several activities, follow up with her/him and ask when they occurred during the day.*

<sup>3</sup> Depending on the context, the enumerator can be asked to enter the information in a digital form, or to take a picture of the visual aid, which will be processed later on.

## Digital form

The digital form allows the information collected through the Calendar to be structured and stored in a database.

The form consists of a series of indicators used to report when, during each day, activities have been undertaken. For example, when the Calendar covers the last five days, five series of multiple-choice indicators are created (e.g. series 1: “Monday before sunrise”, “Monday after sunrise” ...; series 2: “Tuesday before sunrise”, “Tuesday after sunrise” ...). Each multiple-choice indicator informs about which activity has been undertaken (“At school”, “Working in the field”, “Household chores”, “Playing”).

The example below illustrates how this digital form may look for a given day.

A. Child's time use (from the calendar tool)		
	Item	Response
A.0	The child was unable to use the calendar	Box
A1.1	Monday, before sunrise	1= At school 2= Farm work 3= Household chores 4= Playing (Multiple choice is allowed)
A1.2	Monday, after sunrise	1= At school 2= Farm work 3= Household chores 4= Playing (Multiple choice is allowed)
A1.3	Monday, before midday	1= At school 2= Farm work 3= Household chores 4= Playing (Multiple choice is allowed)
A1.4	Monday, after midday	1= At school 2= Farm work 3= Household chores 4= Playing (Multiple choice is allowed)
A1.5	Monday, before sunset	1= At school 2= Farm work 3= Household chores 4= Playing (Multiple choice is allowed)
A1.6	Monday, after sunset	1= At school 2= Farm work 3= Household chores 4= Playing (Multiple choice is allowed)

As for the hazardous tasks that the child might select from the back of the visual aid, they can be coded this way:

**B. Hazardous tasks undertaken over the last [N] days**

	Item	Response
B.1	Hazardous task 1 [name of the hazardous task]	0= No 1= Yes
B.2	Hazardous task 2 [name of the hazardous task]	0= No 1= Yes
...		