

Using Visual Supports

Who benefits from using visual tools?

All children! But specifically:

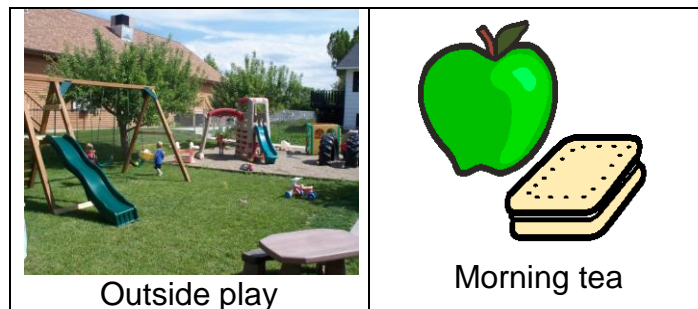
- Children with difficulties understanding language
- Children with difficulties using speech or language to communicate
- Children with behaviour difficulties
- Children with attention and concentration difficulties

What are visual tools and strategies?

Visual tools are anything that you can see. This includes:

- Body language, natural gestures or sign language
- Natural environmental cues
- Objects
- Drawings, photos, or clip art
- Written words or symbols

Visual tools need to be easily recognised and understood.



Visual Schedules

Schedules give information such as:

- What is happening today?
- Is there anything unusual happening today?
- What am I doing next?

They can be for daily routines, parts of the day or to schedule up free time. Calendars can be used to highlight a major event for that day like swimming lessons.

Choice boards

Choice boards are used to offer children a variety of options to choose from in a clearer, more concrete way.

Visual Timers

Giving advance warnings and notice of events and changes increases predictability. This is helpful if paired with a visual. Use of a visual timer can help to show a child how long they have left for a task or reward time. It will increase predictability and help



your child transition between activities. The clock on a smart phone or tablet or an egg timer or sand timer can be useful for this.

How to make visual tools

1. Identify the specific problem
2. Identify the visual strategy that is most likely to help you with the problem
3. Identify the most practical way for you to use the visual strategy. E.g. Is it transportable, durable, non-invasive, colourful?
4. Identify the pictures you will need. E.g. What does the child want or need? Do you want to use photos or cartoons?
5. Collect the images.
6. Begin arranging into a visual tool
7. Begin using and teaching the child how to use the visual tool

Key points for using pictures

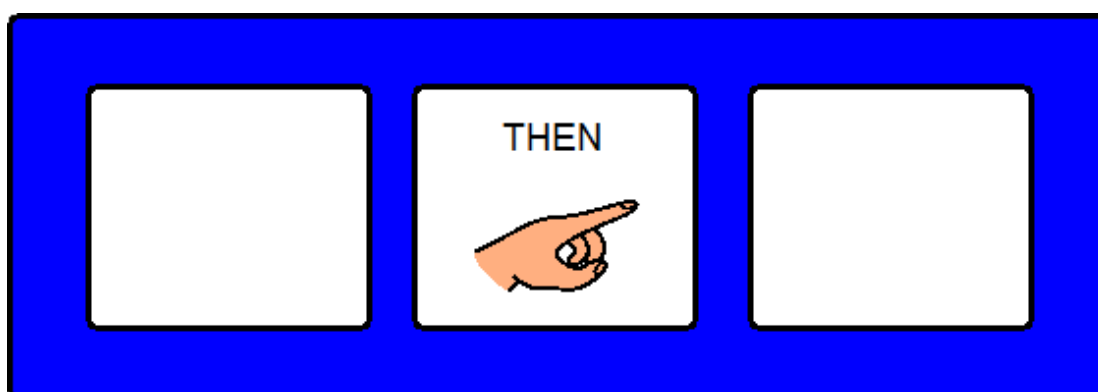
- The picture should always be of the object that you want to communicate. E.g. Use a picture of the TV instead of the lounge room. Use close ups, eliminate the background and ensure that the image is clear
- Sometimes generic pictures are more useful – e.g. a picture of a few books rather than one specific book
- Clip art, board maker or searching for images online can be useful for more generic pictures

How to effectively implement visual strategies

Children will need to be taught how to use the visuals like any other skill. Ensure you have the child's attention before using the tool. Introduce the visual tools systematically using these steps:

1. Show the tool
2. Gesture or point to show the student where to focus their attention
3. Make sure the child can see the tool
4. Use clear, simple, consistent language to label the picture and prompt or guide child to perform the desired response for the communication e.g. requesting an item or following the schedule

Make sure the child can see / access the tool whenever they might need it. Think about position, accessibility, height.



For further information, please contact:

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