



Using Visual Supports at home

What does 'Visual Supports' mean?

Many children with autism find processing spoken language extremely difficult. One way we can help is by using visual instructions and ways of communicating as much as possible.

Processing information visually is often an area of strength for these children: they often learn much better if they see something rather than if they hear something. As well helping your children understand their environment, visual supports are useful for prompting your child to express themselves.

Using visual supports can often help maintain your child's attention for longer. Use visual clues whenever possible to assist your child's understanding and recall. This is particularly important because your child's memory and sequencing skills may well be impaired. Also use natural gesture.

Types of visual supports

- Objects
- Photographs
- Pictures
- Line drawings
- Gestures
- Symbols
- Makaton/ Signalong signs
- Written words

Strategies for Using Visual Supports at home

To help understanding:

- Make your child's room and home a more visual environment by using labels e.g. photo of bricks to let your child know where to put the bricks away.
- Introduce props into story telling e.g. toys or pictures to help illustrate the story.
- Build a word wall in your child's room to remind him/her of new words learned.
- To explain what is going to happen through the use of objects e.g. show them swimming trunks so that they know they will be going to the swimming pool, through the use of a visual timetable using photos or symbols of the morning's activities.
- To explain difficult situations e.g. through the use of a social story.
- To know what choices are available – through the use of a selection of objects/pictures on a choice board.
- To promote independence – to let child know what to do without adult support.
- To show how much time is left – through the use of timetables, sand timers i.e. how many things before dinner time, or an egg timer to show when television time will end.



To encourage expression

- To ask for things or say something – e.g. Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), object exchange, communication board.
- To make a choice - by giving or pointing to an object/picture on a choice board.
- To remind or cue your child of the words to use – e.g. “Good Morning” card for breakfast time.

For older children:

- Visual Timetables.
- Positive reinforcement of good behaviour.
- Storyboards to help pupils organise their thoughts visually before putting them down on paper.
- Independent working worksheet.
- Back up verbal instructions by using pictures/writing them down.
- Highlight key words in texts (and teach pupil how to do this).

Please contact your child’s class teacher or Speech and Language Therapist for visual resources you can use at home.