

FACT SHEET

VISUAL SUPPORTS



Visual supports are tools that are used to increase the understanding of language, environmental expectations, and to provide structure and support for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD).

1 Why use Visual Supports?

Visual supports facilitate understanding by remaining static or fixed in the individual's environment. If verbal language, which is considered transient or fleeting, is the only method used to communicate expectations, provide support, and increase an understanding of language, then individuals with ASD may have extreme difficulty.

Individuals who have ASD often develop stronger visual skills than auditory skills. Visual supports allow them to use this visual strength to participate in the communicative process more easily. Visual supports also allow important information to remain accessible in the individual's environment. This can reduce the stress levels and inappropriate behaviors that individuals with ASD may exhibit when they cannot effectively communicate or when they do not understand the expectations of the environment.

Visual supports are commonly used to:

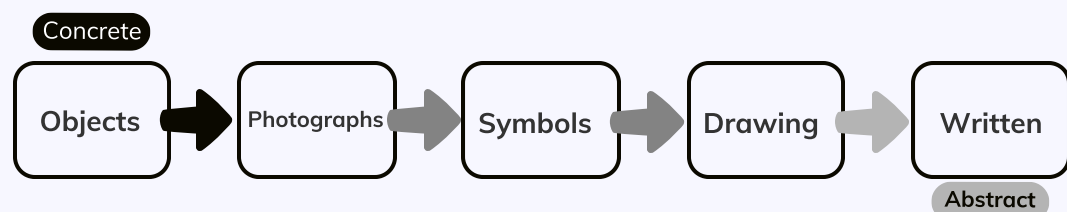
- communicate choices
- organize daily schedules
- give direction
- explain rules or expectations
- reduce anxiety
- aide in transition
- provide appropriate actions
- reinforce

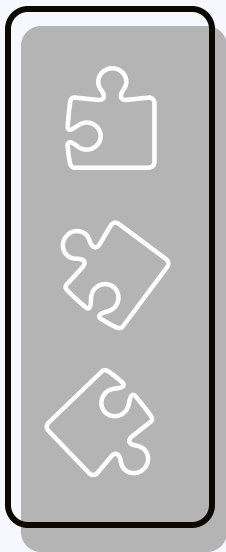
2 What can be used as visual supports?

There are 5 main types of visual supports used with individuals with ASD.

1. Objects - actual 3D visual representations of items or activities
2. Photographs - 2D visual picture representations of items or activities
3. Symbols - a cartoon or clipart representation of the items or activities
4. Drawing - a sketch of the items or activities
5. Written words - written label of the items or activities

These formats can be used independently of each other or in conjunction to create many types of visual supports that can be used in the individuals environment. These visual supports include visual schedules, environmental visuals used for prompting, picture or written rules, choice, communication, and token boards,





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Getting Started:

1. Decide what the supports will be used for.

Example: provide choice of snack

2. Choose the type of support that best meets the needs of the individual.

Example: icons, digital pictures, or objects

3. Gather the necessary pictures, icons, objects, etc.

Example: picture of apple or carrot, logo of McDonalds or Wendy's, bag of chips or Skittles, etc.

4. Make the supports durable.

Example: laminate, attach Velcro, and make multiple copies

5. Choose where and when the support will be used.

Example: mount choice board on refrigerator or schedule on student's desk.

6. Teach and implement the support.

Examples:

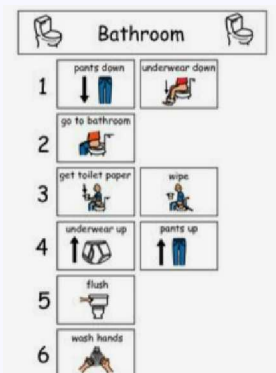
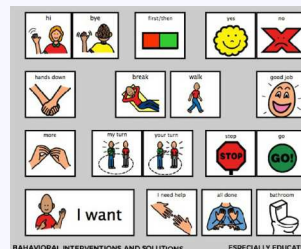
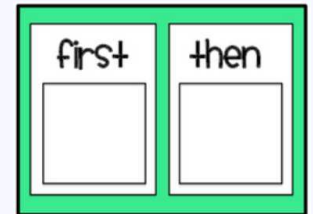


Helpful Hints:

-Make sure they are portable, durable, and easily accessible

-Can be static or interactive

-They do not need to be fancy!



Additional Resources

Books:

Hodgdon, L. (2000). *Visual Supports for Improving Communication*. QuirkRoberts: Troy, Michigan.

McClannahan, L. E., & Krantz, P. J. (1999). *Activity Schedules for Children with Autism*. Woodbine House: Bethesda, MD.

Websites:

www.usevisualstrategies.com: Use Visual Strategies

www.trainland.tripod.com: Beyond Autism PECS, Pictures/Icon Pages

www.do2learn.com: Do 2 Learn

www.txautism.net/interventions/visual-supports TSLAT Website - Visual Supports

For Purchase:

www.mayer-johnson.com; Boardmaker

www.slatersoftware.com: Picture It

<https://lessonpix.com>: LessonPix