

Visual supports for Autistic Children

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LEARNING objectives

1.

Attendees will be able to describe the benefits of utilizing visual supports.

2.

Attendees will be able to differentiate between the types of visual supports.

3.

Attendees will be able to implement a variety of visual supports in the classroom effectively.

4.

Attendees will be able to create individualized visual supports.

What are visual supports?

Visual Supports are an evidence based strategy that uses visuals rather than vocal communication to support an individual.

COMMON TYPES

- Pictures
- Symbols
- Written Words
- Choice Boards
- Schedules
- Labels
- Written Scripts
- Visual Boundaries
- Timers
- Token Boards



Benefits



- Provides structure and routine
 - Promotes independence
 - Builds confidence
 - Decreases anxiety and frustration
 - Decreases maladaptive behaviors
 - Improves understanding
 - Provides opportunities for interaction
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Effectiveness

- Following verbal tasks alone can be difficult for children with ASD due to communication deficits
- Visuals can offer non-intrusive prompts for smoother transitions and increases activity engagement
- Research shows that visual schedules reduces target behaviors and are more likely to generalize transitions without target behaviors with schedule
- Visual aids can increase the learner's independence skills
 - (Pierce et al., 2013)

Example

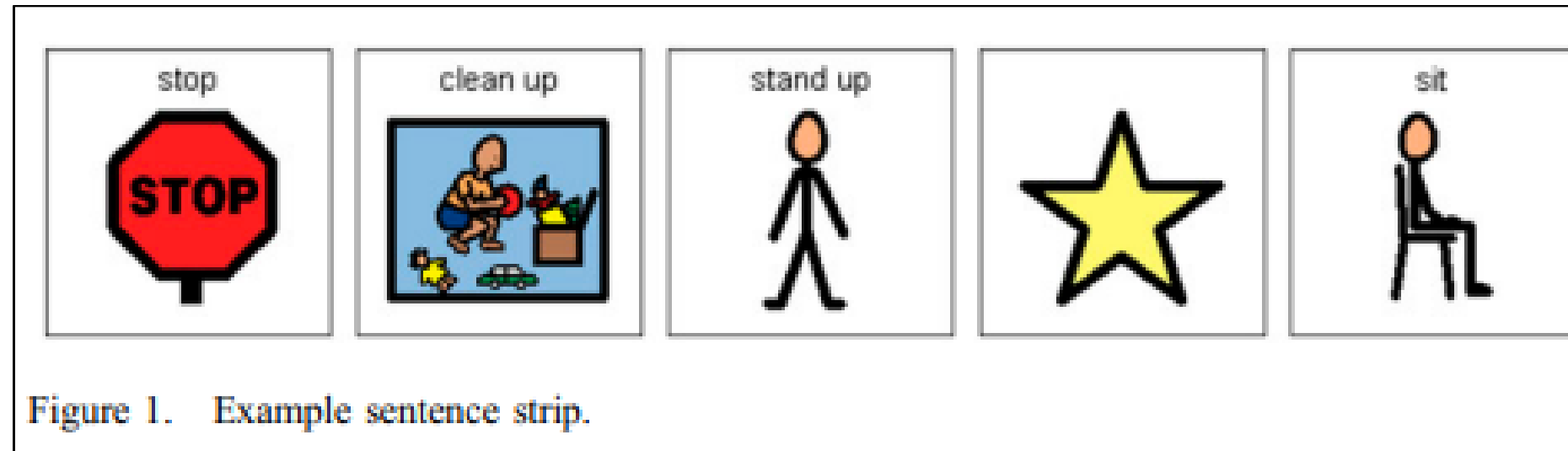
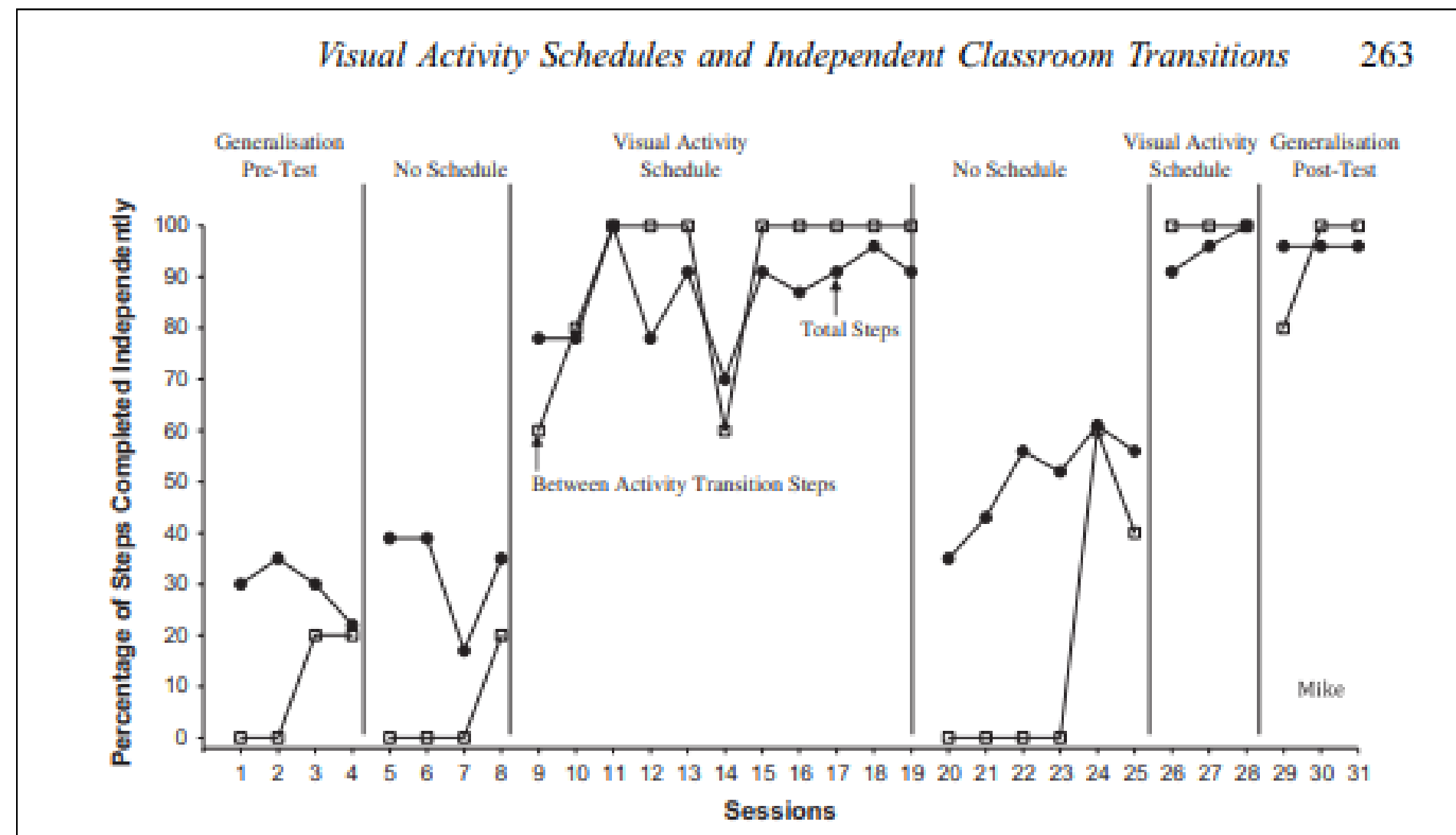


Figure 1. Example sentence strip.





Visual Supports Work Best When They Are:

PORTABLE

- On a communication device or tablet
- In a folder that's easy to carry
- On a key chain/binder ring

DURABLE

- Laminated
- On cardstock
- Backups available

EASY TO FIND

- At eye level
- Attached to an object
- On the home screen of a communication device or tablet
- Kept in the same place

Visual Supports Work Best When They Are:

SOCIALLY VALID

- The visual is age and skill appropriate
- It can be easily incorporated and accessible
- It is significant to the things they are having difficulty with

PERSONALIZED

- What works for 1 child may not work for another child
- Can integrate a child's interest into the design
- Visuals closely relate to what the child accesses in their environment
- When using visuals to promote communication (e.g., choice board), try to use real pictures of items on a plain background rather than cartoon pictures

GENERALIZED

- Can be used across settings (home, school, therapy, etc.)
- Used with other people (teachers, caregivers, etc.)
- Used at various times

Visual schedules

- Can be used to show the steps needed to complete a single activity or a sequence of activities (e.g., daily classroom routine/schedule)
- Needs to be individualized to be effective
- Keep it simple



First/ then boards

- Can help learners transition to a non-preferred activity and then to a preferred activity
- Can reduce challenging behaviors
- Can increase on-task behavior
- Keep language concise and clear.

FIRST

non-preferred activity

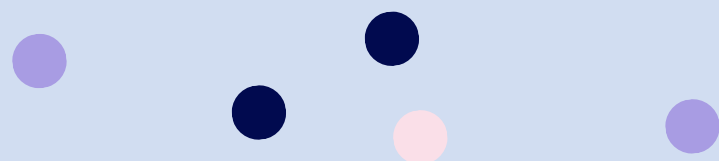
THEN

preferred activity



Visual prompts

- For redirection (e.g., sit down, stand up, etc.)
 - Engaging in “appropriate” classroom behavior
- To prompt functional communication – More time, break, and space


















Visual prompts

- When using visual prompts, first teach what the visual means.
- Pair the visual with the desired expectation (e.g., holding up the “raise your hand” visual while modeling raising your hand)
- After this is done repeatedly, the child will learn what the visual means and you should be able to just use the visual prompt to redirect the child without interrupting the entire classroom.

CHOICE boards

- Providing choices increases engagement and reduces problem behaviors (Watanabe & Sturmey, 2003)

I want to work with...		
 Wooden pencil	 Ink pen	 Big marker
 Colored pencil	 Mechanical pencil	 Little marker

Choice Board		
 Beanbag	 Read a book	 Snack
 Stuffed animal	 Draw	 Music
 Play with friends	 Alone time	 Puzzle

Emotional Regulation

How do you feel?



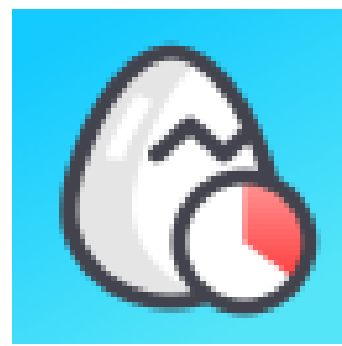
Calm down strategies



Timers

Free Visual Countdown Apps:

- Visual Countdown Timer
- Little Timer Hatch Countdown
- Time Timer



- Offer a concrete representation of time passing
- Great for tasks that need to be completed in a specific amount of time
- Lets the child know how long something non-preferred is going to last
- Can decrease maladaptive behaviors that occur when a child is told to stop doing something they prefer

Token boards

- Promote positive or desired behaviors without having to reward every instance of that behavior with something tangible (e.g., toy, treasure box, etc.)
- Tokens are given when a child displays a desired behavior. Once the child receives a specified amount of tokens, they receive the reward that they have chosen.

THE GOAL:

is for the tokens themselves to become rewarding so that the child does not need to receive some sort of tangible reinforcer/item for every single instance of the desired behavior.



When implementing Token Boards

EXPECTATIONS

- Should be clear and understood by the child
 - Tokens are given for ____ (specific behavior)
 - When I collect all my tokens, I receive ____ (chosen reinforcer)
 - I need ____ (number) tokens to earn a reinforcer

SET ACHIEVABLE GOALS

- You want the child to be able to access the reward, especially when learning a new skill!
- If the child never gets rewarded, this strategy won't be successful.
- Start with small expectations that you increase over time
- Having an achievable goal will help the child to feel confident, proud, and encourage them to reach their goal again, even when you increase the expectation!

Tokens

- Tokens can be anything! Integrate the child's preferences into the design- that way the child is more motivated to earn the tokens!
- Delivery should be quick so that receiving the token is paired with the desired response
 - Tell the child why they are receiving the token
 - Make sure that they see you deliver the token



ORGANIZATIONAL visual supports

- Have discrete visual boundaries if the expectation is that the child is supposed to be in a designated area.
- Label organizational bins with pictures of what is inside
- Place a red X visual on items or activities that are not available and a green check mark visual on items or activities that are available
- Use pictures to prompt the child to grab materials needed for an activity



HOW TO PICK A VISUAL TO USE

- Find **PATTERNS** in frustration and maladaptive behaviors observed
 - What activities reliably cause frustration or maladaptive behaviors?
 - What activities does the child consistently avoid?
 - During what times do you find yourself having to provide more support?
- Determine **WHY** these maladaptive behaviors or frustrations are occurring
 - Look at what is happening right before the behaviors occur
 - Demand to complete a non-preferred task
 - Preferred Activity/Item removed
 - Is the child having difficulty communicating something?
 - Is the child alone and lacking social interactions?

HOW TO PICK A VISUAL TO USE

- Pick a type of visual support based on your observations
 - Examples:
 - Child struggling with transitioning between activities -> visual schedule
 - If the child gets easily frustrated when learning something new -> break visual
 - If the child struggles to gather materials to complete a task -> use an organizational visual support
- The key is that you use visuals that will support the child where they are struggling, based on the patterns you've observed.

Don't assume that a child needs a specific type of support because they are autistic.

Each child is different and has different levels of support that they will need.

General Tips To Remember:

STAY SIMPLE

- Visuals do not have to be high tech or complex to be successful
- Keep the design simple with minimal distractions

BE CONSISTENT

- Use the same support the same way each time
- Use the same support across settings

TEACH

- You have to teach the visual before it will be effective
- Expect that it may take some time, do not give up!

USE LANGUAGE

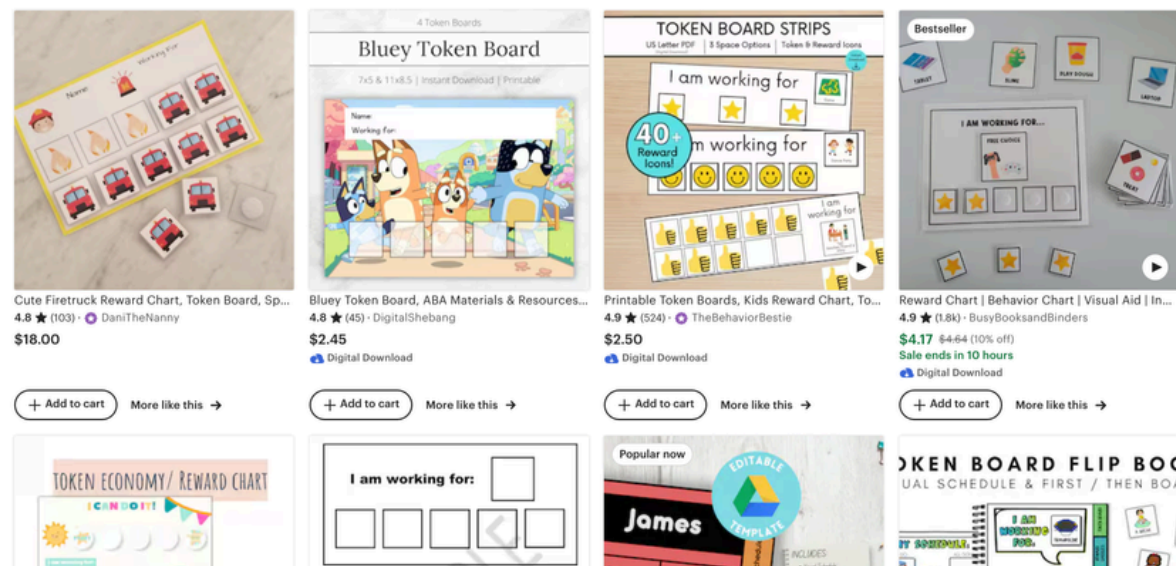
- Pair the visual with vocal language
- Keep language short and sweet

Where Can I Find Visual Supports To Use?

READY TO USE

- Teachers Pay Teachers
- Etsy

Before purchasing a visual that is already made, make sure that it meets the criteria discussed previously!



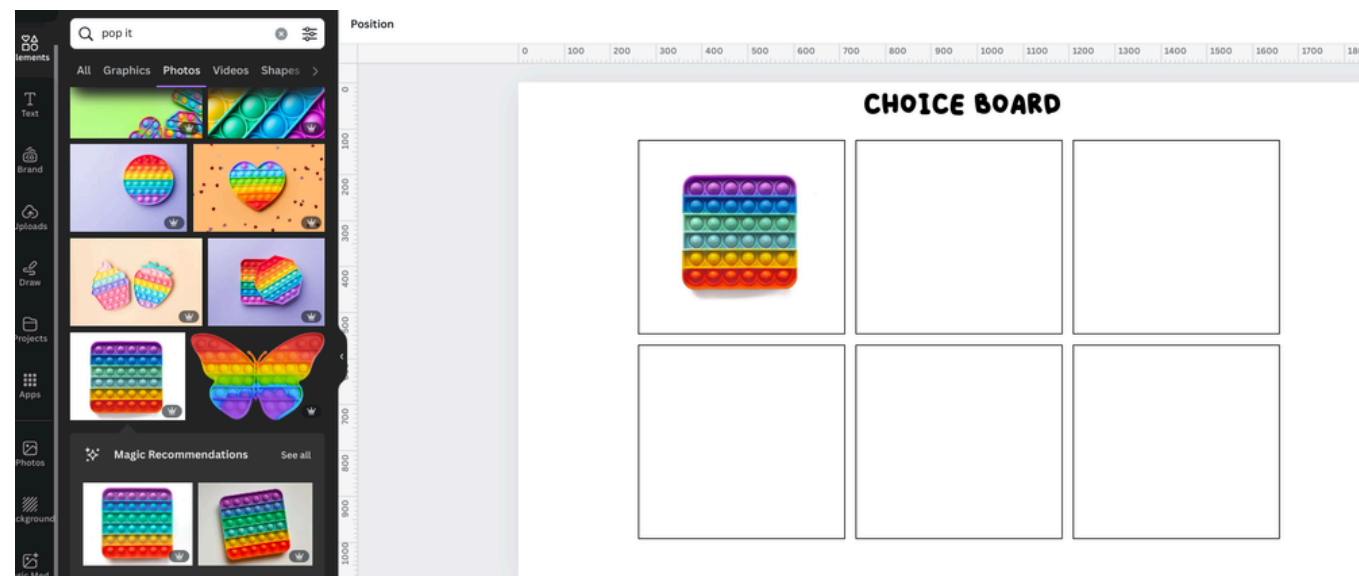
CREATE YOUR OWN

- Canva
- Word or Google Doc



Canva

- Has some free elements, but requires a subscription
- You can design an entire visual without ever leaving the site
- Beyond creating visual supports, there are so many templates that you can customize for schedules, decoration, teacher planner, worksheets, and more!

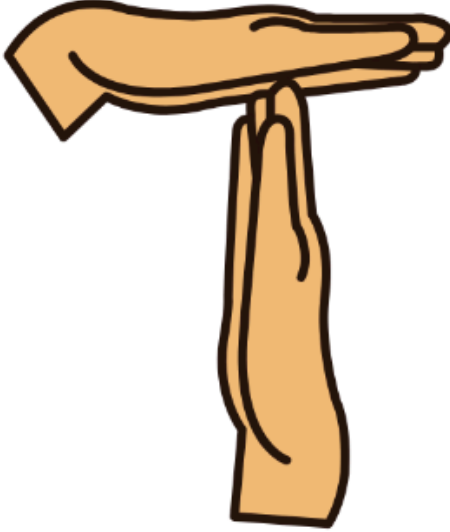


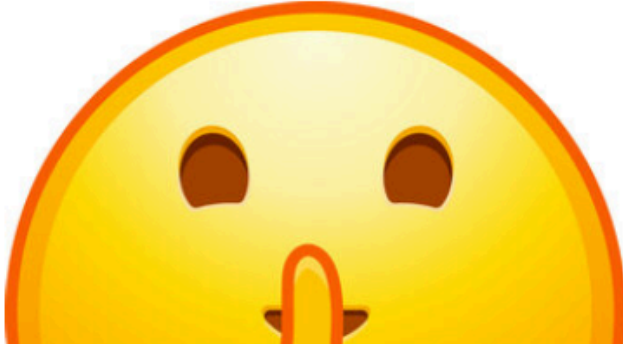


WORD

- Can make templates using shape elements or tables
- Pull in images from a google search

9 - 9:30	Free Play 
9:30 - 9:45	Snack 

VISUAL PROMPTS

BREAK 	MORE TIME 
SIT DOWN 	BE QUIET 

References

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Questions?