

How and Why to Use Visuals

Visuals include real objects, parts of objects or remnants (e.g. empty packet of sultanas), photographs of the actual object, photographs of similar objects, drawings, computer generated symbols (e.g. Boardmaker, Pics for PECS) and written words.

Your child's age and ability will be the determining factor when deciding what type of visual support to use.

Why Use Visuals?

- ✓ Most children with autism spectrum disorder have strengths in visual areas compared to other areas.
- ✓ Up to 80% of families have their child's (with autism spectrum disorder) hearing test first because of delays in language development. Children with ASD can hear but they can't process verbal language.
- ✓ A symbol or picture remains constant long after the word or sign has been completed.
- ✓ People with autism tell us language is confusing. Temple Grandin, a well-known American with autism reports "I think in pictures." She has also written a book by the same name.
- ✓ Sensory processing difficulties are part of autism spectrum disorder so it makes sense to support one sensory input system (i.e. hearing) with another – sight.

How to Use Visuals

- ✓ Always couple visuals with speech. They are an aid to help you understand spoken language, not a substitute.
- ✓ Be eclectic. You do not need to only use one type of visual.
- ✓ Always print the name of the visual, to ensure consistent language (is it a mug or a cup?) and to aid in long term literacy.
- ✓ To be valuable visuals must be accessible. Keep them near where you are likely to use them – sticking the finish symbol on the door frame in every room means one is always available.
- ✓ Wait! Like all communication you need to allow child time to process and point.
- ✓ Persevere. Your child may need many trials before he makes the connection between the visual and the real object.
- ✓ Speak to your speech therapist/pathologist about introducing your child to PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System).
- ✓ Visuals will continue to be of value to your child even after they have learnt to talk – they will be able to check back to them whenever uncertain.
- ✓ Remember most people use visuals – shopping lists, diaries, etc are all visuals!

Excerpt from "The Early Years", page 19, 20.

A picture is worth 1000 words!

How many horses do you see in the picture below?



There are at least six! Roll up a piece of paper and try looking at the picture through the tube. This is how people with ASD observe their environment as they have what we call 'Weak Central Coherence' – remarkably good at attending to detail but appear to have considerable difficulty perceiving and understanding the overall picture or gist.

Remember if there is a busy background the child is likely to focus inappropriately on some small detail. When you make visuals make sure the child sees what you see! This is why I would recommend using commercial products that have been tested rather than downloading off the internet images that maybe busy or confusing.

Always include the written word with all visuals as we are aiming for literacy long term.

Great Visual Resources

Pics for PECS

Contains over 2000 icons, organised by broad categories. Images are jpg (jpeg) format. Compatible with Windows and Mac.

CODE C02 \$59.95 (plus P & H)

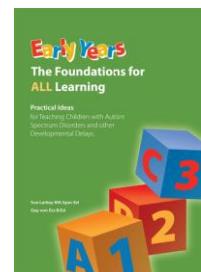


The Early Years

By Sue Larkey & Gay von Ess

Full of practical ideas to give children with an ASD and other developmental delays the KEYS to learning.

CODE B04 \$39.95 (plus P & H)



Visual Learning

By Jodi Lee

Over 100 pages of activities made with Boardmaker. Encourages independent work. Under all curriculum areas. Saves you hours of preparation.

CODE B03 \$39.95 (plus P & H)

