







Using Visual Supports with Individuals with ASD

An OCALI Parent Package




Ohio Department of Education
Division of Educational Support and Assessment



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Objectives

- Participants will be able to identify common visual supports
- Participants will be able to describe the benefit of visual supports for individuals with ASD




What are Visual Supports?

Pictures, graphic representations, or words used to:

Cue us, or Prompt us

To do something we need to do



What are Visual Supports?

"A tool that enables the child to keep track of the day's events and activities and at the same time helps him or her to develop an understanding of time frame and an appreciation of environmental sequences."

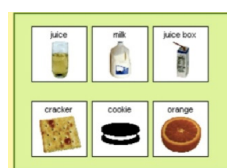
Diane Twachtman-Cullen (1995, p. 145).

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Visual Supports Can Include:

- Pictures
- Written words
- Gestures
- Schedules
- Scripts
- Timelines
- Objects within the environment
- Arrangement of the environment
- Visual boundaries
- Maps
- Labels

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Making food and drink choices visual and available can:

- help the individual communicate his wants and needs and
- allow you to control the options that are available at certain times of the day

Visual supports also work in the community



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What Can Visual Supports Do?

Help individuals with ASD:

- Complete more tasks by themselves therefore increasing independence
- Learn more rapidly
- Demonstrate decreased levels of frustration, anxiety and aggression
- Adjust more readily to changes in their environments

Savner & Myles, 2000

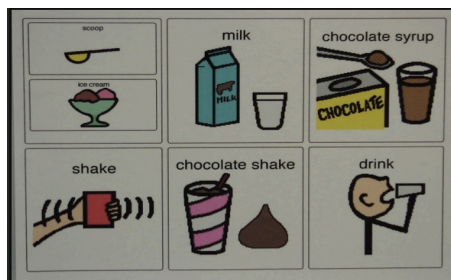
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Simple Visual Support



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Visual Support: Task Sequence



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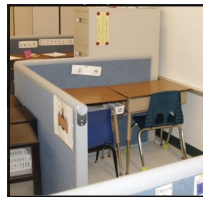
Environmental Visual Supports

- Providing visual boundaries can be important
- Visual boundaries can be created by:
 - Furniture arrangement
 - Labels
 - Color coding
 - Using carpets or rugs to define a space
 - Using colored tape to define an area

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Setting Up Visual Boundaries

- Define the need
- Define the boundary
- Teach the boundary



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Visual Labels



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Labeling can...

- Increase independence
- Increase individual responsibility for belongings
- Help the individual easily locate needed items
- Give the individual have a sense of security increasing predictability and organization in the environment

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Strategies for Teaching Labels

- Develop items within the home, school, community or work environment
- Point out signs or labels when walking through school or community settings
- Teach the meaning of the label across a variety of settings.
- Be sure to use the same label on the individual's visual schedule as used to label the object, center, or activity.

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Setting Up and Reviewing Labeling Systems: Important Questions

- Can the individual match objects or be taught to match objects so he can find what he needs?
- Does the individual understand the labeling system?
- Is the system consistent and appropriate for the individual's functioning level?
- Is the system "user friendly" for the individual?



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Locators

A visual locator can help individuals with ASD process where a favorite person is more readily than if just told.



Case Study: Johnny

Johnny is always asking "Where's Daddy?" He asks over and over repeating the same question. His mother has tried to verbally tell him that Daddy is at work, but because Johnny has not been to work with his father, this answer does not satisfy him.

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"Where's Daddy?"



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Calendar Locator

This type of calendar can help individuals anticipate where they will be on each day. You can imagine a home calendar with additions like “church” or “birthday party” or “Grandma visits.”

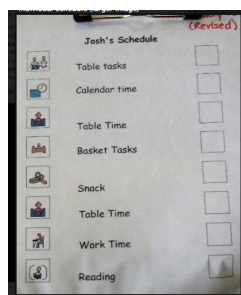


Visual Schedules

- Visual schedules display planned activities in the order in which they will occur using symbols, words, pictures, photographs, icons, or actual objects
- The mode of the schedule is determined by the needs of the individual with ASD

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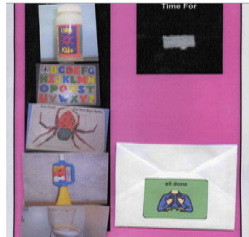
Visual Schedule



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Individual Schedules

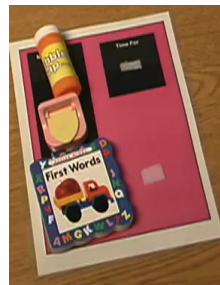
- This individual schedule has a list of activities in order of their occurrence
- Notice that the schedule cards are simple pictures with a plain background



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Object Schedule

An object schedule uses an object of the environment to represent each activity.



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Case Study: Andrew and Jack

- Andrew has Asperger Syndrome
- His mother and Jack's mother decide that Jack will carpool with them two days a week
- Andrew is upset when Jack gets in the car and tells him to get out

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Case Study Continued

- Hoping to solve the problem and lessen Andrew's anxiety and/or anger, his mother makes an individual car schedule for Andrew
- Pictures show the days when Jack will be in the car
- The schedule hangs right in front of Andrew's seat in the car

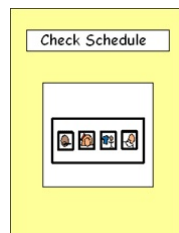
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More examples of individual schedule use...

The following example is divided into 3 steps or parts.

Part 1

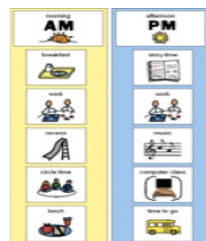
A "check schedule" card is kept right next to the schedule. When it is time for the student to transition to the next activity the card is handed to the student with the request to "check your schedule." The student will bring the card back to the place where it belongs, thus bringing him to his schedule.



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Example #1 –Part 2

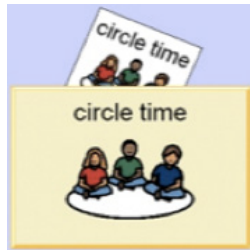
Once the student is at their schedule they can be cued or physically assisted to take the next card on the schedule.



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Example #1 – Part 3

The picture in their hand tells them where they are going. A "receiver envelope" is kept at the site where the activity will occur. The student puts the picture in the envelope and then he is right there where the activity takes place – transition complete!



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Example #2 – Special Days and Activities



- Don't forget party days, field days, and any other unusual days
- For those unexpected activities which can occur any day it is handy to have a "surprise" card (i.e., a solid pink card) which can be put on the schedule to signal a change
- You will find that a change in schedule is usually OK if the student is prepared

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Example #3

This schedule clearly communicates what needs to be done. It can be attached to a notebook or clipboard so that it is portable and easy to use.

As each activity is completed the card is moved to the "All Done" column. Be sure to schedule activities the student enjoys, to keep them interested and motivated.

Things to do.	All Done
<input type="checkbox"/>	Warm-Up
Work Task	<input type="checkbox"/>
Break	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lunch	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Group Schedules

- Group schedules display the activities of the group
- Group schedules should be in a central location
- Each transition can emphasize the importance of the schedule
- One student can be chosen as group leader to get the schedule card to take to the assigned group location

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Pointers for the Group Schedule

- Use color within the schedule: one color for classroom activities, another for activities outside the classroom
- Develop a symbol for unexpected activities
- Use magnets or Velcro to make the schedule flexible

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Visual Supports Points to Remember

- Individuals need to be taught to use the visual supports in their environment
- It is only by using visual supports that individuals will attach meaning to them
- Results may not be immediate, it can take days, weeks, even months

STICK WITH IT!

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Points to Remember

- Visual supports should be age appropriate
- Consider their size and portability
- Help individuals attach meaning to the visual support, pair its use with spoken language—match key words and phrases to the object, picture or action

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Points to Remember

- The more stressful the situation, higher the anxiety level, the more need for visual supports—using visuals allows the you and the individual with ASD to communicate without adding to their level of stress
- Visual supports promote independence by providing a means of communication and a sense of order and control for the individual with ASD

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When we present information verbally, the words are available for a brief moment

When we present information visually it can be there for as long as the individual needs it



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In Summary, Visual Supports can..

Help individuals with ASD:

- Complete more tasks by themselves therefore increasing their independence
- Learn more rapidly
- Demonstrate decreased levels of frustration, anxiety, and aggression related to task completion
- Adjust more readily to changes in their environments

(Savner & Myles, 2000)



References

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Improving the Lives of All Affected by Autism
Ohio

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