



Using Visual Supports with Individuals with ASD Overview

Temple Grandin, an adult with autism and a well known speaker and author on the topic of autism, has written a book called *Thinking in Pictures* in which she describes the visual way she perceives the world around her. Grandin's personal experience supports what research has shown - that individuals with ASD demonstrate strength in visual learning. Since that is the case, it makes sense that when we think about effective instruction techniques for individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), that we use visual cues and strategies.

Remember: When we present information verbally—like giving a direction—the words are available for a brief moment. Our understanding of that information is dependent upon our skill at processing auditory information—that is, making sense of what we hear and then retaining it. When we present information visually, it can be there for as long as we need it.

A visual support can be:

- A picture
- A graphic representation
- A word used to prompt an individual regarding a rule, routine, task, or social response
- Any tool presented visually that supports the individuals as he or she moves through the day

Examples of visuals supports in our everyday lives include:

- A **calendar** to write down activities, events and appointments.
- A **to do list** or **checklist** for errands we need to run
- A **shopping list** so we won't forget items we need when we go to a grocery store
- **Signs** to lead us where we need to go in a large building, or to guide us along a journey from one place to another
- A **recipe** to prepare a meal

For individuals with ASD, visual supports:

- Make auditory information visual
- Organize a sequence of events
- Supplement verbal instruction
- Clarify the information
- Increase the likelihood of comprehension
- Enhance an individual's ability to understand, anticipate and participate in events



Visual supports can be used to:

- Problem solve tough situations
- Help prevent communication and performance breakdowns
- Cue communication
- Provide reminders

When individuals with ASD are given the opportunity to learn with visual supports or cues, they can:

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

REFERENCES

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Resources

Autism Internet Modules: Visual Supports

www.autisminternetmodules.org

OCALI Lending Library

www.ocali.org