

TALK Total Communication Giving thoughts a helping hand!

Guidance for Early Years Professionals



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The aim of this booklet is to provide information and advice to Early Years Professionals in Halton who would like to know more about supporting children's Speech, Language and Communication.

Introduction

A child who cannot communicate effectively due to inadequate speech, is at risk of

- **cognitive and social delays**
- **excessive frustration**
- **behaviour problems**
- **learned helplessness**



**For a child to communicate
they need ...**

Interaction

Someone to communicate with



A reason to communicate

A reason for communicating their message
(i.e. the “why” of communication)



A way to communicate

A way to communicate their message
(i.e. the “how” of communication)



Understanding

To figure out what's said
To understand others

**Lack of speech does not mean a child
has nothing to say.**

One technique will never meet all of a child's
communication needs, so a combination of
approaches may be needed, e.g.
signs/photos/symbols.

Why do we need visual supports?

"Tell me, I'll forget.
Show me, I may
remember.

But involve me,
and I'll understand."

– Chinese Proverb



EducationPossible.com

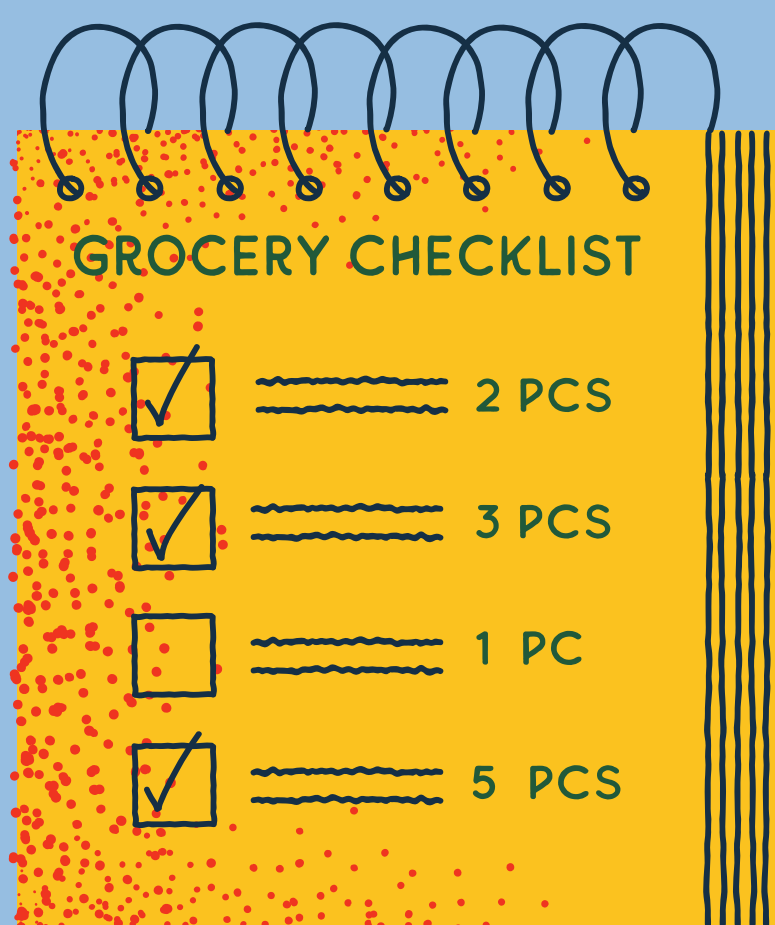
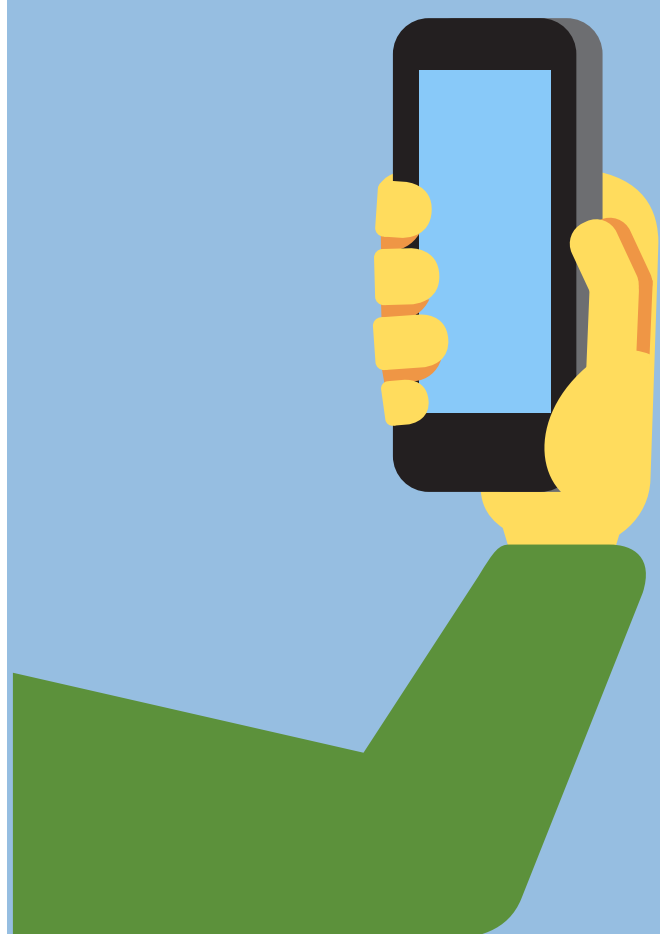
**Visual supports are a way of making
auditory information visual!**



Why do we need visual supports?

We use them and need them as adults ALL of the time!

Think about the visual supports we use every day... recipe books, maps, diaries and calendars, phones, shopping lists, and notes.



Why do children need visual supports?

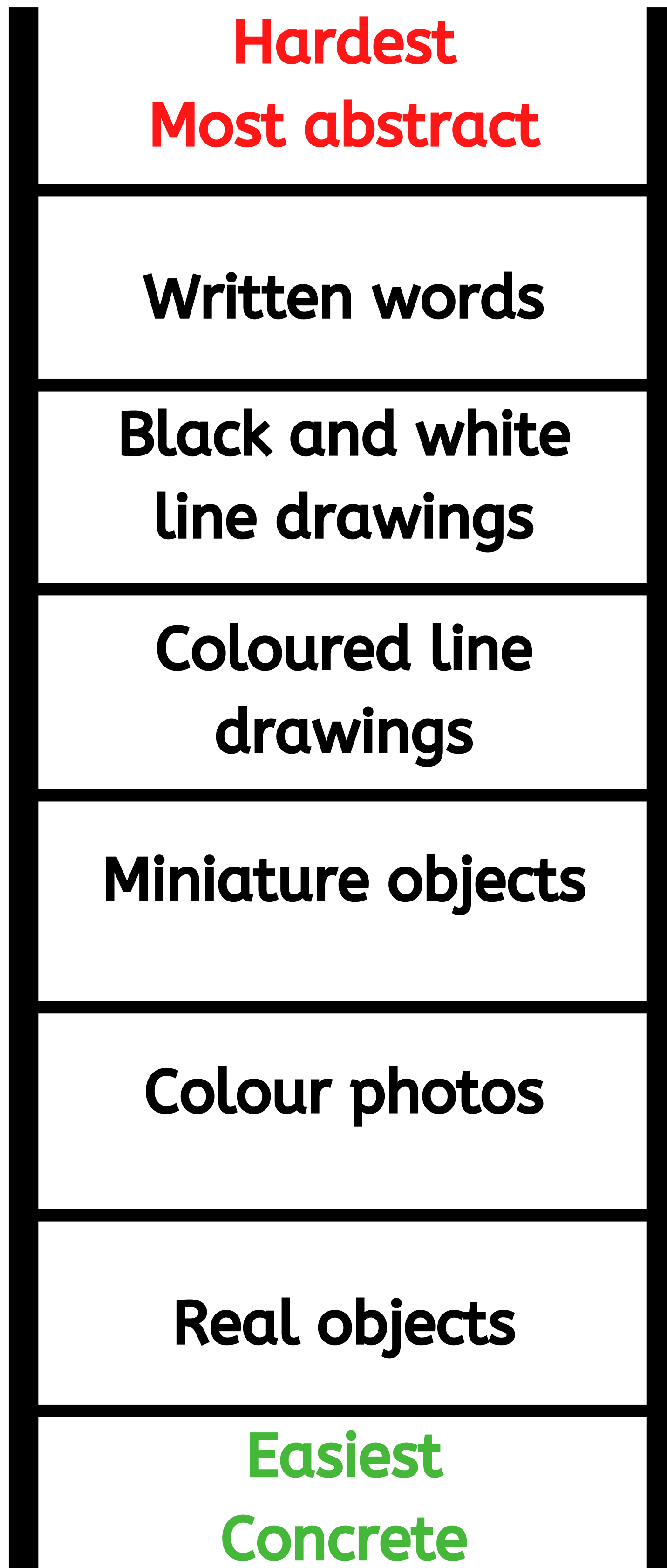
- To help them understand the order in which things happen
- To help them understand what has been said
- To provide them with reminders of what to say and do in a particular situation
- A word is soon forgotten – visual reminders stay around for much longer!

Visual supports can help...

- In situations where you find yourself saying things over and over again
- When your child asks the same thing over and over
- With tasks your child is finding difficult to learn
- Children to make choices
- Children to understand what's going to happen (e.g. schedules)
- Teach children how to do things independently (e.g. self-help boards)
- In difficult situations



Symbol ladder - Understanding verbal language with visual supports



Being able to make choices, even the simplest of choices, is empowering to a child and can increase positive behaviour.

- Make choices available whenever you can, both in the setting and at home!
- Look for an opportunity to present choice in every day routines.
- Make choices visual...with pictures, words or the objects themselves.



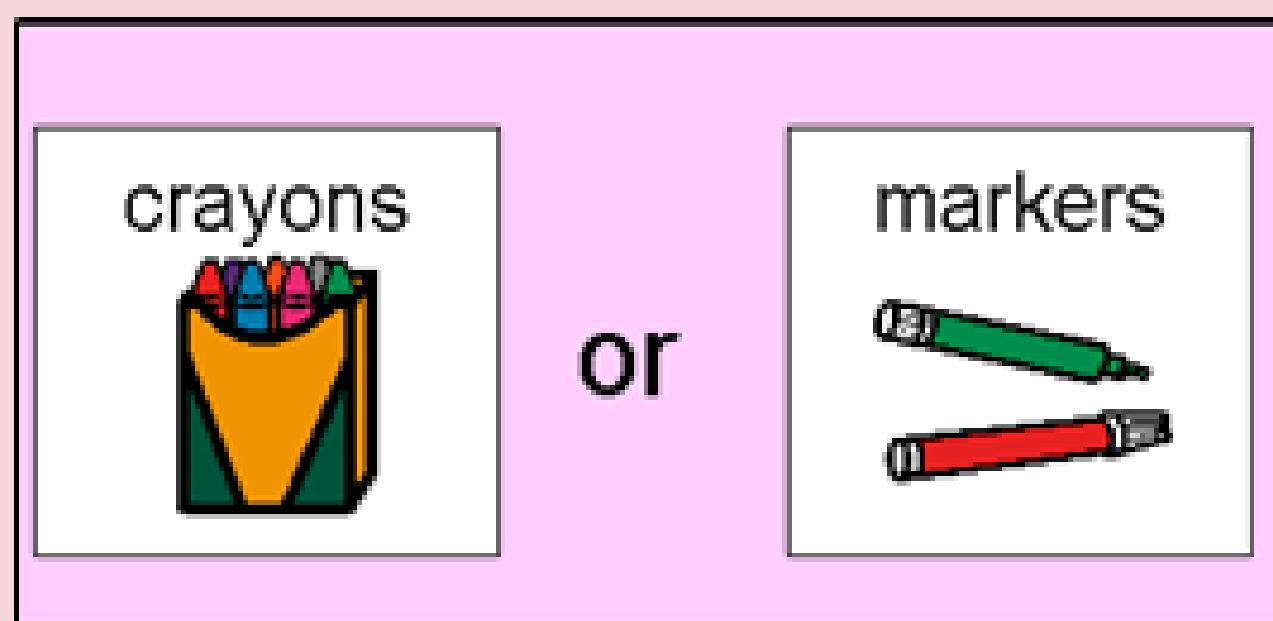
'What's in the bag?'

A simple form of choice is allowing a child to pick a rhyme prop from a bag



Song choice board

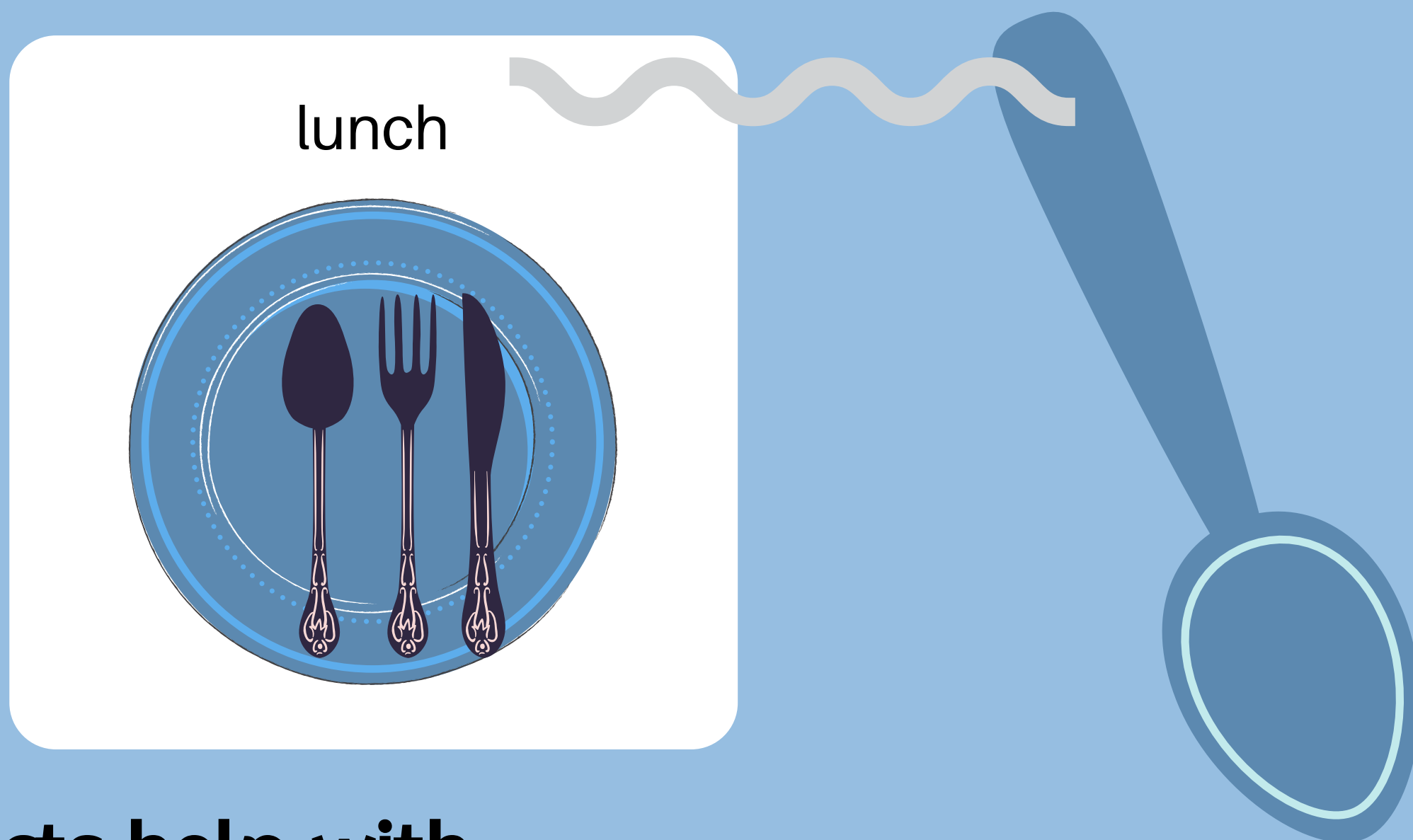
A child can choose from a small selection of song pictures



Choice board

A child can choose an activity from a small selection of pictures. Start with something they like and something they don't like to make the choice easier.

Real objects, sometimes known as '**objects of reference**' are the easiest for a child to understand. They can be used to represent anything we want to communicate such as a spoon to show it is lunch time etc.



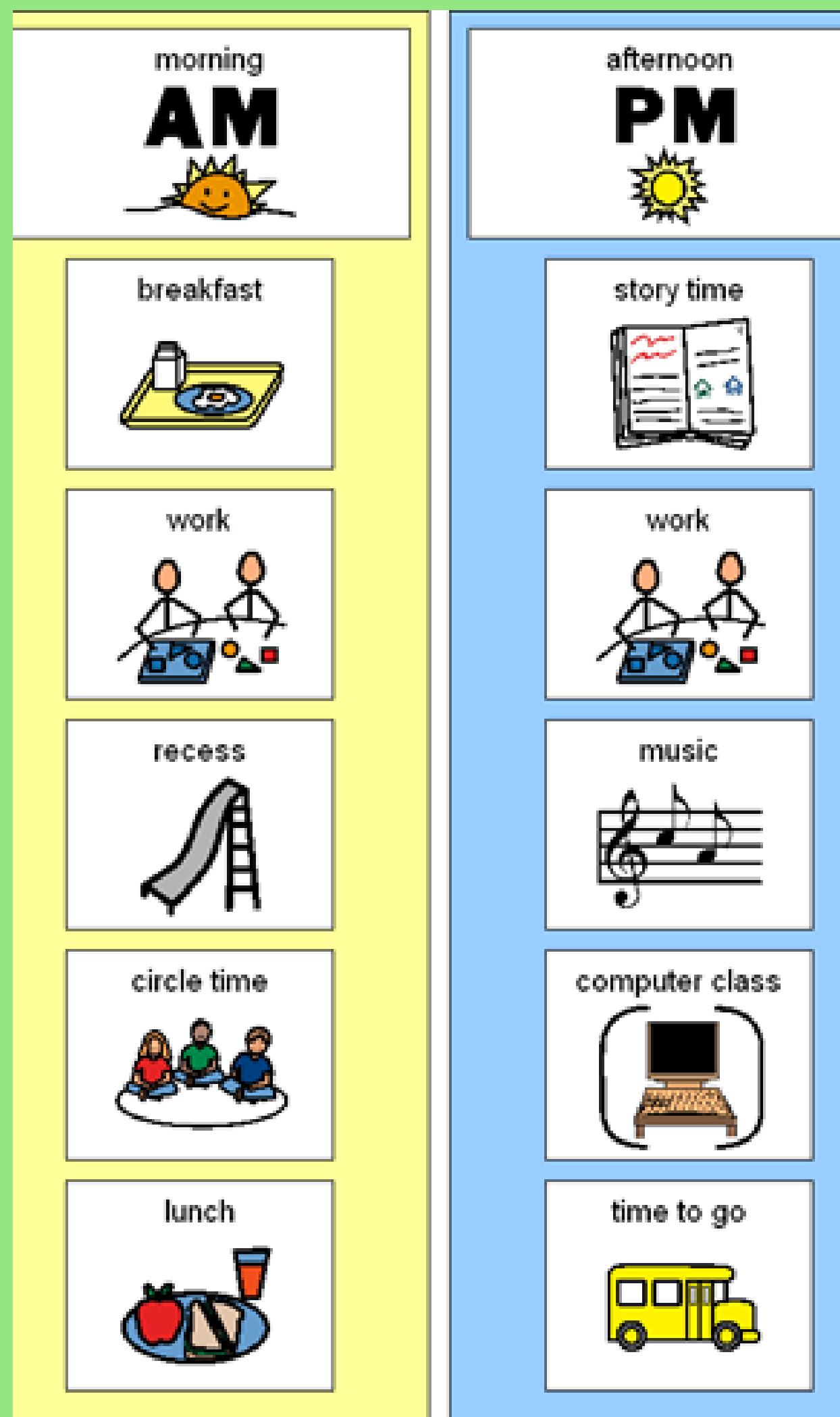
Objects help with...

- increasing understanding of the spoken word
- signaling the beginning of a new activity
- enabling children to make requests
- providing a visual representation of the child's day

When introducing objects

- Have the object at the activity/place to develop the child's awareness of it.
- Give the object to the child at the activity/place.
- Gradually give the object to the child further from the activity/place.
- Pair the object with pictures to develop understanding of pictures as well.

- A visual timetable helps the child to change over from one activity to the next independently.
- Timetables can be used with whole groups or personal to the child and are easy to carry around and use.
- Use photographs, pictures, words, or whatever works best for the individual child. Use symbols at the child's level of understanding.
- The visual images are usually displayed in a linear fashion, either vertically or horizontally.



October 2020						
1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
home 	school 	school 	snow day 	school 	sick 	home
8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	13th	14th
home 	school 	school 	trip 	holiday 	holiday 	home

A calendar can help to take away the unpredictability of daily routines and lets them know what's happening each day.

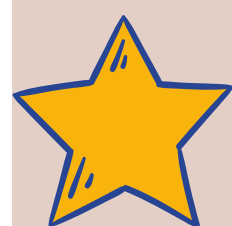
Top tips for using visual timetables



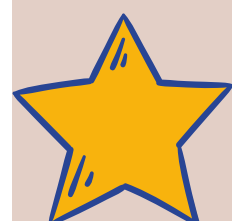
Keep it clear and simple



Choose objects/pictures/photographs that the child can recognise. If in doubt use pictures of the things in your own setting. You don't need any special IT programmes



Consider the timescale. Try doing one for the morning session and one for the afternoon.



Ensure that the visual timetable can be clearly seen by the child. Is it too high up?



When an activity has finished let the children help to remove the card from the timetable.

This will help the children to see that the next activity is starting. (You could use a finished or done box for the children to post the used cards into).

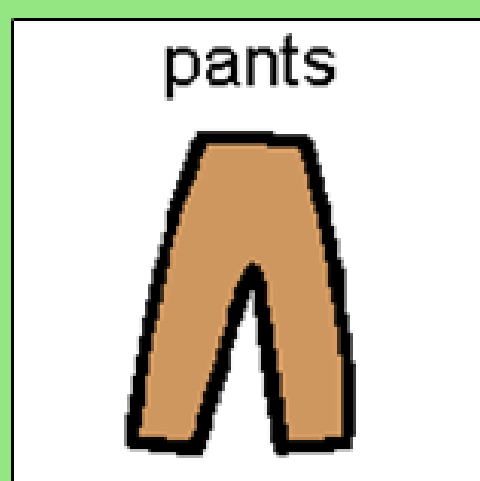


Be consistent - Ensure all staff are using them in the same way and using the same words. It may take a little time for the children to get used to it but once they do it will be worth it!

Here is an example of a mini-schedule for getting ready for outside play.



- Mini-timetables break down an activity into manageable steps.
- Examples of other routines which lend themselves well to a mini-timetable:
 - washing dishes
 - cooking tasks
 - bathroom routine
 - dressing
- These encourage children's self help skills and promote independence

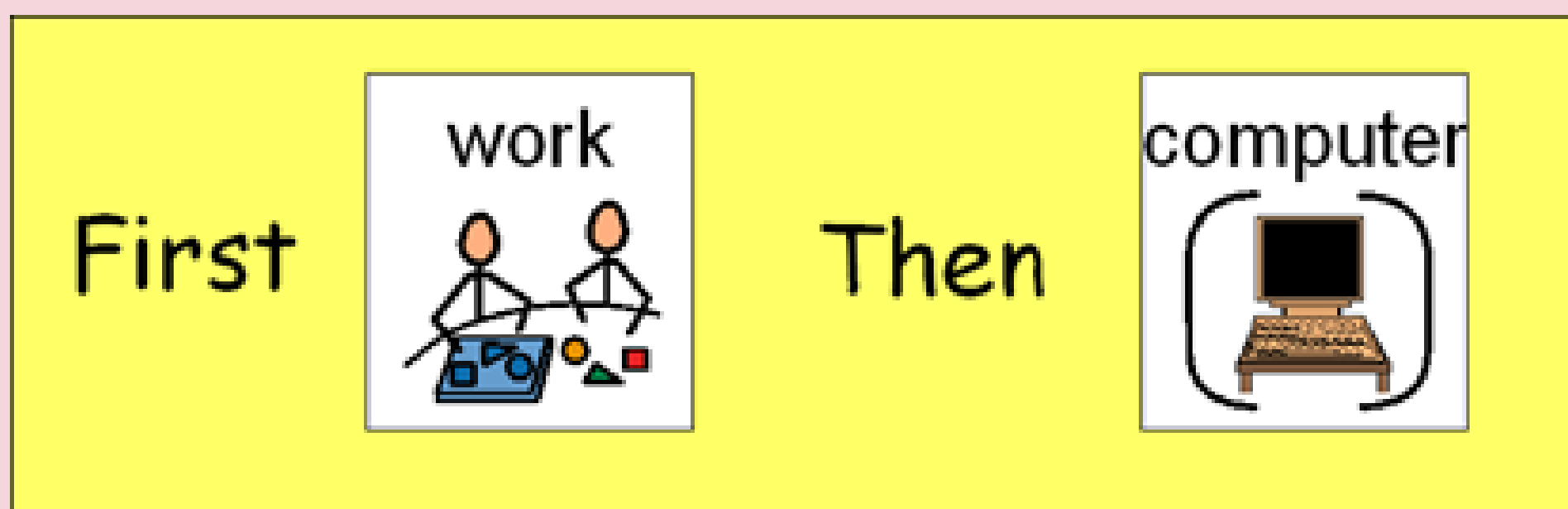


Putting the routine into pictures allows parents/staff to fade out the verbal prompts and promotes independent completion of the tasks.

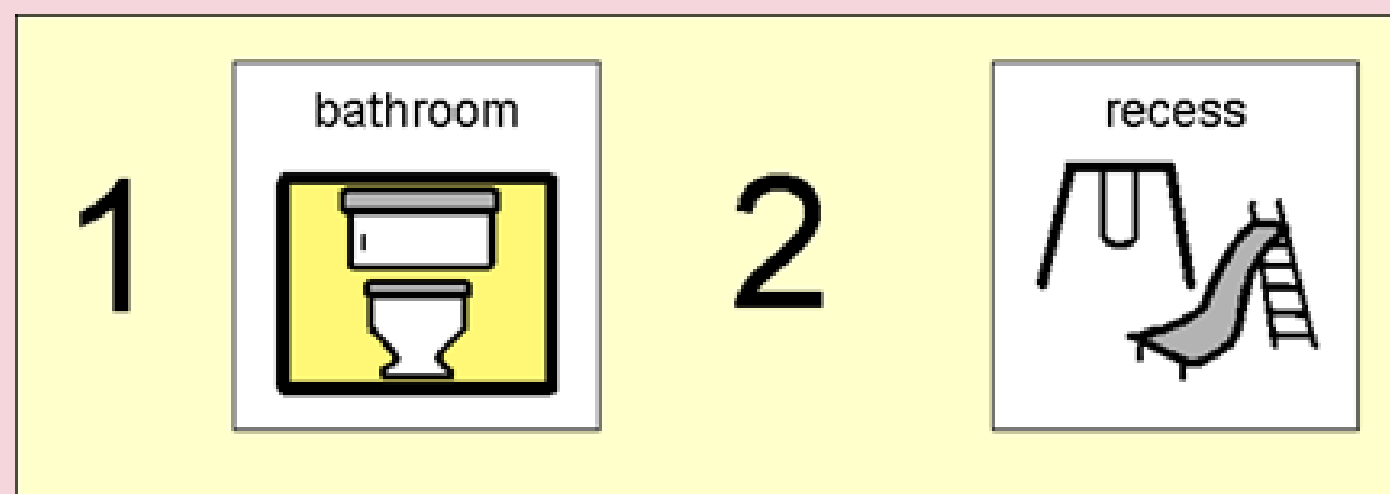
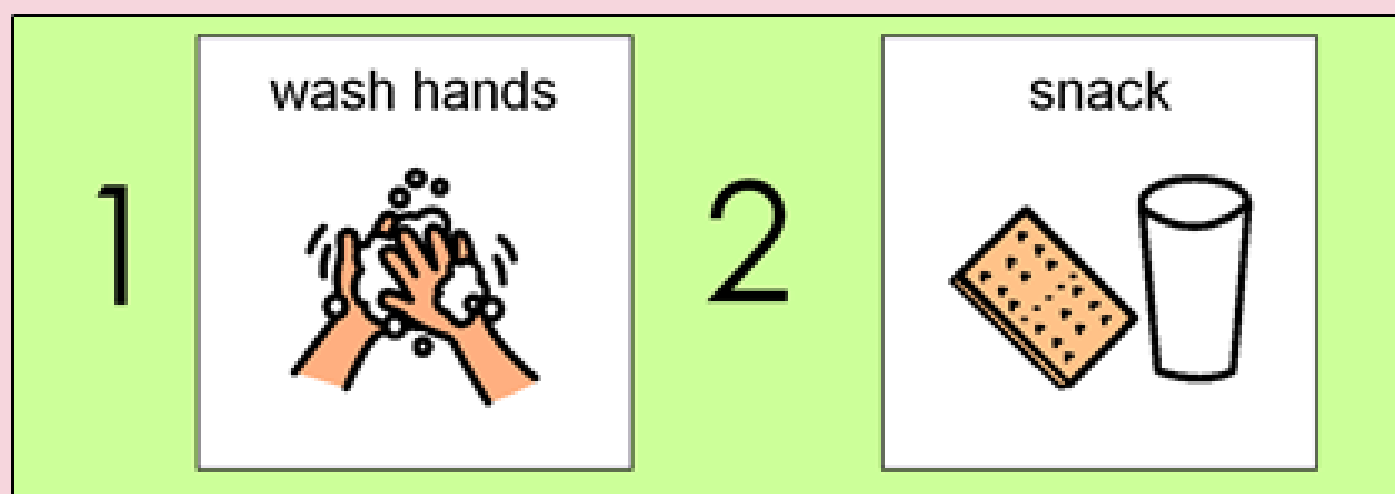


Consider this familiar scene...

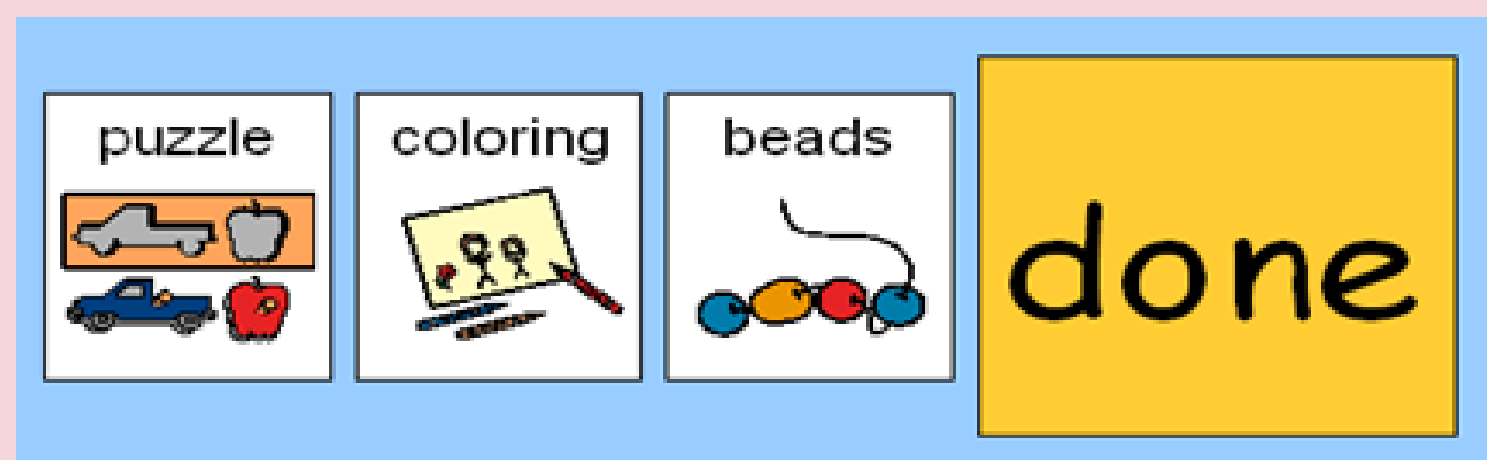
You want your child to complete a task. The child wants to play a computer game. How about this solution ...



This gives the child a visual reminder that once the task is completed they will be able to do something they have chosen or would prefer.



If your child likes to be involved in the symbols you could add a done box at the end so they know that they are working through the tasks as they go in the done box.

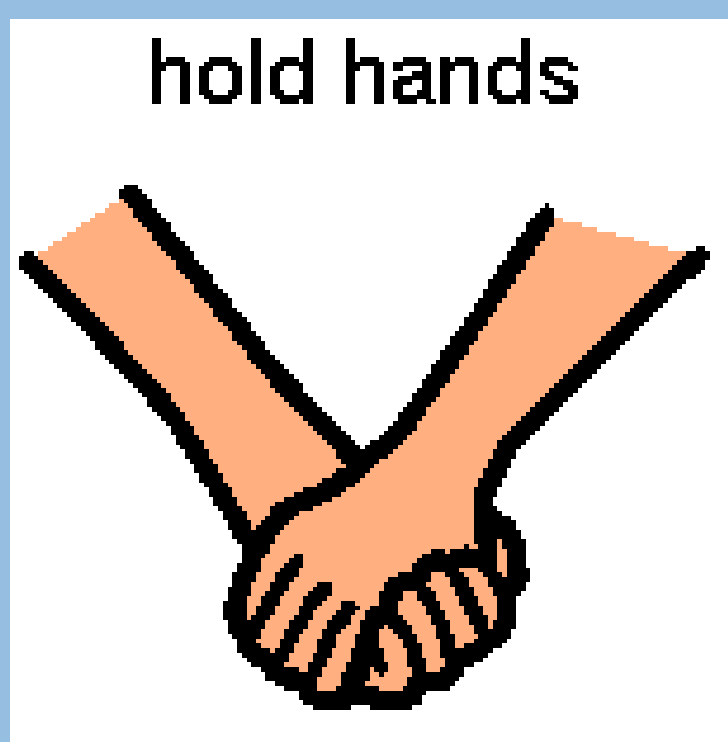
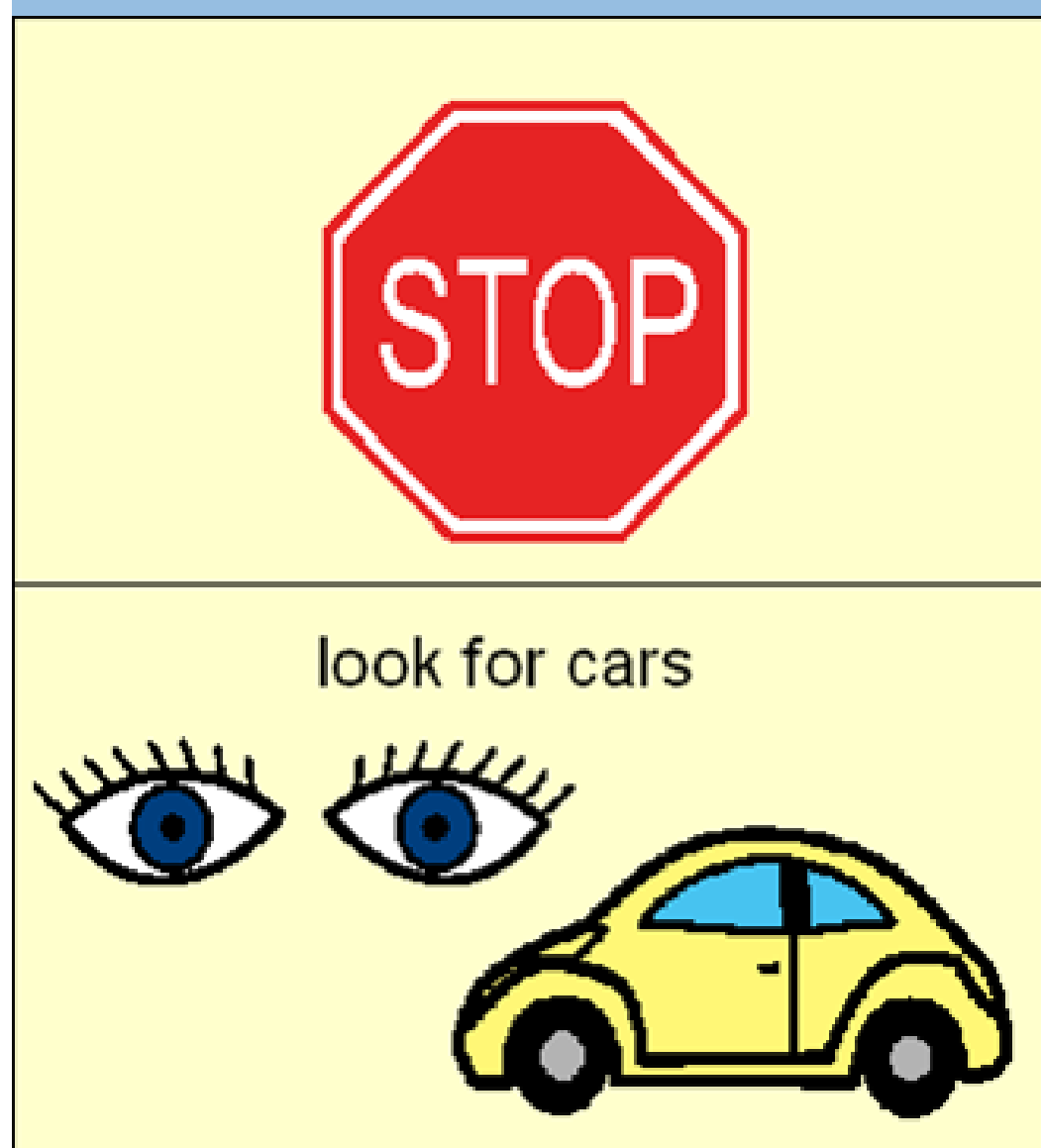


This is a good way to remind children what to do in situations.

For some children, seeing this card before leaving the bathroom is enough to prompt them to do it by themselves.



Carry cards like these when walking outside to reinforce verbal requests to follow rules of safety.



If a child is struggling when an activity is finished, try using a timer so they can see when it is coming to an end.



Timers are also a great resource to use to understand the rules of turn taking.

- "When the timer has finished it is your turn"
- "When the timer has finished it's ...'s turn"



Often the questions we hear children asking over and over are receiving a negative response. Rather than getting caught in the NO game, we recommend using either the universal NO symbol or a big red cross.



These can be placed on cabinets, drawer fronts, desks, etc. which are off limits to children.



They can also be placed on top of pictures to communicate when they cannot have something.

stop



If a child is displaying unwanted behaviours such as climbing, running, throwing etc, try showing a 'stop hand' with a firm gesture.

Some children often don't cope well with different people arriving at the house/EY setting unexpectedly.

You can use a card like this one to prepare the child for change e.g. visitors. This way it isn't a surprise when they show up at the door.



You could also display the pictures of who the child will be coming into, on the setting door or entrance.

Today playing in Teddy Room...



J'nai



Carl

Sharing information with parents



Alfie smiled as he picked up the leaves and threw them in the air. He squeezed a leaf in his hand and held it up to his ear as he crunched it laughing.

Children often forget what they have done in a day. If you send a picture, through media or printed, briefly explaining what the child has done that day, it can start a conversation.

Parents can comment to give the child the words for what they have done. This can also help to make connections between setting and home.

"Alfie you were throwing the leaves today. Let's go and find some leaves in our garden"



- Gestures are associated with descriptive mimes
- Gestures do not cover enough early vocabulary
- Makaton sign programme adds to gestures
- Why not use Makaton to ensure consistency?
- Signing provides an active, functional means of communication that uses children's natural tendencies to use gesture

By 12 months children should have 6 conventional gestures:

- Pushing away
- Raising arms
- Showing
- Reaching
- Waving
- Shaking head for 'no'



- Supplementary gestures are natural gestures that are used alongside a word to convey extra meaning e.g. pointing to a dog and saying “big”
- Research supports the idea that signing supports the development of supplementary gestures
- Supplementary gestures can be used by children before moving on to combining words.
- They need to have the ability to **SEND** a 2 part message before they can **SAY** one.

Why use signs?

- Signing can enable children to become active, independent communicators
- Signing **does not** stop a child from talking
- Early introduction of signing is proactive
- Use of signs, targets multiple learning styles– visual, verbal, auditory and kinaesthetic (touch)



- Makaton is a language programme which uses speech, signs and written symbols to develop communication.
- It is a programme, not a complete language.
- Makaton signs are selected from British Sign Language (BSL)
- Makaton Sign Programme targets key information words
- There is no grammatical content e.g. tenses / word endings e.g. -ing / plurals are indicated by repeating the sign e.g. boys = sign for boy twice.
- Use a 'signing hand' and a 'supporting hand'. (It does not matter if your 'signing hand' is right or left)
- Sign within your 'signing window' i.e. around upper chest area. Be careful signs around your mouth do not cover your facial expressions and lip movements



Do not 'mumble' your signs. Keep them accurate and with firm movements.

A few signs are difficult for children to copy. Some of theirs will be inaccurate, adult signs should not be

Use 'model and expansion' strategies with signs i.e. accept child's attempt, model back the 'target' movement and add another sign e.g. ball, my ball



Remember to **SPEAK** while you are signing

If you think you have signed incorrectly, then you probably have. Refer to the book and try again!

However well the signs are known, their use will only be effective if consideration is given to the child's communication skills:

- level of understanding
- social interaction levels
- motivation to communicate
- attention levels
- opportunities to communicate
- preference to use signs and/or symbols
- the skills of the interactors

Signing - Where should I start?



Choosing the words and sounds that are taught needs careful thought. We must start somewhere..... with a word or a phrase How shall we decide?



- There are signs for the words 'is, a, the'. Do not teach these at first. Concentrate on information words.
- Do not teach 'please' as a first sign. Even though it is in Stage 1.
- You do not need to go through vocabulary stage by stage. Be led by the child's communication needs, language levels and interests/motivators

Select vocabulary that is...

- appropriate to child's understanding
- relevant to their daily experiences i.e home/family, nursery, visits
- The sign for 'more' is often the first or most useful sign to begin with – make sure it does not become over-used!

Remember

- Any communication system we use will only work if **we create opportunities** for the children to use them with us
- Children will only use visual supports if **YOU DO!**
- Communication partners are essential
- The point is we are not keeping children guessing, we are letting them know what to expect in the most accessible way.
- **ALL** children benefit from use of visual supports at any level
- Use of visual supports helps EXPRESSIVE and RECEPTIVE language
- Visual supports should be used as universal approaches as part of quality first teaching.

Gesture information (Hanen)

<https://www.hanen.org/SiteAssets/Articles---Printer-Friendly/Research-in-your-Daily-Work/Printer-Friendly---Closer-Look-at-Gestures.aspx>

Makaton website

<https://www.makaton.org/>

Singing Hands website

<https://singinghands.co.uk/>

Makaton YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCKVXkfPQceP9thH1k8FRZsg>

Singing Hands YouTube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/user/SingingHandsUK>

Something Special on CBeebies

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/shows/something-special>