



Community Children's
Health Partnership



Using visual support

**Top Tips from
Speech & Language Therapy**

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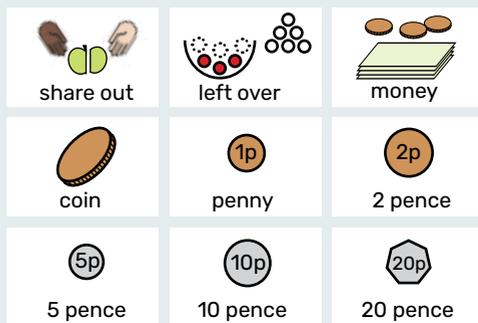
Sirona
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Visual support can be really helpful to support children and young people in lots of different ways, including:

- Understanding of language & memory
- Understanding routines
- Completing tasks
- Communicating ideas, choices & feelings
- Understanding expectations & rules

Ideas to support understanding and memory:

Draw simple line drawings on a whiteboard or paper to help with understanding.



Use symbols to support understanding of spoken and written language. There are several symbol systems available, so you should check if your child's school uses a particular system.



Use graphic organisers and mind maps to help support written work & classroom discussion.

Ideas to support understanding routines

A visual timetable can be used to show what is happening across part of or the whole day. This can be used at home and at school. Each activity (e.g. assembly, playtime, art) has its own picture and word, and colour coding can also be helpful.

Spend time each morning talking about the plans for the day and putting each activity on the timetable. This might be a good time to negotiate and make choices about the day, especially around favourite activities.

My Timetable

	1	2	3	4	5
Monday	10	10	D2	11	24
Tuesday	56	AT3	T1	10	10
Wednesday	11	L3	54	24	Lib
Thursday	54	10	11	10	A6
Friday	11	T2	10	10	T1

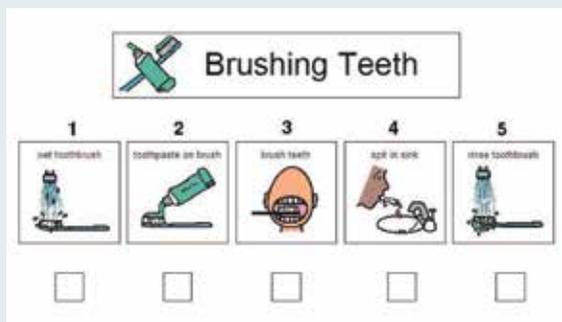
	1	2	3	4	5
Monday	10	11	10	24	52
Tuesday	D3	51	24	EB	10
Wednesday	A6	L3	1:1	11	Lib
Thursday	D3	10	T1	T2	L1
Friday	10	L1	54	D2	T6

Remember to check back on the timetable regularly and remove completed tasks. A 'change' or 'oops' card is useful to indicate a change in plans. It's good to learn things don't always go to plan.

Think about where the timetable is – they can be hard to follow when up on the wall, and are better on a desk or somewhere they can be checked often.

Ideas to support completion of tasks

Visual checklists show the steps involved in completing a certain task. Tick them off or remove pictures when completed:



Use "I am working towards..." boards for completing tasks – the child or young person earns tokens (which could be themed around interests), which lead to a reward.



- Write name
- Listen to story
- Cut out pictures
- Stick in order
- Fill in missing words
- Colour the pictures

Understanding expectations and rules:

Sometimes, it is helpful to break down expectations or rules into a visual list. For example, "good listening" could break down into looking, thinking, sitting, waiting. This helps make it much more obvious to a child or young person what is expected of them.



Give me 5!

1. Eyes looking



2. Ears open



3. Hands in
lap or on table



4. Feet on floor



5. Mouth closed



You could apply this to lots of situations that a child might find difficult e.g. sitting on the carpet, getting in the car, eating dinner, going to assembly.

Communicating ideas, choices and feelings

Visuals can also be helpful to express feelings that are harder to put into words. Visual 'emotion thermometers' or feelings grids can be helpful to link words to feelings.

I feel ...



happy



sad



surprised



excited



worried



frustrated



silly



angry



like crying



Choice boards can be used to talk about and agree a choice of activity, as many children and young people find open questions like "what do you want to do now?" overwhelming.



Visuals can also be really useful when thinking about likes and dislikes, and can be a good starting point to open up the conversation. Starting with a simple picture sorting activity can make a tricky conversation easier.

The evidence based 'Talking Mats' approach uses visuals to support people with communication difficulties make decisions & share their views.

Useful websites and books for more information:

The National Autistic Society information page gives an overview and has links to further resources. <https://www.autism.org.uk/about/strategies/visual-supports.aspx>

The do2learn website (American) has lots of information and free resources to download <https://do2learn.com/>

Twinkl also has a range of resources to download if you create a free account. <https://www.twinkl.co.uk/>

Book: Visual Supports for People With Autism: A Guide for Parents and Professionals (by Marlene Cohen, 2016)

Advice and Support

For further advice and support from a Speech & Language Therapist, please contact us via our Telephone Advice Line 07825 016 335 (Wednesdays 9am-12pm) or by email sirona.slt@nhs.net



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This service is provided by Sirona care & health as part of the Community Children's Health Partnership

Let us know what you think and get involved

T: 0300 124 5300* **E:** sirona.hello@nhs.net

W: www.cchp.nhs.uk

*Calls from landlines are charged up to 10p per minute; calls from mobiles vary, please check with your network provider. This is not a premium-rate number.

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