Visual Supports
Brief Informational Guide

ECHO AUTISM COMMUNITIES
echoautism.org



Visual supports help many autistic children understand what's happening, feel less stressed, and be more independent. When words feel confusing or fast, pictures make things clear.

Scan here for examples of Visual Supports

Why Use Visual Supports?



Visuals can help your child:

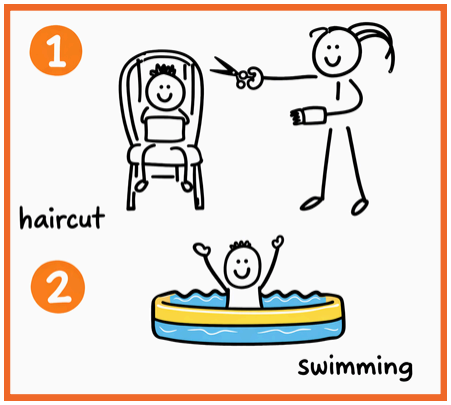
- Know what's happening now and next
- Feel calmer during changes
- Be more independent and confident
- Communicate wants and feelings
- Reduce frustration and challenging behaviors
- Build routines and predictability

When Visual Supports Can Be Helpful



- Morning and bedtime routines
- Transitions (home → car, play → clean up)
- New or stressful situations
- Play and turn-taking
- Eating or trying new foods
- Independence (toileting, dressing)
- Community outings

How Families Can Use Visuals



- Show the visual before giving directions
- Use fewer words and more pictures
- Point to and model using the visual
- Start small—one or two visuals at first
- Let your child hold or point to visuals
- Praise your child ("Great job checking your
- schedule!")
- Update visuals when routines change

Common Types of Visual Supports

Visual Schedules

Show the steps of the day, a routine, or an activity (morning routine, therapy day, bedtime routine, etc.) Can be first->next->last or multi-step schedule.



Social Stories™

Narratives/Social Stories™: Explain situations using simple language and visuals (going to the doctor, sharing toys, riding the bus).



Communication Boards

Provides a set of pictures, symbols, or words that children can point to express their wants, needs, feelings, and ideas to support communication when speaking is difficult or overwhelming.



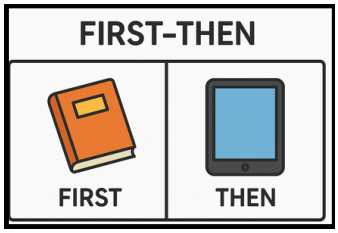
Reward Charts

Build motivation and reinforce positive behaviors and participation. After so many times of showing a desired behavior, a reward follows.



First-Then Boards

Provide clarity: "First ___ (expectation), then ___ (reward/activity)." Helps with transitions and motivation



Choice Boards

Give structured options for snacks, activities, or break choices



Labels

Labels on drawers, doors, toy bins, and classrooms increase independence and organization.



Feelings Boards

Helps children identify and communicate how they feel. When kids identify emotions, they can be taught coping strategies to manage emotions.



Tips and Tricks for Success with Visual Supports:

- Use real pictures (e.g. from your home) when possible
- Start with one to two visuals
- Can make visuals portable-use key rings, lanyards, small binders, or Velcro strips
- Keep it simple (e.g. carry around a small white board to sketch next steps)

If you have questions about Visual Supports, please talk to your healthcare clinician.