

Making a Choice Gives Me a Voice!

Empower Your Learner by Offering Choices

Which outfit to wear, what to have for breakfast, whether to make coffee at home or stop on the way to work... these are just a few of the choices I make every morning before I leave the house. Our lives are filled with choices.

Most of our children however, especially those with the most significant disabilities, have many of their choices made for them. Imagine how frustrating it might be if someone told you what to wear every day, what to eat, and where you can and can't go.

Offering choices is one of the most powerful strategies in our toolbox for both decreasing problem behaviors and creating empowered, active learners at home and school!

Why?

Choices

- Give control to the learner – they're empowering!
- Make the activity more reinforcing to the learner, which makes them more likely to complete it
- Create opportunities for communication
- The ability to make a choice is something everyone needs to learn to be an independent adult

Two Types of Choices

Between Activity Choices

- Choosing **between** activities
 - We can play with sidewalk chalk or on the playground today.
- Choosing the **order** of activities
 - Would you like to do math or reading first?
- Choosing between **reinforcers**
 - Would you like to earn bubbles or a puzzle?

Within Activity Choices

- Would you like to use a pencil or marker?
- Which snack would you like?
- Which book would you like to read?
- Do you want to solve your math problems with blocks or with a number line?
- Do you want to write your answers on paper or a dry erase board?

Making Choices Even More Powerful

Choices are **powerful**, but you can make them even more meaningful for your learner.

- Aim for the "win/win." When you offer a choice, the outcome should be acceptable to both you and your learner.
- Offer a choice of reinforcer – There is very little that is more powerful than getting to choose what you are working for!

Offering Choices for Learners with Significant Needs

Some learners can listen to a choice and communicate their answer, while others need more support.

Object Choices

When possible, you can offer the actual objects your learner is choosing between and let them touch, reach for, or look (eye gaze) toward their choice.

Which color do you want?

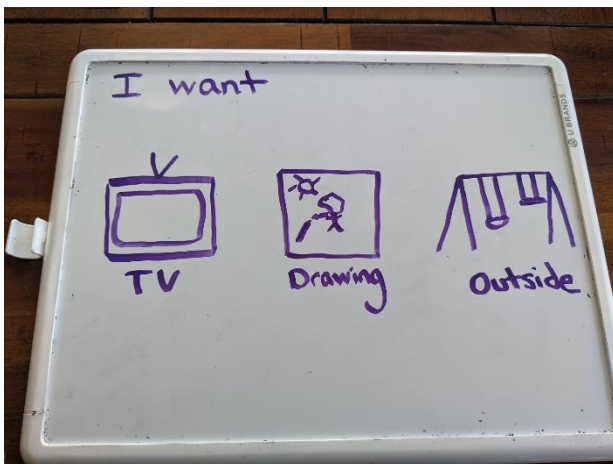
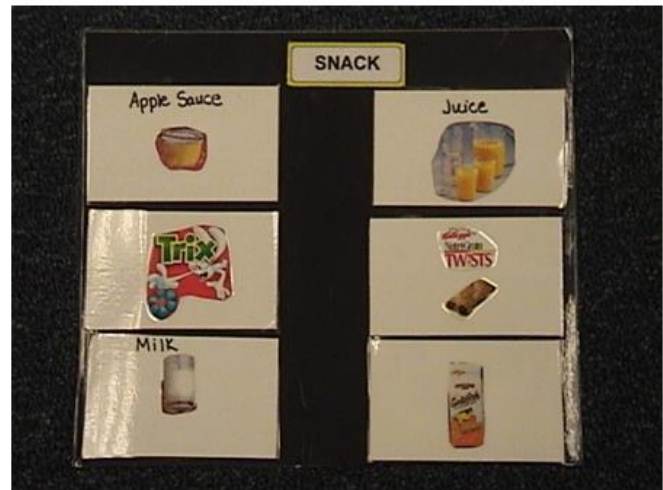


Choice Menus

For choices that are more abstract or that need to be made frequently, you can use a **choice menu**. Choice menus can include pictures, but they can also be offered as written choices for learners who can read the words.

Choice menus don't need to be fancy and don't require any special software or picture symbols.

Google image search and lettering from actual food packages or magazines are a great place to find visuals for choice menus.



Don't have a printer? You can create the menu and let your learner choose right on your computer screen.

If technology isn't an option, hand-drawn illustrations will work for many learners.