

Let's Get Visual!

Supporting Positive Reinforcement Through Visuals

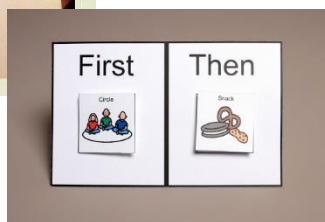
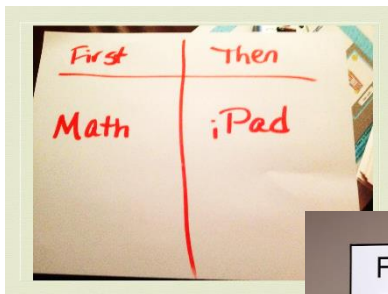
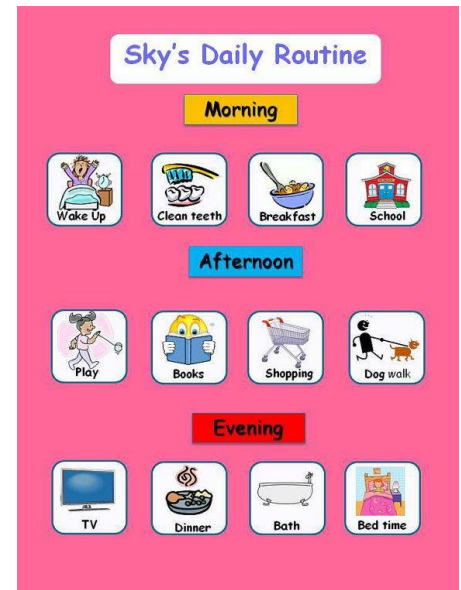
If you've ever created a "to do" list, a grocery list, or used a daily planner or calendar, then you've used visual supports. Most adults rely on a variety of visual supports to help us navigate our environment (signs, maps, labels) and manage our time (schedules, calendars, lists). Our learners are no different. Take a look at these visual supports, and how they can help your learner gain skills and independence.

Schedules

The visual support people are most familiar with is a daily schedule. Schedules help learners organize their day and prepare for what's coming next.

Visual schedules...

- Use words or pictures that are meaningful to and understood by the learner
- Can show a whole day or parts of a day
- Need a plan for showing a change in the schedule
- Can help you avoid power struggles.
 - It's not *my* fault we have to wash hands. It's on the schedule!



First/Then

First/Then prompts and visuals...

- Communicate expectations using clear, concise language
 - *First reading, then outside.*
- Can motivate learners by reminding them what they are working for
- Work best when the "then" is something the learner enjoys

Timers

Visual timers...

- Provide a clear ending time for both activities the learner likes and those they don't like
- Help learners who can't read numerals visualize how much time is left
- Free visual timer apps can be downloaded for most devices
- Check out this free visual timer online - <https://www.online-stopwatch.com/countdown-clock/>



Token Economies

For learners who are working to earn a positive reinforcement that isn't available right now (see our tip sheet on positive reinforcement for more information), token economies provide a visual earning system toward their reward.

Token economies

- Make less-concrete reinforcers (like outside time) more tangible
- Can be helpful in fading immediate or tangible reinforcers
 - Start by pairing a token with the tangible (like a piece of candy or cookie) then slowly eliminate the tangible
- Can be created so that the tokens and system are themselves reinforcing to the learner
 - A favorite character or color
- Work best when the learner is offered a **choice** of reinforcer

What does it look like?

- Usually 3-10 tokens
- Learners can earn tokens on a timed schedule (every so many minutes) or for demonstrating the desired behavior (like staying in their seat or answering a math question)
- Once the learner earns all their tokens, they get their reinforcer
- "Reset" the board and start again!

