



Guides

Caregiver's Guide to Setting Up Visual Supports at Home

SETTING UP VISUAL SUPPORTS AT HOME

Visual supports are a powerful way to help your child learn and grow. When you use pictures or symbols along with spoken words and directions, it can make language easier to understand and reduce frustration. Visual supports also give your child tools to make choices, follow routines, and meet behavior expectations. They work best when you use them consistently at home and your child's providers use them during learning activities.

The resources in this guide are designed just for families. They will help you understand why visual supports are important and how to set them up in your home. You'll find simple steps to prepare and use these tools with your child every day.

If you have questions or need extra help, reach out to your child's early intervention provider. Together, you can make these supports part of your child's daily routine and help them grow and succeed.

GETTING STARTED: MATERIALS YOU'LL NEED

To prepare visual supports for your child, gather these common items:

- Scissors
- Tape or glue
- Dry erase marker
- Hole punch and binder rings (optional)
- Markers
- Sturdy folder or clipboard
- Paper
- Hook and loop fastener (like Velcro)

Note: Some supports may need extra materials, which will be explained in each section.

GENERAL HOME SUPPORTS

Visual Schedule and Pictures for Home

Getting Ready:

1. Print the visual schedule and pictures for home.
2. Cut out the schedule and pictures as needed.
3. Glue or tape the visual schedule pages together to make one big schedule.
4. If possible, laminate them to make them last longer.
5. Attach hook and loop fastener to the blank boxes on the schedule and to the back of each picture.
6. Display the schedule at their eye level in a spot your child can easily see (like the kitchen or play area).
7. Keep the pictures organized and nearby.

How to Use:

1. Each morning, set up your child's schedule by placing the pictures in the order you plan to do activities.
2. When it's time to switch activities, say "check your schedule" or use a timer/song as a signal that it's time to check the schedule.
3. Help your child remove the picture, go to the next activity location, and put the picture in a bowl or container at that location.
4. Start the next activity together.

First-Then Chart and Pictures for Home

Getting Ready (pictures for chart):

1. Print, laminate, and cut out the home activity pictures.
2. Attach hook and loop fastener to the back of each picture and to the chart.
3. Organize the pictures and keep them with the first-then chart.

How to Use:

1. Place a picture of the first activity in the “First” box and the next activity or reward in the “Then” box.
2. Before starting, show your child the chart and say, “First [activity], then [next activity/reward].”
3. Use the chart as needed during the activity.
4. When your child finishes, start the next activity right away.

Early Communication Pictures

Getting Ready:

1. Print and cut out the communication pictures.
2. If possible, laminate them to make them last longer.
3. Organize them in a way that works for you—on a ring, lanyard, or board:
 - **Ring option:** Hole-punch the top left corner of each picture and place a ring through the hole. Carry the pictures on the ring so the pictures are available.
 - **Lanyard option:** Hole-punch the top left corner of each picture, place a ring through the hole and attach it to a lanyard. Wear the lanyard so the pictures are available.
 - **Board option:** Place hook and loop fastener on a board such as a sturdy folder, clipboard, or piece of laminated paper. Attach the prepared early communication pictures. Put the prepared board and communication pictures near your child’s play area so they can easily use them during activities.

How to Use:

1. During routines, encourage your child to use the pictures to say things like “more,” “all done,” or “help.”
2. Show your child how to use the pictures and encourage them to try. Over time, let them use the pictures on their own.

Following Directions at Home Pictures

Getting Ready:

1. Print and cut out the following directions pictures.
2. If possible, laminate them to make them last longer.
3. Hole-punch the top left corner and put them on a ring for easy access.

How to Use:

1. Use these pictures to remind your child what’s expected before starting routines (like “clean up” before tidying toys).
2. Show the picture before the routine and show or tell them what to do next.

Examples:

- Before singing a song to clean up toys, show your child the “clean up” picture, then sing the song.
- Before going for a walk, show your child the “walk with me” picture.

PLAY SUPPORTS

Choice Board and Choice Wheel

Getting Ready:

1. Decide if you want to use a board, a wheel, or both.
2. Print, laminate, and prepare the choice board/wheel and play pictures.
3. Attach hook and loop fastener.
4. Place in the play area.

How to Use:

1. Attach pictures of available toys or activities.
2. Ask your child to choose by removing a picture and communicating their choice.

Visual Request Templates

Getting Ready:

1. Print, laminate, and cut out the visual request templates.
2. Attach hook and loop fastener.
3. Use with the choice board/wheel and the play pictures included in this unit.
4. Keep the templates and choice boards/wheels together in the play area.

How to Use:

1. Put 2–5 play pictures your child can choose from on the choice board/ wheel.
2. Label each picture and ask, “What do you want to play?”
3. Help your child:
 - a. Take the picture they want from the choice board/wheel.
 - b. Put it on the blank space on the template.
 - c. Give the template to you.
 - d. Point to the words “I want” or “More” (depending on the template) and point to their chosen play picture.
4. As your child points, say what they want out loud, like “I want bubbles” or “More cars.”

Play Pictures

Getting Ready:

1. Look through the play pictures and/or take photos of your child’s play choices.
2. Decide if you want to use the pictures provided, your own photos, or a mix of both.
3. Print, laminate, and cut out the pictures you want to use.
4. Attach hook and loop fastener on the back of each picture.
5. Keep the pictures in a container or plastic bag, or on extra choice boards/wheels.

How to Use:

1. Use the play pictures on a choice board/wheel to help your child choose what they want to play with.

Constructive Play Charts

Getting Ready:

1. Look at the constructive play charts provided. Decide if your child will do all the play activities or just a few.
2. Print and laminate the charts you want to use.
3. Gather the toys shown on the charts and put them in a bin.
4. Keep the charts with the matching toys so they're easy to find.

How to Use:

1. Let your child pick a toy.
2. Show your child the steps on the chart. If needed, do the steps together so they can see how to do it.
3. While playing, remind your child to look at the chart for the next step.

SNACK AND MEALTIME ROUTINES

Choice Board and Choice Wheel

Getting Ready:

1. Decide if you want to use a board, wheel, or both.
2. Print, laminate, and prepare the choice board/wheel and play pictures.
3. Attach hook and loop fastener.
4. Place in the play area.

How to Use:

1. Attach pictures of available toys or activities.
2. Ask your child to choose by removing a picture and communicating their choice.

Visual Request Templates

Getting Ready:

1. Print, laminate, and cut out the visual request templates.
2. Attach hook and loop fastener.
3. Use with the choice board/wheel and the play pictures included in this unit.
4. Keep the templates and choice boards/wheels together in the play area.

How to Use:

1. Put 2–5 play pictures your child can choose from on the choice board/wheel.
2. Label each picture and then ask, "What do you want to play?"
3. Help your child:
 - a. Take the picture they want from the choice board/wheel.
 - b. Put it on the blank space on the template.
 - c. Give the template to you.
 - d. Point to the words "I want" or "More" (depending on the template) and then point to their chosen play picture.
4. As your child points, say what they want out loud, like "I want apple," or "More milk."

Snack and Mealtime Pictures

Getting Ready:

1. Look through the snack pictures and mealtime pictures.
2. Decide if you want to use some or all the pictures provided.
3. Print, laminate, and cut out the pictures you want to use.
4. Attach hook and loop fastener on the back of each picture.
5. Keep the pictures in a container or plastic bag, or on extra choice boards/wheels.

How to Use:

1. Use the pictures on a choice board/wheel to help your child choose what they want to eat or drink.

"Trying New Foods" Choice Wheel

Getting Ready:

1. Print, laminate, and cut out the choice wheel.
2. Pick 2–5 new foods for your child to try. Prepare small servings of each.

How to Use:

1. Use the wheel during snack or mealtime to make trying new foods fun:
 - a. Ask your child to choose one food to try first.
 - b. Put a small amount of that food on a plate or in a bowl for your child.
2. Show your child how the wheel works:
 - a. Point to an action on the wheel (like "touch," "smell," or "taste").
 - b. Do that action with your food.
 - c. Show your child how to do all actions on the wheel.
3. Encourage your child to pick an action and imitate your action with their food.
4. If your child isn't ready to interact with the food, calmly show them how to say "No [food/action]," and let them copy you in their own way.
5. Repeat the process with one or two more foods.
6. Keep the choice wheel near where your child normally eats so it's easy to find whenever you introduce new foods.

BATHROOM ROUTINE

Sequence Strip Template

Getting Ready:

1. Look at the bathroom routine pictures provided. Choose the ones that match your child's routine.
2. Print the sequence strip template.

Tip: Add or remove boxes to fit your routine.

3. Glue the strips together, laminate them, and attach hook and loop fastener.
4. Keep the sequence strip template with the routine pictures.

How to Use:

1. Attach the pictures to the strip in the order of your child's bathroom routine.
2. Show your child the strip and encourage them to follow each step.
3. If they need help, point to the step, say "Do this," and show them how.

Bathroom Routine Pictures

Getting Ready:

1. Look through the bathroom routine pictures.
2. Decide if you want to use some or all the pictures provided.
3. Print, laminate, and cut out the pictures you want to use.
4. Attach hook and loop fastener on the back of each picture.
5. Keep the pictures in a container or plastic bag, or on extra choice boards/wheels.

How to Use:

1. Use the pictures on a choice board/wheel to help your child choose what they want to eat or drink.

Bathroom Communication Pictures

1. Look at the bathroom communication pictures and choose the best size for your child and home.
2. Print, laminate, and cut out the communication pictures.
3. Organize them in a way that works for you—on a ring, lanyard, or board.
 - **Ring option:** Hole-punch the top left corner of each picture and place a ring through the hole. Carry the pictures on the ring so the pictures are available.
 - **Lanyard option:** Hole-punch the top left corner of each picture, place a ring through the hole and attach it to a lanyard. Wear the lanyard so the pictures are available.
 - **Board option:** Place hook and loop fastener on a board such as a folder or piece of laminated paper. Put the prepared bathroom communication pictures on the board. Put the prepared board and pictures in the bathroom.

Tip: Attach hook and loop fastener to your child's play area or other important places in your home. Place the "I need to go to the bathroom" card on it so it's easy for your child to find and use.

How to Use:

1. While using the bathroom, encourage your child to use pictures to communicate their needs.
2. Show your child how to use the pictures and encourage them to try. Over time, let them use the pictures on their own.

MORNING AND BEDTIME ROUTINES

Sequence Strip Template

Getting Ready:

1. Look at the getting dressed routine pictures provided. Choose the ones that match your child's routine.
2. Print the sequence strip template.

Tip: Add or remove boxes to fit your routine.

3. Glue the strips together, laminate them, and attach hook and loop fastener.
4. Keep the sequence strip template with the routine pictures.

How to Use:

1. Attach the pictures to the strip in the order of the routine.
2. Show your child the strip and encourage them to follow each step.
3. If they need help, point to the step, say "Do this," and show them how.

Getting Dressed Routine Pictures

Getting Ready:

1. Pick the pictures that match your child's routine for getting dressed.
2. For a changeable strip: Print, laminate, and cut out the pictures, then add Velcro.
For a permanent strip: Glue pictures to the strip and laminate.
3. Display the strip near where your child gets dressed.
4. Store extra pictures in a bag or container.

How to Use:

1. Let your child follow the steps on the strip.
2. If they need help, point to a picture, say "Do this," and show them how.

Brushing Teeth & Bedtime Routine Strips

Getting Ready:

1. Print, laminate, and cut out the strips.
2. Put the brushing teeth strip near the bathroom sink and the bedtime strip in the bedroom.

How to Use:

1. Show your child the strip during the routine and encourage them to follow each step.
2. If your child needs help, point to and model the step.

Morning & Bedtime Mini-Schedules

Getting Ready:

1. Print, laminate, and cut out the mini schedules.
2. Display them in the bedroom or near where the routines happen.

How to Use:

1. Use the schedule as a guide for your child.
2. If your child needs help, point to and model the step.

WASHING HANDS AND BLOWING NOSE ROUTINES

Washing Hands Sequence Strip

Getting Ready:

1. Print, laminate, and cut out the strip.
Tip: Prepare a strip for each sink where your child washes their hands.
2. Display the strip near the sink your child uses.

How to Use:

1. Show your child the strip while washing hands.
2. If your child needs help, point to and model the step.

“Wash Your Hands” Song

Getting Ready:

1. Print and laminate the song.
2. Keep it in the bathroom or near a sink.

How to Use:

1. Sing the song to the tune of “Are You Sleeping?” while washing hands.
2. Do each step as you sing. Sing twice for enough time to wash hands thoroughly.

Blowing Nose Sequence Strip

Getting Ready:

1. Print, laminate, and cut out the strip.
2. Display it near tissue boxes or tape it to the box.

How to Use:

1. Show your child the strip when they need to blow their nose.
2. If your child needs help, point to and model the step.

“Blow Your Nose” Song

Getting Ready:

1. Print and laminate the song.
2. Keep it in the group area or near tissues.

How to Use:

1. Teach the song to the tune of “Are You Sleeping?”
2. Sing and model each step when your child needs to blow their nose.



Tips for Success:

- Start with one routine and add more as your child gets comfortable.
- Keep pictures simple and clear.
- Involve your child in making or choosing pictures.
- Be patient—learning new routines takes time!