Visual Supports

Types of Visual Support
Visual supports are a communication tool that can be used with autistic people. They can be used in most situations, are adaptable, and portable.

Visual supports can help to:

- Provide structure and routine

- Encourage independence

- Build confidence

- Improve understanding

- Avoid frustration and anxiety

- Provide opportunities to interact with others

A wide range of items can be used as visual supports, including:

- Real objects, printed images, or digital tools (smartphones, tablets, computers)

- Tactile symbols (e.g., swimming trunks, packaging, food labels)

- Photographs

- Short videos

- Miniatures of real objects

- Colored pictures

- Plain squares of colored card

- Line drawings

- Symbols

- Written words

Uses of Visual Supports
Visual supports can be used in different ways, such as:

- **Single message**: The person takes a yellow card when they need to go to the toilet or places a purple card on a board when feeling stressed.

- **Daily schedule**: Visual timetables, reward charts, and structured routines help provide predictability.

- **Making choices**: The person selects a visual option, such as placing the trampolining symbol in the "afternoon" slot on the board.

- **Illustrating a story**: Used in social stories and comic strip conversations.

- **Expressing opinions**: Using a thumbs-up/down symbol to indicate enjoyment of an activity.

Examples of Visual Supports

- Choice boards

- Different colored tablecloths (e.g., white for dinner time, blue for coloring time)

- Emotion thermometers

- First-then sequences

- Key phrase symbols (e.g., "I want," "What's that?")

- Labels for objects and storage

- Morning schedules

- Photos and maps for explanations (e.g., "Mom is at work," "My new school is in Glasgow")

- Safety signs

- Visual scripts for social situations

- Task sequence instruction strips (e.g., for using the bathroom)

- Time trackers for transitions between activities

Top Tips for Using Visual Supports

- **Portable**: Use apps, store images on a phone, or carry laminated symbols in a folder.

- **Durable**: Laminate printed materials and back up digital files.

- **Easy to find**: Place symbols in visible locations, attach to objects, or keep them in a designated folder.

- **Personalized**: Adapt to individual preferences (e.g., using a space-themed visual timetable for a child interested in rockets).

- **Consistent**: Use the same type of symbols (e.g., line drawings vs. photographs) across different settings and ensure caregivers use them consistently.