



Help Kids Talk and our partners take a collective approach to encouraging the speech, language and communication of our babies, children and young people. We believe everyone within our communities, organisations and settings can play a valuable role in supporting our children's speech, language and communication development.

We know that making small changes can have a big impact and that the best outcomes are achieved when babies, children and young people spend time in environments where values and priorities are conducive to implementing these changes.



Visual supports are items that we can see to help support children's understanding and spoken communication. They can be objects, gestures, pictures, symbols, signs or written words. We all find visual supports like diagrams, maps and videos often help us understand complicated things. It makes sense therefore, that children who have challenges understanding words or talking will find them especially useful.

How do visual supports help?

- **Visual supports BACK UP what is being said.**
When we only say words they 'disappear' quickly, making it difficult for some children to make sense of what we are saying. Using visual supports, alongside speech, helps the words 'stay longer,' giving the children more time to work out what the words mean, understand what we are asking them to do, think about how they might want to respond and prepare for change.
- **Visual supports can also help children communicate**
Some children point at objects or pictures to make choices, some use gestures or signs, and others chose objects, pictures or symbols to communicate.



What are some different types of visual support and how can I use them to help my child?

- You can show your child **real objects** to help their understanding. You could show them their coat at the same time as saying, "It's time to go out" or their schoolbag when saying "It's time for school."



Will visuals stop my child talking?

Using visual supports does not stop children talking and can actually make communication easier, reducing their frustration!

- **Gestures, actions and body language** give extra visual clues as we demonstrate actions, like eat, drink, hop etc or describing words, like big and small.

- **Signing systems**, such as Makaton, offer visual support to help children understand language and be understood by others.

(Please see our gestures and signs bite size session for much more information and a demonstration of some commonly used Makaton signs.)



A visual timetable or schedule is a series of pictures, symbols or photographs that illustrate a child's routine, helping them anticipate their day and prepare them for change.

Please see the free downloadable visual supports which can be used at home or in educational settings.

1: Visual schedules for home routine:

These can be laminated and 'ticked' by the child when each task is completed.

- **getting ready for the childminder**
- **getting ready for nursery**
- **getting ready for school**
- **coming home from school**
- **getting ready for bed**



2: Visual schedules, for individual children:

These can be laminated and velcro added.

Two blank visual schedules and a non exhaustive set of pictures representing common tasks in school and at home. We have included some blank cards for your schedules, should you wish to use your own pictures. A 'change' card has been included to help a child anticipate a change in their expected routine. **We have also provided pictures to be used in individual schedules to help children prepare for swimming and sports activities.**

- **Photographs, pictures or symbols** can be used to help support communication, alongside speech. You can show your child a photograph, picture or symbol at the same time as speaking e.g. "It's time to go to the toilet" or "It's time for bed."

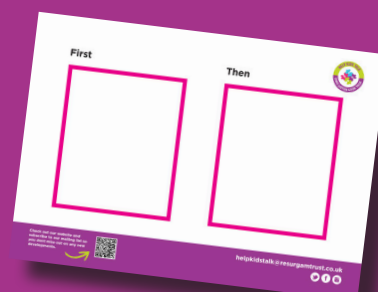


- Photographs, pictures or symbols can also be used on **visual timetables** or schedules for individual children, small groups or whole classes.

3: First/ Then and First/ Next/ Last boards:

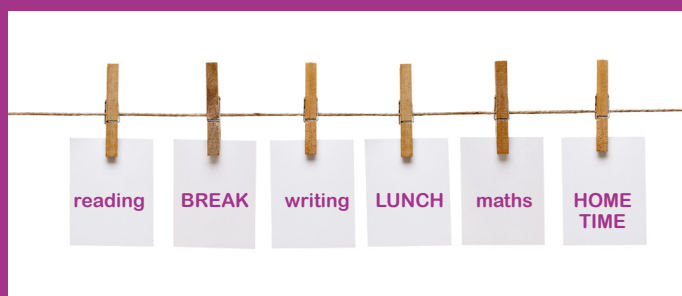
These can be laminated and velcro added.

These simple visual supports help individual children understand what an adult wants them to do. Pictures will support what the child has to do first, then etc.



4: A whole class visual schedule:

This set of pictures can be used as a whole class visual schedule in a pre-school or school setting. It is not exhaustive and can be added to. A CHANGE card has been included to help children anticipate a change in the expected routine of the class.



5: Count Down Cards

Show the child the count-down cards from numbers 5 to 1, to help them prepare for the end of an activity.

Check out our website and subscribe to our mailing list so you don't miss out on any new developments.



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