

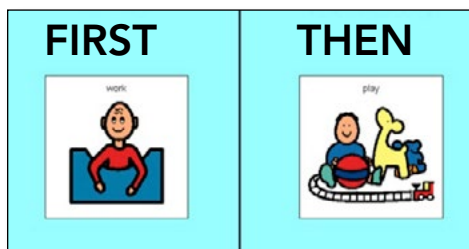
# Using Visual Aids

## Center for Autism and Related Disorders

Visual aids can help a child understand what is said to or expected of him or her. They also help to facilitate expressive language development and usage. This handout outlines different types of visual aids and provides ideas for incorporating them into everyday life.

### First-Then Boards

One type of visual aid is a “first-then” board (shown below). This is a simple visual aid that helps a child understand the sequence of two events. A first-then board can be helpful when a nonpreferred activity precedes a preferred activity. Activities can



be changed for specific needs across the day. The example above may be helpful in therapeutic or classroom

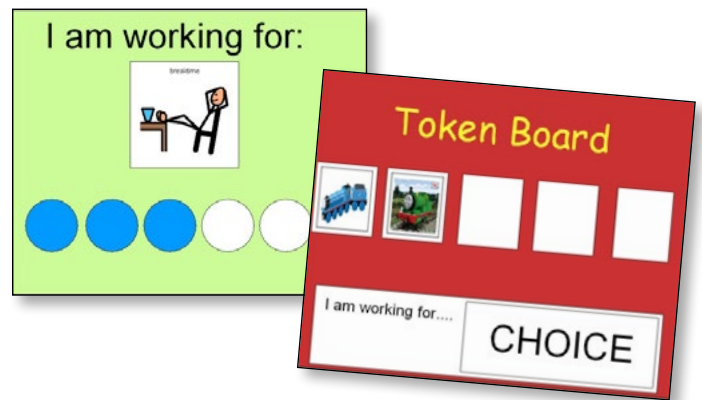
settings. At home, a first-then board may indicate that the child must first complete homework, then he can have TV time; or first a bath, then a book. This type of visual aid can be any size, shape or color. The pictures can be line drawings or photographs. If the child is able to read, use written words rather than pictures or drawings.

### Token Boards

A “token board” is an easy way to reward a child for good behavior and encourage cooperation during daily activities.

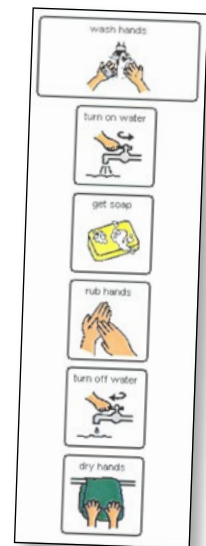
The idea is simple. A child earns tokens—such as a sticker, star or small coin—for demonstrating a specific behavior. Once a child receives a set number of tokens, she earns something she likes.

For example, while doing math homework, a child might earn one token for every two problems completed. Once he receives five tokens, he earns a two-minute break. Token boards can be adapted to fit each child’s individual needs. Here are some examples:



### Sequence Boards

Sequence boards can be used for tasks that require a specific order of events. They provide visual support for language and understanding, and they help children become independent in completing these tasks. Some examples include using the bathroom, brushing teeth, preparing a bowl of cereal and making a bed. The example on the right shows a sequence board for washing hands.

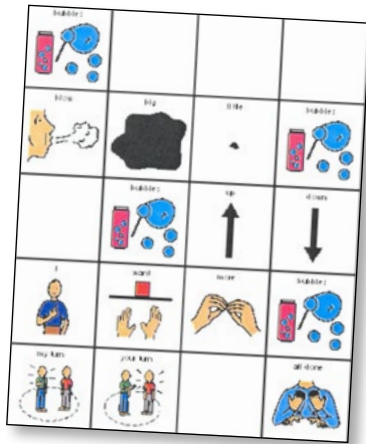


We are all born with great potential.  
Shouldn't we all have the chance to achieve it?

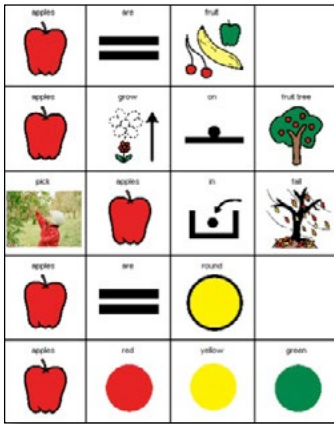


## Topic Boards

A topic board provides information about an activity. It can include a sequence of events, a dialogue or simple concepts. Topic boards are used to facilitate understanding and expressive communication. The example to the right is a topic board for an activity involving bubbles.



Topic boards can be about anything, including play activities, games and daily routines. Some examples of ways to use



topic boards are getting dressed, homework time, mealtimes and getting a haircut. They can also help teach a child about a new concept, such as a holiday and the associated objects and events. To the left is an example of a topic board used in a preschool classroom to support a lesson about apples.

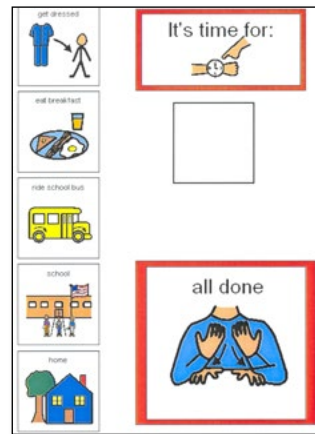
To the right is a topic board that outlines a visit to CARD for an evaluation and provides information about the sequence of events. This type of visual aide can help a child understand a change to her daily routine and alleviate some anxiety.



## Visual Schedules

Visual schedules can help increase predictability and provide visual support for language. A visual schedule also helps a child

understand what is expected of him throughout the day. These schedules are made with picture symbols that the child can manipulate when activities start and end.



The example to the left shows a schedule outlining a child's day. Visual schedules can also be modified to show specific activities and events. You can use more or fewer pictures as needed.

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