



## Visual Tools

Improving communication at home

### Other ideas for home

- Buy a camera.
- Take pictures of grandparents, neighbours and friends who are regularly in your life.
- Use pictures when you talk about what is going to happen. For example use the picture of grandma and grandpa to tell your child they are coming to dinner tonight. Hang the picture on the fridge and refer to it throughout the day in preparation.
- Make photo books with your child of things they have done or outings they have been on.
- Make a collection of visuals tools to prepare your child for when you are going out. Include:
  - places you are going
  - choices to make
  - rules to follow
  - things to help changes or transitions.
- Buy a little pocket size photo album to fit into your purse or pocket when away from home.
- Use business card holders with pictures and word cues as conversation starters.
- Find things in your home that can be used to support communication (e.g. clocks, TV guides, calendars and labels on packages).
- Create a family information centre.
- Use a calendar on a white board.

### For success at home, remember that:

- Visual tools used at home and at school may be different
- Visual tools are not a 'cure', but an aid to meet your own and your child's needs
- Developing visual communication tools and learning to use them has to be an ongoing process
- Many routines and interactions at home may already work well and don't need to be changed.

### Communication Support Service

Special Education Resource Unit  
 72A Marlborough Street  
 Henley Beach SA 5022

Telephone: 8235 2871  
 TTY: 8235 0465  
 Facsimile: 8235 1907

Email: [admin@seru.sa.edu.au](mailto:admin@seru.sa.edu.au)  
 Website: <http://web.seru.sa.edu.au>

(Click: Specialised Services/  
 Communication Support Service)



Information for families





## Communication

Good communication skills are essential for your child to:

- interact with others
- learn skills for success at school (especially literacy skills)
- manage their daily lives.

## Visual tools help communication

A visual tool is something your child can see, which helps in communication.

For example, family photos are visual tools. They can help you and your child talk about a particular person.

Visual messages (that you see) are easier to understand than auditory messages (that you hear). This is because you usually look at a picture for longer than you listen to spoken words. Also, a picture can give more information.

Visual tools help your child communicate with the world around them.

## For visual tools you can use:

- real objects and small toys
- photographs
- pictures
  - clip art
  - Compic or Boardmaker
  - catalogues, magazines
- drawings
- words
- words and pictures.

## Improving communication at home

You can use visual tools at home to help your child to:

- communicate information
- provide structure and organisation
- manage their own behaviour
- help your child function as a more independent person.

REMEMBER: Visual aids can help communication for the whole family, not just the child with special needs. They can make family life more enjoyable for everyone.

## Starting to collect and organise visual tools

- Start with ONE thing. One picture, photo, label or sign is all you need to begin.
- It is important to collect and use your visual tools gradually so you can see what works best with your child.
- Have your child take part as much as possible in making and using the visual tools.
- Help your child organise their space. Use boxes and holders to sort, organise and categorise. Label spaces and drawers.
- Keep visual tools in the location where you need them. Tools that you will use in the bedroom or bathroom can be kept in those rooms.

## Using visual tools

Follow each of these steps to teach your child to use the tools:

- get down to your child's level
- show the tool
- gesture to focus attention
- wait until your child is looking at the tool
- say the words (use the same words whenever using the tool)
- guide your child to perform the task or behaviour required
- encourage your child to talk through what they are doing, while they are doing it
- use the tool frequently.