# Visual Supports

**Most people use visual supports frequently throughout everyday life. For example, traffic lights tell us when to stop and go, or a diary to help plan our week and remind us of tasks.**

KU Children's Services
Since 1895

We all use different sorts of visual supports to improve our understanding of the world around us, to help organise information and express ourselves.

Children also benefit from information that they can SEE as it can enhance and support the communication process.

## What are visual supports?

Visual supports are tools that are used to increase our understanding of language, the environment, and expectations and to provide structure and support.
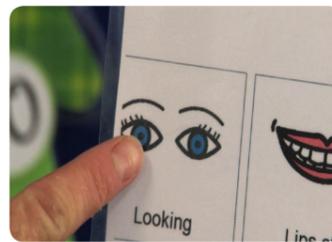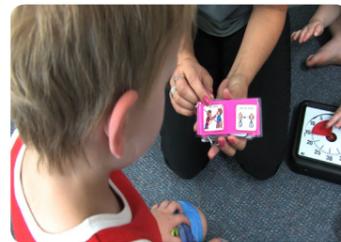
## Types of visual supports

### Non-verbal communication:
Pictures, photos, objects, board maker, real objects.

### Social supports:

#### Rule boards
Rule boards tell children what not to do, highlighted with a cross through it, and then show them what they should do, e.g. 'no hitting, hands down'.

#### Warning cards:
**Stop** – let children know limitations, for example, boundaries they are not allowed to go to.

**Wait** – support the 'impatient' child. Educators can give a child a wait sign to hold while they wait, so they have something to do.

**Go** – indicates to children when they can move or proceed.

#### Routine visuals or self-help boards
These visuals show the important steps to completing an activity, e.g. washing hands or getting dressed. These boards also help increase your child's independence.

### Daily Sequence Boards/Daily Timetable
These will help your child to see all the activities to be done each day and where the breaks are. It is also important to highlight changes in the day. For example if it rains, place a red cross on outdoor play and an arrow to show a replacement activity.

### Common Supports:

#### A two-step board or a transition board
Example: "do this first and this next". Preferably with the later item the preferred item (this motivates the child to complete the less preferred activity). This is why we sometimes call the board a 'consequence' board or a 'make a deal' board. You do the thing I want, and then you can do the thing you want.
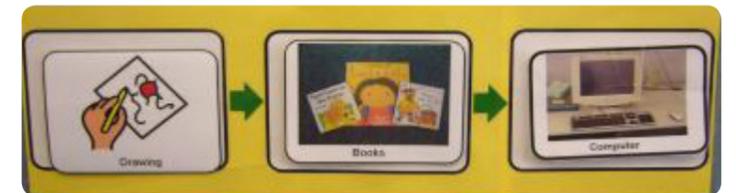
#### A transition board
Example: "this is what you are doing now and this is what you are going to do next". E.g. to help with packing up or moving on to another task, such as meal time.

#### A three-step sequence board
To show children what is going to happen.

### Individual Supports:

#### Emotional/behavioural regulators
The aim of the visuals is to assist the child to understand their emotional state which is preventing them from playing or engaging in daily activities and then making appropriate choices for calming. The long term aim is that the child will be able to recognise their emotions and calm themselves.

### Tips on using visual supports:
- Introduce one type of visual at a time.
- Always verbally label visuals and try to use the same word/s so that children can become familiar with that word/s and what it means.
- Add written labels; this is useful for pre-literacy skills.
- Display using velcro, lanyards.
- Put visuals in a place where they will be used – at eye level, indoors and outdoors.
- Draw children's attention to the visual supports and teach children to use them by pointing, showing and discussing.

### Useful Resources:
- www.images.google.com
- Boardmaker
- Pics for PECS: www.pecsaustralia.com
- Using Visuals to Support Children's Learning DVD
- Getting started Using Visual Systems to promote Communication, by Dolly Bhargova

**For more information please contact your Inclusion Agency.**