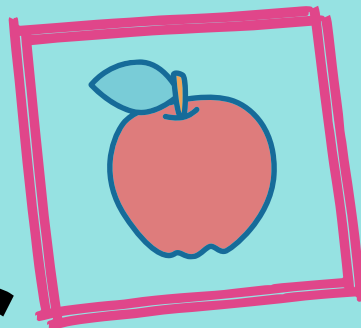# VISUAL STRATEGIES

Visuals are a big part of most of our lives - from grocery lists to road signs to calendars to the lines in a parking lot. Teaching children/youth how to use visuals can help them be more successful at school, home or in the community too.

WHAT ARE THEY?

- Visual or written schedules
- First/then boards
- Checklists
- Timers
- Lines on the floor
- Agendas/calendars
- Social scripts
- Choice boards
- Videos
- And more!

WHY DO WE USE THEM?

- Increase predictability
- Support verbal instructions
- Create boundaries
- Increase independence
- To support transitions or changes in routine
- Allow more time for processing
- Help reduce anxious feelings
- They are permanent - the words we say disappear; visuals are concrete

WHO CAN USE THEM?

Anyone! That's the best part! Some children and youth need visuals to help support their daily activities and routines, but all children and youth can benefit from them. Having visuals at home, school or in the community can help everyone!
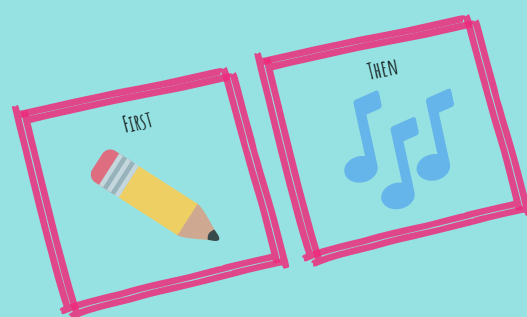
HOW DO WE USE THEM?

Visuals are diverse and can be created for any reason. Visuals work best when they are used proactively so start small and add more as you go. It's important to spend some time teaching your child/youth how to use visuals - model, model, model! You can start by establishing a consistent routine and use visuals to support this routine. Encourage your child/youth to refer back to the visuals so they learn that these are an effective tool. The goal is for your child/youth to refer to visuals as independently as possible. Building in choice with visuals can also help your child/youth feel they have a sense of control. Most importantly, only use what you and your child can manage.

HOW DO WE MAKE THEM?

Visuals don't need to be fancy! You can start by giving a choice of two real objects. You can take pictures, use tape to create a boundary on the floor, write a story, print images from the Internet, draw pictures, write a list, etc. Try to keep them simple and clear.

WHAT ARE SOME OTHER WAYS TO USE THEM?

Visuals can be used to:

- Outline rules and expectations
- Create a designated space to sit/stand
- Prepare for an upcoming outing or experience
- Breakdown steps of a routine like getting dressed
- Create a checklist of chores or tasks to complete
- Show how long an activity will last using a timer
- Support teaching about feelings and emotions
- Label bins to show where toys belong
- Decrease adult instructions - visuals tell them what to do instead
- To countdown to a transition using a timer
- Provide choices and structure
- And so much more!