

## Topic Summary:

Visual supports are designed for students with strengths in visual learning. Individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) tend to have strength in visual learning. To play on this strength, professionals and parents have developed visual supports for individuals with ASD. Put simply, visual supports make auditory information visual; they organize a sequence of events, enhancing the individual's ability to understand, anticipate, and participate in those events. Visual supports supplement verbal instruction, clarifying the information for the individual and increasing comprehension. They can be used to **cue** communication, providing reminders of what to do and say in a situation. When individuals with ASD are given the opportunity to learn with visual supports or cues they:

-Complete more tasks by themselves therefore increasing their independence; - Learn more rapidly; -Demonstrate decreased levels of frustration, anxiety, and aggression related to task completion; -Adjust more readily to changes in their environments.

Are there things that you hear yourself saying over and over, or questions that you hear the individual with ASD asking over and over? Visual supports provide a way to problem solve these issues and prevent communication and performance breakdowns.

**When we present information verbally, the words are available for a brief moment but when we present information visually it can be there for as long as the individual needs it.**

## Implementation Checklist:

1. Identify **WHAT** information should be presented visually.
2. Assess the learner's skills to ensure that the appropriate visual support is developed (objects, photographs, drawings, words, etc.).
3. Teach the learner how to use the visual support, fading prompts as quick as possible. Remember to take data and assess.

## Recommended Resources:

1. Autism Internet Module on Visual Supports; [www.autisminternetmodules.org](http://www.autisminternetmodules.org)
2. Linda Hodgdon – Book and Website; Hodgdon, L. (2000). *Visual Supports for Improving Communication*. QuirkRoberts: Troy, Michigan  
[www.usevisualstrategies.com](http://www.usevisualstrategies.com)
3. Autism Speaks Website, 4 page handout on Visual Supports; [http://www.autismspeaks.org/docs/sciencedocs/atn/visual\\_supports.pdf](http://www.autismspeaks.org/docs/sciencedocs/atn/visual_supports.pdf) and <http://www.autismspeaks.org/about-us/press-releases/autism-speaks-launches-visual-supports-tool-kit>
4. Cohen, M., Sloan, D. (2007). *Topics in Autism – Visual Supports for People with Autism. A Guide for Parents and Professionals*. Woodbine House: Bethesda, MD.
5. National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders: <http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/content/visual-supports>

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