

5 Ways to Give Information with Visual Tools

Linda Hodgdon M.Ed., CCC-SLP
Speech Pathologist, Consultant for Autism and Related Disabilities
www.LindaHodgdon.com

Life is full of questions. Who is coming? What is happening? Why is the schedule changing? What am I supposed to do? Where are we going? When are we leaving? How do I know what my choices are? When students don't know the answers, life becomes frustrating and confusing to them.

Giving children information helps them handle changes and transitions successfully. When children understand the answers to all those questions, they are more able to participate successfully in home and school activities. Children with communication challenges cannot easily figure out what is happening in life. Anxiety, frustration and behavior difficulties begin to appear when they are confused. Using visual strategies to give students information makes a difference. Once students understand the answers to those questions, they are ready to join in. Visual tools create simple solutions for many communication and behavior challenges.

Visual tools are things you see: Pictures, signs, logos, objects, written messages, story books and more. Putting information in a visual form helps students understand better.

Here are some ways to use visual tools to give students information.

1. Assist students in handling change - Prepare for something that is going to change. Preparing students when something will be different from what they normally expect can prevent lots of problems.

2. Explain social situations - The social world can be confusing. People are moving, changing & unpredictable. Giving social information by writing it down helps students understand.

3. Give choices - How do students know what the options are? What is available? What is not available? Do they only get one choice, or can they choose two?

4. Manage time - How long is 5 minutes or one hour? How much time is there before a transition in the schedule? Time is invisible. Timers and clocks turn time into something students can see.

5. Communicate rules - People presume students know the rules. That is often not true. Perhaps they don't remember. Or they don't understand. Or they get too impulsive. Making rules visual helps students follow them.

Giving information to students in a concrete visual form helps them handle the many happenings during a day that can cause confusion or frustration. It gives them the structure necessary to better handle situations that are difficult for them.

Linda Hodgdon, M.ED., CCC-SLP is the author of the best-seller, *Visual Strategies for Improving Communication*. She is featured in the award winning Visual Strategies Workshop-Video Program. To learn more or to sign up for her FREE E-newsletter, visit www.UseVisualStrategies.com

We are going to Grandma and Grandpa's for dinner.



P.O. Box 71, Troy, MI 48099-0071
Phone: 248-879-2598 Fax: 248-879-2599
Email: linda@lindahodgdon.com