

# Top Tips

## Using Visual Support Strategies at home

Visual support strategies can help children with a range of communication difficulties and also children who have English as an additional language.

Visual support strategies are cues used to help children understand what is happening and to anticipate what will happen next.

Strategies can range from real life objects (**Objects of reference**) to **photographs** and **symbols** such as Widgit/Boardmaker etc.

Whichever visual support is being used, the process of its introduction remains the same and your child will need to understand its relevance before being expected to follow its purpose.

Try not to introduce too many 'visuals' at once, maybe introduce 5 at a time. You can add to these gradually as your child's skills increase. Try to focus on activities/routines which are motivating to your child e.g. bath time, park, favourite toy, dinnertime etc.

The decided 'visual' (*object/photograph/symbol*) will need showing to your child each time they play with the specific toy/activity or when the routine event such as bath time occurs. This will help them to recognise the relevance of the 'visual'.

Bath time example:

- Move to show your child the visual cue for 'bath time' e.g. an object of reference may be a toy duck.
- Show them the duck and state, "Bath time".
- Offer a guiding arm around their waist to support them into the bathroom. Try to encourage your child to carry the 'duck' to the bathroom, however don't worry if they don't want to hold it, just keep showing it to them.
- Whilst moving to the area, verbally reinforce "bath time".
- Once in the bath continue to refer back to the 'duck' and repeat "bath time".

- As your child becomes familiar with the relevance of the 'visual' (object, photograph, symbol) they will begin to need less physical support to act when shown them.
- Remember, progress may be slow. Look out for subtle signs that they are beginning to understand the relevance of the 'visual'.
  - ☐ they need less physical guidance
  - ☐ when shown the 'visual' they pause in what they are doing
  - ☐ they may look to where the activity/event usually happens.

Once the relevance of a 'visual' is established, short sequences can be introduced e.g. Now bath Next bed.