

Visual Support (VS)

Brief Introduction

Children with ASD often have superior visual-spatial skills and poor auditory memory skills. Visual supports (VS) provide concrete supports utilizing the strength in visual processing (Rollins, 2014).

Description

Visual supports (VS) are concrete cues that provide information about an activity, routine, or expectation; they may also support skill demonstration. Visual supports can provide assistance across activities and settings, and can take on a number of forms and functions. These include but are not limited to: photographs, icons, drawings, written words, objects, environmental arrangement, schedules, graphic organizers, organizational systems, and scripts. Visual supports are commonly used to: 1) organize learning environments; 2) establish expectations around activities, routines, or behaviors (e.g., visual schedules, visual instructions, structured work systems, scripts, power cards); 3) provide cues or reminders (e.g., conversation and initiation cues, choice making supports, visual timers, finished box); and 4) provide preparation or instruction (e.g., video priming, video feedback).

Visual supports meet evidence-based criteria with 18 single case design studies. According to the evidence-based studies, this intervention has been effective for toddlers (0–2 years) to young adults (19–22 years) with ASD. Visual supports can be used effectively to address social, communication, behavior, play, cognitive, school-readiness, academic, motor, and adaptive skills.

Brief Adapted from

Hume, K. (2013). *Visual supports (VS) fact sheet*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, The National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Matrix of VS by Outcome and Age (years)

Social			Communication			Behavior			Joint Attention			Play			Cognitive			School Readiness			Academic			Motor			Adaptive			Vocational			Mental Health		
0-5	6-14	15-22	0-5	6-14	15-22	0-5	6-14	15-22	0-5	6-14	15-22	0-5	6-14	15-22	0-5	6-14	15-22	0-5	6-14	15-22	0-5	6-14	15-22	0-5	6-14	15-22	0-5	6-14	15-22	0-5	6-14	15-22	0-5	6-14	15-22

Research Summary: Visual Support (VS)

Ages	Skills/Intervention Goals	Settings	Outcome
0–22 years	Social, communication, behavior, play, cognitive, school readiness, academic, motor, adaptive	Home, school, community	EBP

*The information found in the Research Summary table is updated yearly following a literature review of new research and this age range reflects information from this review.

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Research

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Steps for Implementation

Step 1. Identifying the Target of Instruction

- A. Refer to IEP or IFSP to identify the learner's goals.
- B. Discuss goals with IFSP/IEP team members, including family and learner.
- C. Select and operationalize an observable and measurable goal as a target of instruction.

Step 2. Collecting Baseline Data

- A. Collect baseline data appropriate for the targeted skill.
- B. Collect data on at least three occasions to establish an accurate baseline for the targeted skill.

Step 3. Identifying and Selecting Visual System based on Learner's Needs

- A. Identify support personnel in the school/program building.
- B. Identify available symbol systems.
- C. Ask learners and their families about preferred symbol systems.

Step 4. Teaching How to Use Visual Supports to Others Who Support the Learner

- A. Introduce the visual system to those who work with the learner at school and at home.

Step 5. Introducing the Learner to Visual System

- A. Explain or model for the learner how the system will work.
- B. Give the learner time to interact with the system while providing cues, feedback, and assistance.

Step 6. Providing Learner with Multiple Opportunities to Use the Visual System

- A. Identify other opportunities at school and at home for the learner to use the visual system.

Step 7 Collecting Data on Acquisition of Target Skill

- A. Collect data on the target skill in a format similar to baseline data collection.
- B. Use these data to make instructional decisions regarding the targeted skill or behavior.