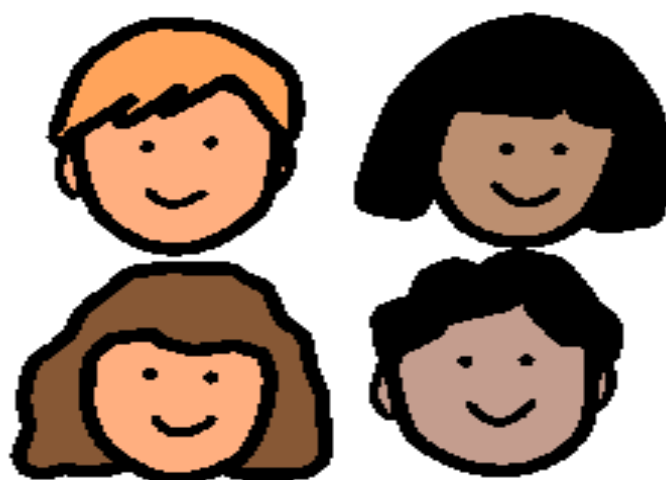


**Early Years  
Speech and Language Therapy (SLT)  
(for 0-5 year olds)**



Supporting social communication skills in  
the nursery setting  
(Language Partner level)

## The Pack

This nursery programme pack has been designed by Speech and Language Therapists and is based on the most up-to-date research on communication development in the early years.

## How-to-use this pack

1. Take a look at the **top tip**
2. Each top tip has an **activity** idea you could try
3. Think about how you can use the top tip in other **daily routines** (e.g. snack time, small group time, outside play) to increase the opportunities for the child to learn throughout their day
4. If the child isn't responding in the way you expect or the activity isn't working; move on to another activity, and come back to it.
- 5... and finally keep it **fun** and keep it **going!**

## Tip 1: Provide regular opportunities for turn taking games

**Why?** To support peer interactions within a familiar game or structured activity

To encourage back and forth interactions with adults and peers

To develop awareness of others

### Activity 1



**Name of activity:** Bricks in a tube

**You will need:** A long cardboard tube (from wrapping paper or kitchen towel)  
Approximately 10 small bricks that fit inside the tube

**What to do:**

- First try the activity with the child and adult, then progress to introducing other children.
- Put the bricks into a small bag or box. As the adult, hold the cardboard tube steady on the floor or table with one hand.
- Use the green 'my turn' visual cue card (in the resources section at the back of this pack) to indicate whose turn it is to put a brick into the tube. Place the cue card in front of the person whose turn it is.
- Take it in turns to put one brick into the tube (the bricks will stack on top of each other in the tube) – when they are all in the tube, you can gently lift up the tube to reveal a tower.
- Use the phrases and corresponding Makaton signs or gestures for 'my turn', 'X's turn', 'waiting' as appropriate to support the child to wait for their turn.
- With time, the aim is for the child to ask for a turn using words and/or by giving you the picture symbol.

**You could also try this tip with:** taking turns to:

- Put cars down a car runner
- Operate a toy, such as a Jack in the box, Pop up Frog
- Catch a fish in a fishing game
- Posting pictures into a post box
- Throwing bean bags into a hoop

**! Remember** to include the child's interests, for example if the child loves Pepper Pig, you could take turns posting pictures of Pepper into a box.

## Tip 2: Support the child to give and follow simple instructions

**Why?** To support understanding that communication influences what others do

To develop the ability to follow somebody else's agenda/ideas

To develop understanding and use of vocabulary

Practise listening skills

### Activity 2

**Name of activity:** Musical Instruments

**You will need:** A selection of musical instruments  
Go/stop visual cue cards (see resources section)

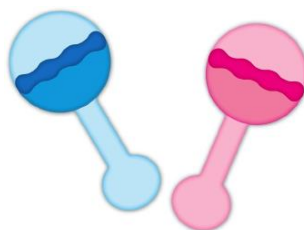
**What to do:**

- First try the activity with the child and adult, then progress to introducing other children, as a paired activity, then small group activity.
- First practise stop/go games with the instruments – ensuring the child understands the instructions 'stop' and 'go' – you can use visual cue cards to support understanding.
- Then the child can take a turn to give the instructions.
- Some children get confused by the visual cue cards, and hold them up to face them-selves rather than showing their friends. Some children may respond to adult prompting to turn the card around – other children may find it easier to just give verbal instructions.

**Extra challenge:** You could move on to giving/receiving instructions about playing the instruments 'loud or quiet.'

**You could also try:**

- Go/stop instructions with pushing cars
- Go/stop instructions with jumping
- Giving/receiving instructions with bubble blowing – giving the instruction to blow the bubbles 'high or low'



### Tip 3: Support the child to use different people's names

#### Why?

- Children with social communication difficulties might leave out the 'subject' (person) in their sentence
- To verbally direct communication to a particular person
- To develop relationships with others



### Activity 3: **Name of Activity:** The hat game

**You will need:** The visual resources for the hat game (see resources section)  
– including photos of the people who will be playing the game (including the adult leading the activity).  
A selection of hats/glasses that match the visual resources

#### What to do:

- The adult leading the activity demonstrates how to use the visual sentence strip by choosing one of the hat symbols (from **the 'what?'** choosing board) to place on the green square on the sentence strip. Then place the photo of the child you are working with on the **orange** square, so it reads '**X wear the cap**', or '**X wear the sun glasses**'.
- Encourage the child to follow the instruction; helping them to select the corresponding hat to wear.
- Then the child can have a turn making the sentence strip. To help the child focus on the 'person' – the adult leading the activity can pre-load the sentence strip with a hat visual in place on the green square. So the child only needs to choose 'the person' photo from the **'who?'** board, for the **orange** square.
- Encourage the child to 'read' the sentence strip, either by pointing to each symbol and/or by saying the words aloud.
- This activity works well within a small group – so the child can choose a friend's photo, and that friend needs to follow the instruction regarding which hat to wear.
- Some children with social communication difficulties will find it difficult to follow an instruction given to them - instead wanting to choose their own hat to put on. Try and encourage them to follow the sentence strip, as this is an important skill to learn too!

#### You could also try:

- **Use a photo choosing board, with photos of the child's friends** – during turn taking games, the child can choose who will have a turn next using the choosing board. Or they can choose who they want to play with at a particular activity.
- **Use Hello/goodbye songs** – during circle time, use hello songs that incorporate individual children's names. You could use a cardboard window that the children pass around the circle to highlight 'who' you are singing Hello to.

### Tip 4: Develop the ability to use names and action words together, for example 'Mary jump', 'Miss Jackson open'

**Why?**

- Developing a foundation for sentence building
- Extending understanding that communication influences people's actions



### Activity 4:

#### **Name of Activity:** Open the Pot

**You will need:**

- A see-through container (that the child can't open)
- A highly motivating toy (depending on child's preference)
- Photo of adult working with the child

#### **What to do:**

- Place an object that the child really likes (for example 'car' for car runner) inside the see through container and secure the lid.
- Stick a photo of the adult working with the child on the lid
- Leave the container close to the child and move away (but so the child can still see you).
- When the child brings over the container for you to open, model the phrase "[adult's name] open" for example "Jill open".
- The photo of the adult is there to prompt the child to use the adult's name.

#### **You could also try:**

- **Action Games using visual sentence strips (like the hat game activity)** aiming for the child to form 2 word phrases with a 'person + an object' to give instructions and to follow instructions from others. This idea can be adapted for a wide range of activities for example:
  - o Playdough (rolling, cutting, squashing)
  - o Playing with a ball (kick, throw, catch, roll, bounce)
  - o Playing with water (pour, splash)
  - o Pretend play picnic: (teddy/dolly/child/teacher – eat/drink/cut/mix)

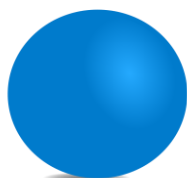
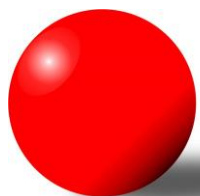
#### **Commenting**

- During supported play activities, use 2 word phrases to comment on what the other children are doing, for example at a playdough activity: 'Louis' cutting', 'Mary's rolling'. You can support these comments with visuals if available and or gestures/Makaton signs alongside the spoken action word.

### Tip 5: Develop vocabulary and extend requesting skills

**Why?** To extend ability to make specific requests, for example using two word phrases (attribute + object) – 'big ball', 'red car'.

### Activity 5: Rolling balls down a tube/ramp



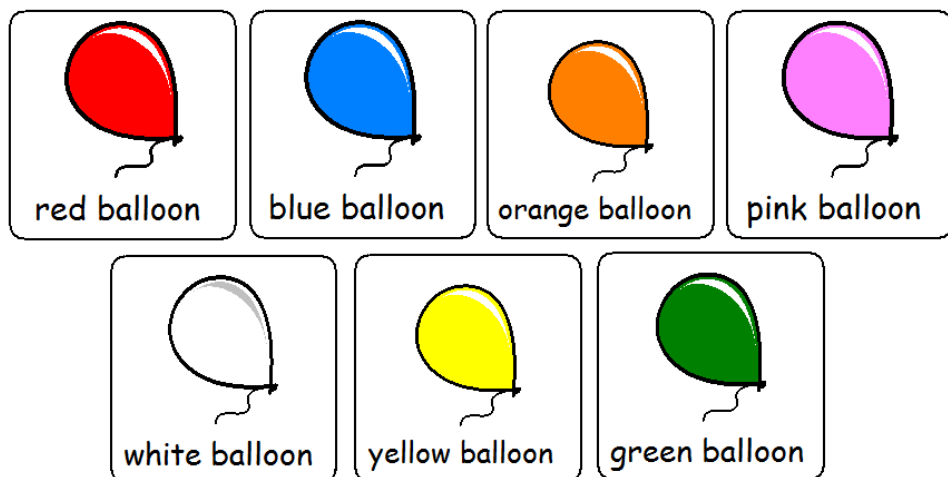
**You will need:** A range of different balls – varying in colour and/or size  
A tube that the balls will fit down or a ramp

#### What to do:

- Offer the child a choice of two balls varying by an attribute, for example would you like 'red ball or 'blue ball' – hold up the objects to show the child as you offer the choice.
- Verbally repeat the child's choice: 'you want the red ball'
- Allow the child to roll the ball down the tube or ramp and then repeat

#### You could also try:

- The same activity but using different objects, for example cars with different attributes (colour, size), different coloured balloons (or long and round balloons)
- When the child is able to answer choice questions using (attribute + object) – you could try using choosing boards (see the balloon example in the resources section)



## Tip 6: Support understanding of emotion words

**Why?** – Interpreting their own and other people's emotions can be particularly challenging for children with social communication difficulties.

### Activity 6: Using an emotions choosing board



**You will need:** Emotions choosing board (see Resources section at end of this pack)

#### What to do:

- Find a time each day to practise using the emotions choosing board – it could be soon after the child arrives in nursery or during small group time for example.
- Ask the child 'how are you feeling?' and provide the choosing board to support them to answer the question.

### ! Remember

- The child may first need support to learn what the picture symbols represent – label their emotions throughout the day, and label your own and other children's emotions too, for example 'you're happy', 'Mia's feeling sad'. Show the corresponding emotion visual symbol at the same time.
- Play games using 'emotions' picture cards – for example fishing for the pictures, rolling a large dice with the pictures attached – label the emotion card and make the corresponding facial expression yourself to consolidate understanding.

#### You could also try:

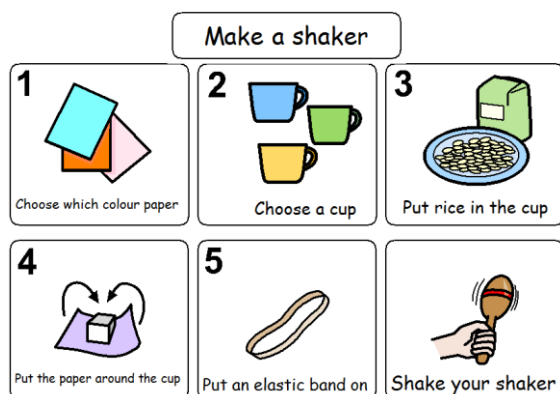
- Asking the child to make the different facial expressions themselves, and take photographs to show them.
- When reading stories, comment on the characters' emotions.



## Tip 7: Use a visual schedule to support child to follow step-by-step instructions to complete an activity (with adult support)

**Why?** – Children with social communication and/or language difficulties often find it easier to complete a task if it is supported with visuals.

### Activity 7: Make a shaker



**You will need:** coloured paper, a plastic cup, elastic band, dried rice  
**visual schedule (see resources section)**

#### What to do:

- Talk through the resources that you need
- Use language such as first, next, now to talk the child through the visual schedule
- Support the child to follow the visual step-by-step guide to making a shaker.

#### You could also try:

##### Making the day predictable:

- Use a visual timetable for the nursery day (see resources section)
- Use visual timetable for small group time/circle time
- Be consistent in giving warnings before an activity ends – for example a 2 minute warning and then a 5,4,3,2,1 countdown.
- Use visual schedules to complete other simple

# Resources

Here you will find visuals and additional information to support the tips and activities in this pack



**my turn**



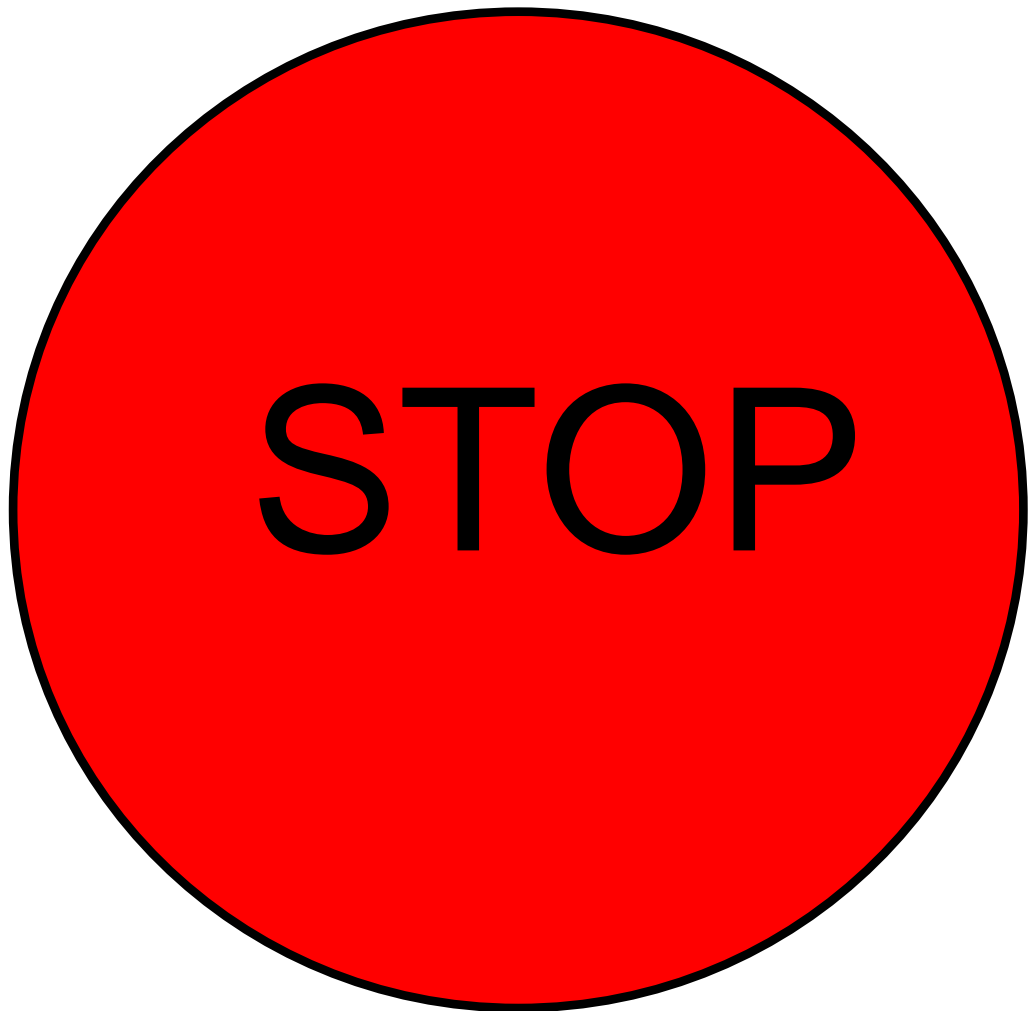
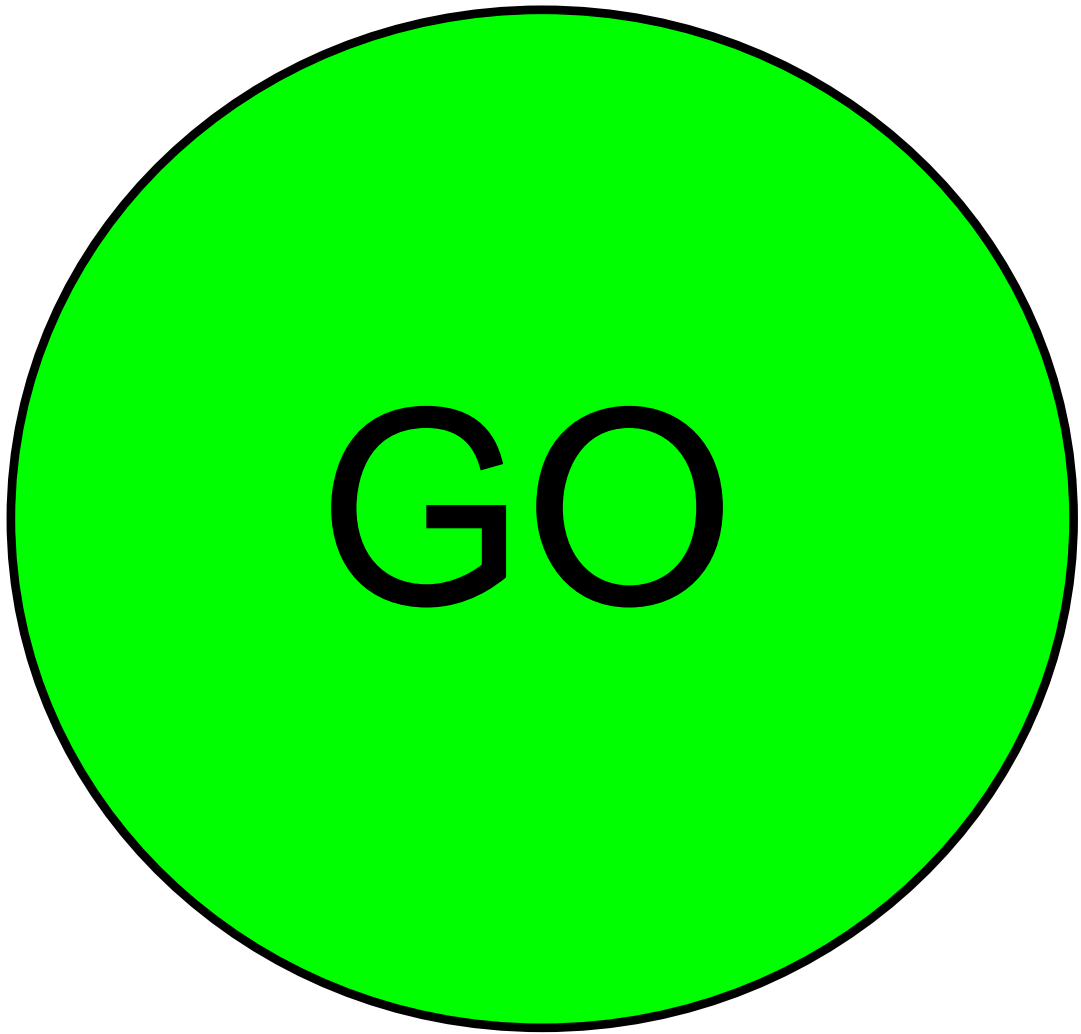
**my turn**

A large, solid red oval shape that serves as a background for the word "wait".

**wait**

A large, solid red oval shape with a thin yellow border, serving as a background for the word "wait".

**wait**





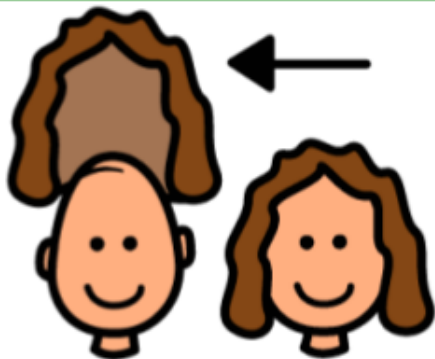
sunglasses



cap



hat



wig



party hat



Santa hat



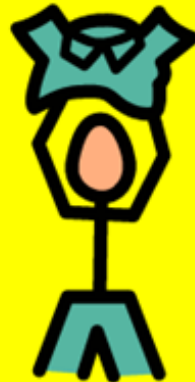
who



action



what



wear













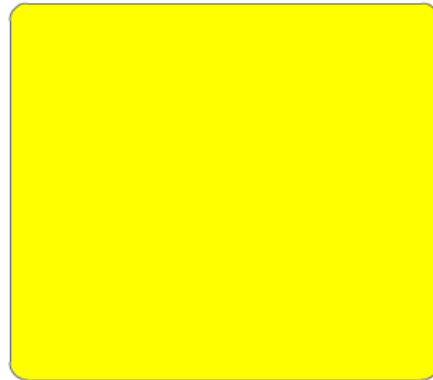
who

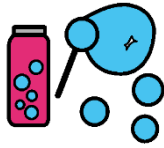


action



what



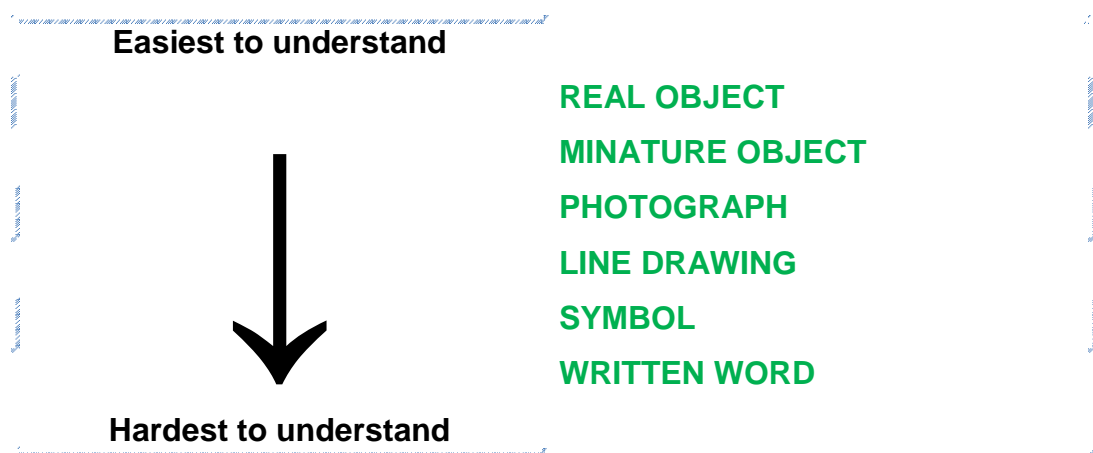


## Using Visuals



Using visuals can be helpful for children with ASD because they are **permanent**, in contrast to spoken words which are **transient**. Because visuals don't disappear they can help children understand information and support them in completing tasks.

There are different types of visuals and children may find some easier to understand than others:



Key to the success of visual supports is that they are used **consistently** across all the child's environments, so the message is the **same** at home and at nursery.

### REAL OBJECTS

Real objects can be used to show a child what is about to happen and are sometimes known as 'Objects of Reference'. They are concrete - the child does not need to 'interpret' them in any way. It is vital to choose objects that are relevant and meaningful to X. These may not be the most obvious things to others people!

The object/s chosen should be kept in a place that is **accessible** to X, so that he becomes familiar with the objects and has the opportunity to initiate. This may be a shelf or a bag or basket. **The objects should remain in that place until they are used for communication.**

Examples of Objects of Reference:

Object	Meaning
Teddy	<i>It's nap time</i>
Beaker	<i>It's drink time</i>
Plate	<i>It's lunchtime</i>
Football	<i>It's time to play football</i>
Shaker	<i>It's music time</i>
Hat	<i>It's outside play time</i>



## **MINATURE OBJECTS**

As above, but sometimes it is more practical to have small Objects of Reference. If light enough, these can be stuck to a large board using Velcro to create a timetable or choice board. Parts of an object could also be used, for example a piece of towel to represent bath time, or a piece cut from clothing to represent a person.

<b>Object</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Toy bus	<i>We're going on the bus</i>
Piece of towel	<i>It's bath time</i>
Toy spoon	<i>Dessert</i>
Doll's coat	<i>It's home time</i>
Ping pong ball	<i>Outside playtime</i>
Square of dress fabric	<i>Mummy</i>



## **PROMPTING STEPS - OBJECTS OF REFERENCE**

### **STEP 1**

#### **X IS GIVEN THE OBJECT AND LED TO THE ACTIVITY**

This is the easiest level where X only has to co-operate with their key-worker.

### **STEP 2**

#### **X IS GIVEN THE OBJECT AND GOES TO THE ACTIVITY WITH PROMPTING**

This may be physical prompting, gestural prompting, verbal prompting or a combination of some or all of these. The aim is to reduce the level of prompting needed until X moves on to...

### **STEP 3**

#### **X IS GIVEN THE OBJECT AND GOES TO THE ACTIVITY WITHOUT PROMPTING**

When X is able to do this it shows that they have gained an understanding of the meaning that the object has, but they are not yet at the level of initiating.

OR

#### **X GOES TO THE OBJECT SPONTANEOUSLY THEN GOES TO THE ACTIVITY WITH PROMPTING**

This shows that X has some idea that the object has meaning and is able to initiate but is unable to make the connection to the activity without prompting.

#### STEP 4

### **X TAKES THE OBJECT, SPONTANEOUSLY AND GOES TO THE ACTIVITY WITHOUT PROMPTING**

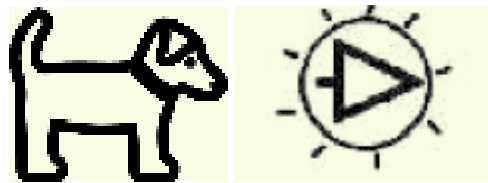
This indicates that X understands the communicative significance of the object and is able to initiate an interaction by taking the object to the activity.

#### **PHOTOGRAPHS**

Photographs are more concrete picture representations of people and things than line drawings. Pictures of family members, nursery staff and peers can be added to photos of everyday activities (such as circle time, snack time, singing time) to create a timetable or reference board.

#### **LINE DRAWINGS AND SYMBOLS**

There are a number of graphic symbol systems in common use in the UK, including Makaton Symbols™, Picture Communication Symbols™ and Widgit Symbols™. Each system has its strengths and weaknesses and some are more pictorial than others. Pictures that represent a concrete thing or person (e.g. 'dog') are often more easily understood than pictures that represent abstract ideas (e.g. 'tomorrow', 'want', 'on'). Therefore, care needs to be taken when choosing which symbols to use, and some symbols may need to be explicitly taught to children.



'dog'

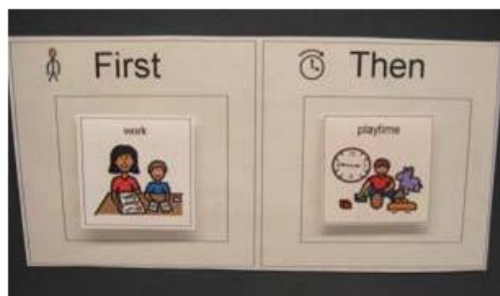
'tomorrow'

Pictures can be used for a range of purposes, including:

### Visual Timetables:



### First/Then or Now/Next boards to support transitions:



A 'First/Then' board should initially be introduced using two activities that X likes (e.g. "first elephant song, then bubbles"). When the first activity is finished, warn X using a countdown, say 'elephant song finished', show the picture for the second activity and start the second activity.

Once X has understood that the second activity will follow the first, the board can be used to encourage him to do a less preferred activity first, with the reward of a desired activity afterwards (e.g. first put on coat, then elephant song).





## Websites

You may also find the following websites helpful:

- ❑ Our speech and language therapy website: <https://www.clch.nhs.uk/services/speech-and-language-therapy-children>
- ❑ **NSPCC's** 'Look, Say, Sing, Play' campaign' with the following link <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/look-say-sing-play/sign-up>
- ❑ **Vroom:** Boost your child's learning with **Vroom's** fast and fun tips to your phone or via email. <https://www.vroom.org>
- ❑ The **Hungry Little Minds** campaign provides lots of ideas that can help boost your child's learning. [www.hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk](http://www.hungrylittleminds.campaign.gov.uk)
- ❑ **Local Offer website:** (search "SEND local offer with the name of your borough). This website has lots of useful information for parents about local help for children with additional education and/or health needs
- ❑ **Parent forums:** Contact for support if your child has additional education/health need
  - Parents Active (Hammersmith & Fulham) [www.parentsactive.org.uk](http://www.parentsactive.org.uk)
  - Full of Life (RBKC) [www.fulloflifekc.com](http://www.fulloflifekc.com)
  - Make it Happen (Westminster) [www.wppg.org.uk](http://www.wppg.org.uk)
- ❑ **The Communication Trust:** for what to expect at different ages [www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk](http://www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk)
- ❑ **ICAN:** a children's communication charity [www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk)
- ❑ **Hanen:**

## CLCH NHS Trust

The speech and language therapy service is provided by Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust.

For more information visit [www.clch.nhs.uk](http://www.clch.nhs.uk) or call us on **020 8102 3575**