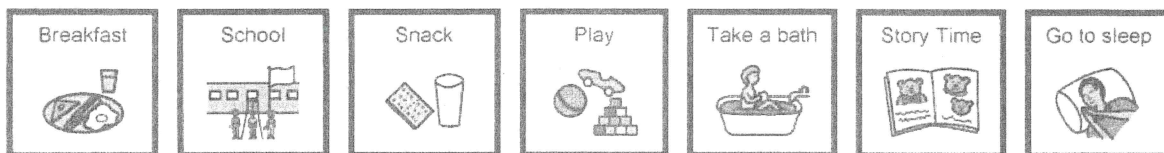


TIP SHEET How to Use Visual Wait Supports

Most children have difficulty waiting for something that they want or that is motivating to them. This difficulty is particularly difficult for children with autism and other development disorders. Pictures can be used to help children who are non-verbal or on the autism spectrum to communicate their wants and needs. Software programs are available that allow you to easily produce clear and colorful communication pictures. The following tips will help you make the most of picture communication tools.

- Place the picture support board with five to six “wait” symbols on it in the child’s line of sight. (Placing the symbols on a board allows it to be portable for school, in the van, at the store, etc.)
- Use verbal cues along with the symbols to help the child understand that s/he has to wait (e.g., show the “wait” symbols and say, “Dad’s not here yet. We have to wait.”)
- Remove the symbols from the board one at a time as time passes. You will need to judge how fast or slow pictures should be removed based on the amount of time needed to wait. For example, if the wait is approximately 30 minutes, you may want to use six pictures initially. Remove the first picture after about five minutes and say, “Five more. We need to wait.” Then remove the second picture after five more minutes and say, “Four more. We need to wait.” Continue to remove each picture and point out how many pictures are left each time. If possible, have the child remove the pictures on his/her own in order to make it more interactive.
- DO NOT remove the last picture until the waiting is completely over. This will make it very clear to the child that the wait is over when the last picture is removed. It’s okay if the wait period for the last picture is longer than the previous pictures — 12 minutes versus five minutes. That’s the whole idea of waiting. We don’t always know when we’re done until we are actually done.
- Have the child remove the last picture when s/he can visibly see that the waiting period is over (e.g., Dad’s car pulls in the driveway, the pizza delivery guy comes, the timer goes off to indicate time for a video/van ride/etc.)
- Use verbal cues while the child is removing the last “wait” sign (e.g., “Okay, Dad’s here. We’re all done waiting.”)
- You can also put the picture of the item/person the child is waiting for on the last spot to provide a visual cue (e.g., picture of Dad at the end to cue “Four more, then Dad.”)



These tips were compiled from a variety of sources including picture symbols from Mayer-Johnson BoardMaker program. For more tip sheets, visit www.fraser.org.