

Information Sheet

Visual Supports

2. Using Real Objects of Reference to **Make Choices**

Before using the guidance in this document, please refer to the following:

Visual Supports - 1 Using Real Objects of Reference

It is Important to Remember:

- Using visuals is a **whole team approach** - all adults use visual supports for all parts of the day and routine.
- **Everyone** in contact with the child must have an understanding of the child's preferred form of communication.
- When getting your setting ready for the day/session - this should include checking that visuals supports are accessible.
- Visual supports can be personalised to support individual children.
- Visual supports enable the child to have a visual image alongside the verbal word(s).
- Use of visual supports will help reduce some of the child's frustration and anxiety.
- Visual Supports encourage some independence, as well as develop the child's confidence.
- When using verbal communication, remember the child's **current stage of development** (not their actual age) and their current level of understanding.
- It is important to choose the words you will use with the real objects of reference - then all adults will use these same **word(s)** with the same **real object(s)**.
- An adult will get down to the child's level and use the child's name to get their attention - then pause, briefly. The adult will use the chosen words while showing the child the Real Object of Reference.
- Take it slowly - start off with 1 or 2 real objects and only introduce more once the child is using these purposefully.
- Remember, that using visual supports doesn't automatically mean the child will co-operate.

- ❖ The following examples are based on a child who is not receiving support from a Speech and Language Therapist. If the child is receiving support from a Speech and Language Therapist, please contact them for advice.

First steps to making choices:

This guidance is to for children who are being supported with real objects of reference.

The adult will use real objects of reference alongside verbal language to support making choices. This gives the child a visual cue as well as a verbal one.

Offering a Choice:

When offering choices, start with one real object that is highly motivating to the child.

For this example: the child's teddy that they bring in from home.

Plus, another real object that is not motivating or interesting to the child.

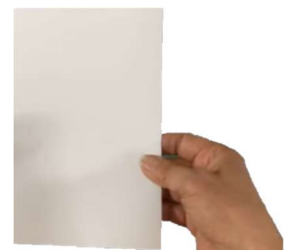
For this example: a piece of plain paper is not interesting or motivating to this particular child.

The adult will probably know which option the child will want - but it is important that the child learns to make a choice.

For this example:

- The adult will get down to the child's level
- The adult will use the child's name to get their attention and pause, briefly.

The adult holds out the piece of paper towards the child, and says, for this example, "Want paper?"



- The adult will pull the paper back and then hold out the child's teddy and says, for this example, "Want teddy...?"



- The adult encourages the child to make a choice (consider using hand over hand, initially, to guide the child to make a choice).
- To select the object, the child may - take the object - point to it - glance at it - etc.
- If the child wants both items - The adult can use their tone of voice to make the motivating item more interesting.

Remember: The focus of this intervention is making a choice, it is ok if the child chooses not to play with their choice.

Remember: Keep trying with different highly motivating activities, at different times and in different situations. However, remember not to bombard the child with too many choices.

Supporting the Child to Make a Choice during Child Initiated Play / Free-play:

This is for children who can make choices, but need support to choose and settle at an activity.

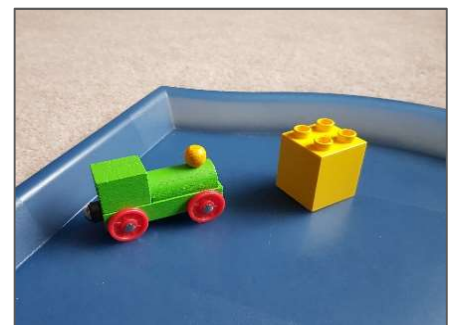
When a child is observed wandering around the setting during child initiated time / free-play, and not stopping at any activity for more than a few seconds - offering the child a choice of activities that are currently available will support them to know what activities are available.

For this, you could use a Choice Tray, basket or box, with real objects of reference that interests the child. The activities relating to the real objects on the tray must be available straight away.

Always start with activities that you know the child enjoys.

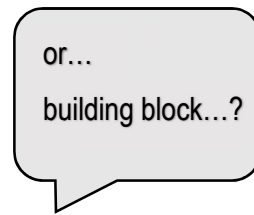
For this example:

- At the beginning of the session, an adult places a train and a building block on a Tray, basket, box, etc. These are two of the child's favourite activities.
- When the adult sees the child wandering around the setting, the adult will get down to the child's level and use the child's name to get their attention, then pause, briefly.
- The adult shows the child the tray and encourages the child to make a choice.



How this choice is offered will depend on the child's current stage of development and their level of understanding. You could point to the objects on the tray or pick each it up as you label it.

For this example:



- Wait a reasonable amount of time for the child to make a choice - to support the child, consider using hand over hand.

Once the child has made a choice, the adult would then take the child to the relevant activity. If the child is able to 'play' with their choice of object, model and play alongside.

Remember: You are modelling making choices, so the child may not want to play alongside.

Take advantage of opportunities to support the child to make choices:

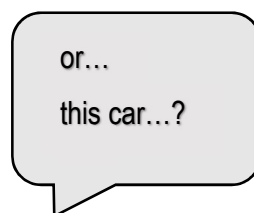
For this example: The child is sat in the transport area, looking at the click-clack car ramp.

The adult decides to use this as an opportunity to focus on making choices:



- The adult play alongside the child and waits for an opportunity to offer a choice.
- The child is looking for a car - however the adult has already got them in their hand.

For this example:



- The adult encourages the child to make a choice. After waiting a reasonable amount of time, consider using hand over hand, initially, to guide the child.

Remember: You are modelling making choices within an interesting activity or resource, so staying at the activity and playing, is something you will build up to.

Snack Time is a great opportunity to offer choices:

For this example: the setting is offering either an apple or a banana for snack.



A glimpse of all this fruit can be overwhelming to some children. Instead of a choice of either an apple or a banana - the child will probably see a choice of about 18 different apples and bananas.

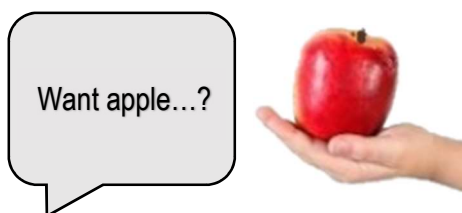
To support the child:

At the beginning of snack time, an adult places 1 apple and 1 banana to one side. You may need to take the two choices to the where the child is, and then guide them to the sink area/snack area.

Remember: When using verbal communication, remember the child’s level of understanding and their current stage of development (not their actual age).

For this example:

- The adult will use the child’s name to get their attention and pause, briefly.
- Adult offers the apple to the child and says, for this example, “Want apple...?”
- Adult then offers the banana to the child and says, for this example, “or banana...?”
- The adult encourages the child to make a choice - (consider using hand over hand, initially, to guide the child).



Remember: You are modelling the access of available snack, so making a choice may not lead to the child eating it.

Remember: Every adult must use the same word(s) with the same real object(s).