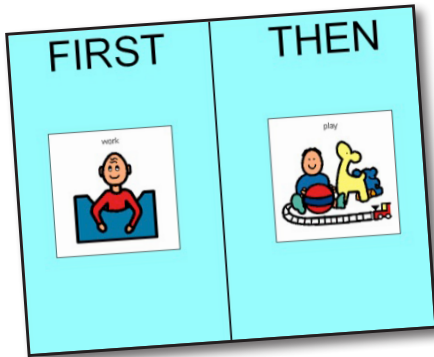


# Using Visual Aids

Visual aids can help a child understand what is said to or expected of him or her. They also help to facilitate expressive language development and usage. This handout outlines different types of visual aids and provides ideas for incorporating them into everyday life.

## First-Then Boards



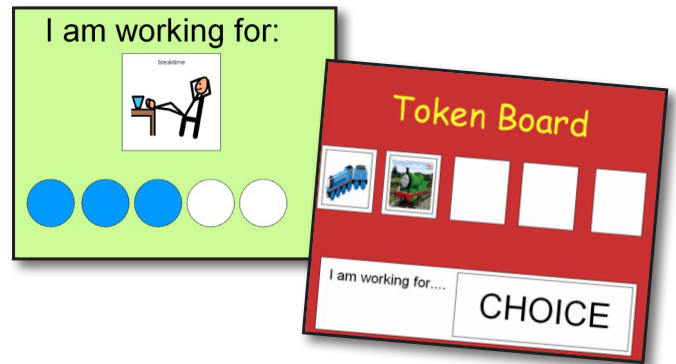
One type of visual aid is a “first-then” board (shown above). This is a simple visual aid that helps a child understand the sequence of two events. A first-then board can be helpful when a nonpreferred activity precedes a preferred activity. Activities can be changed for specific needs across the day. The example above may be helpful in therapeutic or classroom settings. At home, a first-then board may indicate that the child must first complete homework, then he can have TV time; or first a bath, then a book. This type of visual aid can be any size, shape, or color. The pictures can be line drawings or photographs. If the child is able to read, use written words rather than pictures or drawings.

## Token Boards

A “token board” is an easy way to reinforce a child for good behavior and to encourage cooperation during daily activities.

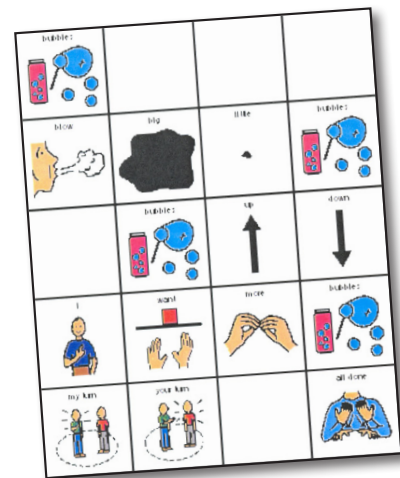
The idea is simple. A child earns tokens—such as a sticker, a star, or a small coin—for demonstrating a specific behavior. Once a child receives a set number of tokens, she earns something she likes.

For example, while doing math homework, the child might earn one token for every two problems completed. Once he receives five tokens, he earns a two-minute break. Token boards can be adapted to fit each child’s individual needs. Here are some examples:



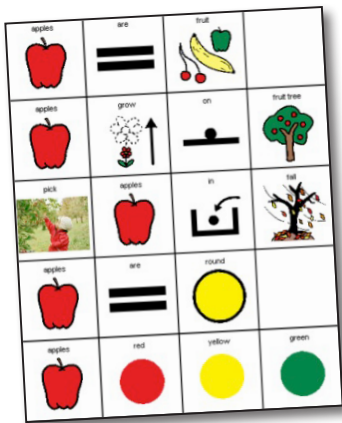
## Topic Boards

A topic board provides information about an activity. It can include a sequence of events, dialogue, or simple concepts. Topic boards are used to facilitate understanding and expressive communication. The example below is a topic board for an activity involving bubbles:



Every child is born with great potential.  
Shouldn't every child have the chance to achieve it?





Topic boards can be about anything, including play activities, games, and daily routines. Some examples of ways to use topic board are getting dressed, homework time, meal times, and getting a haircut. They can also help teach a child about a new concept, such as a holiday and the as-

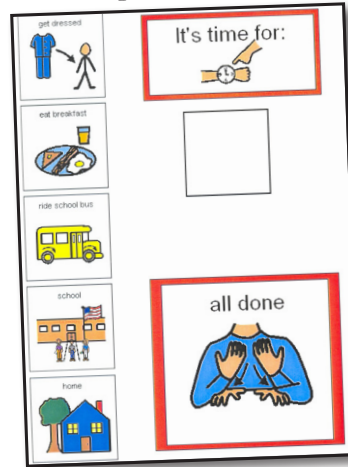
sociated objects and events. Above is an example of a topic board used in a preschool classroom to support a lesson about apples.

Below is a topic board that outlines a visit to CARD for an evaluation and provides information about the sequence of events. This type of visual aide can help a child understand a change to her daily routine and alleviate some anxiety.



## Visual Schedules

Visual schedules can help increase predictability and provide visual support for language. A visual schedule also helps a child understand what is expected of him throughout the day. These schedules are made with picture symbols that the child can manipulate when activities start and end.



This is an example of a schedule outlining a child's day. Visual schedules can also be modified to show specific activities and events. You can use more or fewer pictures as needed.

## Sequence Boards

Sequence boards can be used for tasks that follow a specific order of events. They provide visual support for language and understanding, and help children become independent in completing these tasks. Some examples include using the bathroom, brushing teeth, preparing a bowl of cereal, and making a bed. The example on the right shows a sequence board for washing hands.



### Where can I get help making visuals to use at home?

The Center for Autism and Related Disorders (CARD) Resource Center is staffed by CARD employees and parent volunteers. It features books, videos, computer programs, and other materials that focus on a variety of topics related to autism spectrum disorders. For more information about the CARD Resource Center, please call 443-923-7888 or email [resourcecenter@kennedykrieger.org](mailto:resourcecenter@kennedykrieger.org).

### What is Boardmaker™?

Boardmaker™ is a computer software program by Mayer-Johnson. All of the examples of visuals in this handout were created using this program. Boardmaker allows you to create and print a variety of visuals using picture communication symbols. This program is available for use in the CARD Resource Center. For more information about Boardmaker or to purchase the software, visit the Mayer-Johnson website at [www.mayer-johnson.com](http://www.mayer-johnson.com).