

Communications Series

Using Visual Support



Children with Down's syndrome are good visual (seeing) learners and often have poor auditory (hearing) learning skills.

Children with Down's syndrome also take longer to process information. Visual support can help your child's speech and language development. An added bonus of using visual information is that your child will be able to spend longer taking it in, because visual information lasts longer than auditory information. Visual supports can help your child's understanding and also help your child to learn to communicate. There is no research to suggest that signing reduces spoken language.

Visual support can include:

- Objects
- Photographs
- Pictures
- Line drawings
- Symbols
- Written words
- Gesture
- Sign

Visual support varies in the level of understanding it requires. The easiest visual support for a child to understand is a real object because your child does not have to make a representational link. The ability to hold, feel and explore objects will help understanding. Photographs of real objects are the next level of visual support you can use. Photos are two dimensional, but give a real representation of what you are talking about. Pictures, line drawings and symbols are increasingly abstract, so it is best to use photos before you move on to line drawings and then symbols.

Gesture and sign are more momentary than objects and pictures, but they are essential in supporting your child's language development. Gesture and sign have the added advantage that your hands are always with you throughout you and your child's daily routine, so no extra equipment is required.

Signing

Makaton or Signalong communication systems are often used with children who have Down's syndrome.

If you do not know how to use Makaton or Signalong, you can use natural gesture and lots of expression in your face and voice. This will also help your child to understand.

Visual supports for speech sounds

Children can also learn about speech sounds using 'visual supports'. These include 'Jolly Phonics' pictures and gestures, 'See and Learn' speech resources, and 'Cued Articulation' by Jane Passy.

Written words

Some children with Down's syndrome can recognise written words from an early age, and will begin to learn to read.

When you use photographs, pictures, line drawings or symbols, you can write or type/print the written word underneath.

Further information

[Jane Passy Cued Articulation](#)

[Jolly Learning](#)

[Makaton](#)

[See and Learn](#)

[Signalong](#)

[Special iApps](#)

[Widget](#)

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