



# Autism Toolkit

**Scouts**   
Northern Ireland



# Autism Toolkit

## CONTENTS

Template: Memo of Understanding  
Template: Communication Passport  
Questions to ask Parents/Guardians  
Template: Welcome to our Scout Group  
Template: Meet your Scout Leaders  
Template: Section Transition Passports  
Template: We are going on an Outing  
Template: Visual Communication Ideas  
Effective Autism Strategies  
Autism NI Hints & Tips for Managing Behaviours

## INTRODUCTION

This toolkit has been designed to help our volunteer Leaders make appropriate adjustments to the programme to enable children and young people with Autism be fully engaged members of Scouts NI. These resources are designed to facilitate communication with parents/guardians, including enabling them to feel comfortable disclosing a diagnosis of Autism.

*Scouts NI would like to thank Colin Millar and those at Boys' Brigade Northern Ireland District for creating the content of this Autism Toolkit, in conjunction with Autism NI. We are delighted they have shared this with us to enable our Scout Leaders to work better with children and young people with Autism. Design work by Scouts NI.*



# Additional Needs/Memo of Understanding

*Strictly Confidential*

Young Person's Name:		Scout Group:	
Section:		Date Completed:	
Issue	Scout Group Action	Parent Action	Additional Information
Points to Note:			
Signed (Parent/Guardian)		Signed (Scout Leader)	

# Additional Needs/Memo of Understanding

*Strictly Confidential*

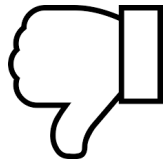
Young Person's Name:	J Doe	Scout Group:	1 <sup>st</sup> Northern Ireland	
Section:	Squirrels	Date Completed:	19 June 2023	
Issue	Scout Group Action	Parent Action	Additional Information	
Nightly Timetable	Provide a vertical schedule on hall of wall	To get the cards used by J in school	Schedule goes top to bottom	
Changing Activities	Use the transfer object, ie yellow card	n/a	Parents to inform Leaders if transfer object changes	
Melt Down	Leaders to use calming technique	Parents to ensure calming object is with J each Scout night	Calming technique – Provide with spinner and remove to a quieter area	
Unsettled	To contact parents after 15 mins if J remains unsettled	Parents to collect J and take home, with a restart next week	Extreme distress is shown by rocking movements	
Instructions	Provide instructions on visual activity line. (Step by step instructions using visual clues)	Parents to provide any specific visual cue card needed from J's school	Activity cards go right to left	
<b>Points to Note:</b> Diagnoses of Autism, using visual cue cards for communication, J's link Leader is ....				
Signed (Parent/Guardian)		Signed (Scout Leader)		

# Communication Passport - Confidential

My name is....



I like.....



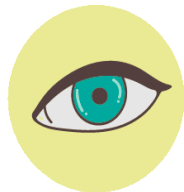
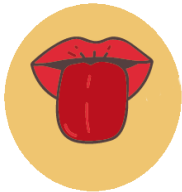
I don't like.....

These things make me upset...

These things will make me feel better...

## Sensory Needs

*I am affected in these ways...*



## Communication

*I prefer to communicate by...*

Words

Gestures (eyes/hands)

Writing things down

Other

When communicating with me please do this:



# AUTISM TOOLKIT

## Questions to ask Parents/Guardians

Does your child use a calming object?

Does your child use a transference object?

What is your child's calming routine?

Does your child use any form of communication system?

Does your child engage better in small or large groups?

# AUTISM TOOLKIT

## Questions to ask Parents/Guardians

Does your child have sensory issues?

Can your child express his/her feelings?

Does your child use a visual schedule?

What are your child's interests?

How does your child indicate he/she is becoming unsettled or anxious?

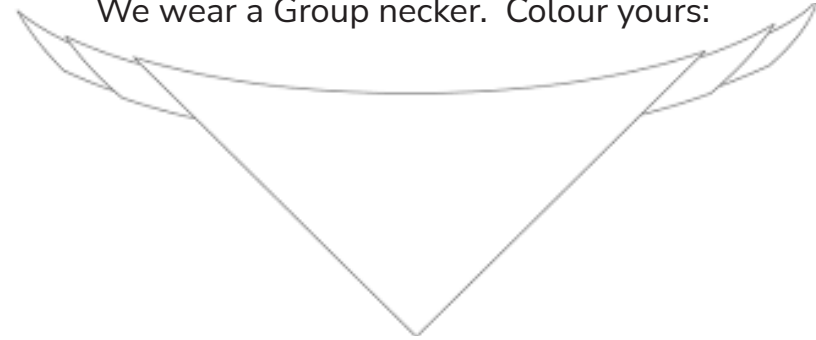


# Welcome to our Scout Group



My GSL is called:

We wear a Group necker. Colour yours:



We meet in:

Write your Scout Promise here so you can remember it:



We meet on:

We like these activities:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

We meet at:



# Meet your Scout Leaders!

Take a photograph of your Group Scout leader, Section Leader and Assistant Section Leader and glue them into the spaces. If you write their name, you will remember who is who.



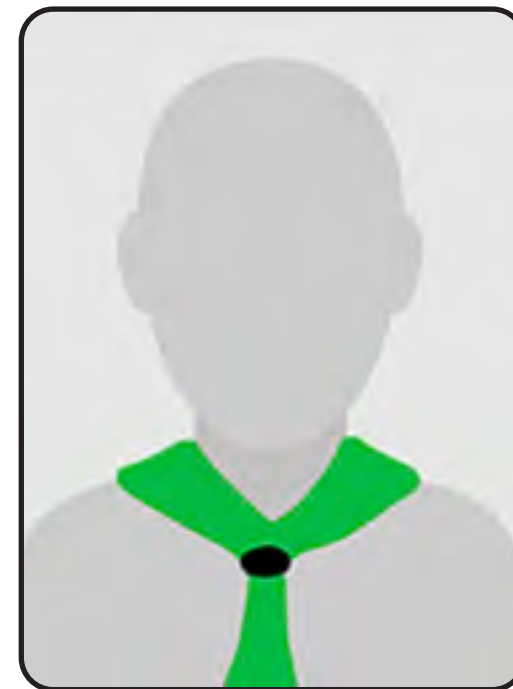
Name:

**Group Scout Leader**



Name:

**Section Leader**



Name:

**Assistant Section Leader**

# Squirrels

## Squirrel Section Information

There are lots of badges! Some of the ones you can get in Squirrels are:



Super Chef



Story Time



Let It Grow



Let's Celebrate



Get Creative



Go Wild



Exciting Experiments

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ & I am a Squirrel Scout



We meet in:



We meet on:



We meet at:

The Top award I can earn while I am in Squirrels is:

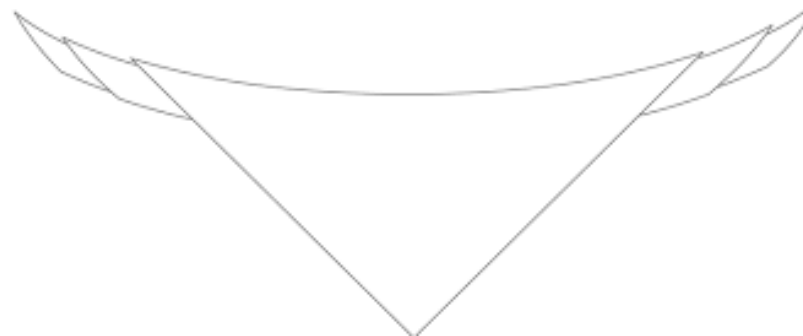
**Chief Scout's Acorn Award**



We wear:



Colour your Group necker:



We like to do these activities:

# BEAVERS

## Beaver Section Information

There are lots of badges! Some of the ones you can get in Beavers are:



Money Skills



Animal Friend



Book Reader



Let's Celebrate



Sports



Safety



Global Issues

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ & I am a Beaver Scout

The Top award I can earn in Beavers is:

**Chief Scout's Bronze Award**



We meet in:



We meet on:

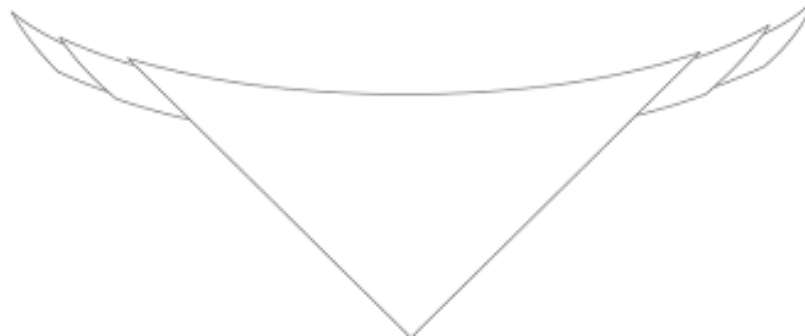


We meet at:

We wear:



Colour your Group necker:



We like to do these activities:

# cubs

## Cub Section Information

There are lots of badges! Some of the ones you can get in Cubs are:



Super Chef



Story Time



Let It Grow



Let's Celebrate



Get Creative



Go Wild



Exciting Experiments

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ & I am a Cub Scout

The Top award I can earn in Cubs is:

**Chief Scout's Silver Award**



We meet in:



We meet on:

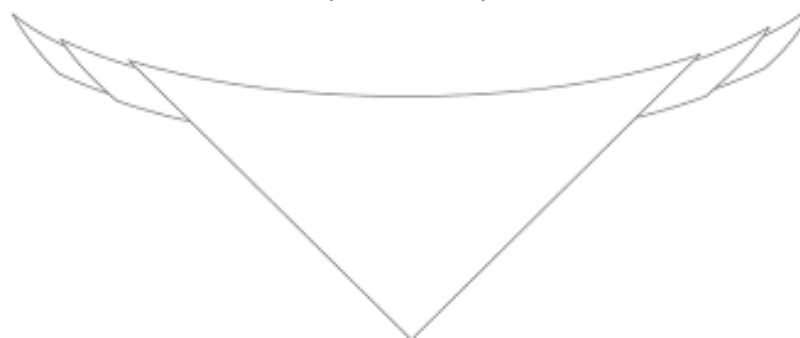


We meet at:

We wear:



Colour your Group necker:



We like to do these activities:

# SCOUTS

## Scout Section Information

There are lots of badges! Some of the ones you can get in Scouts are:



Super Chef



Story Time



Let It Grow



Let's Celebrate



Get Creative



Go Wild



Exciting Experiments

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ & I am a Scout

The Top award I can earn in Scouts is:

**Chief Scout's Gold Award**



We meet in:



We meet on:

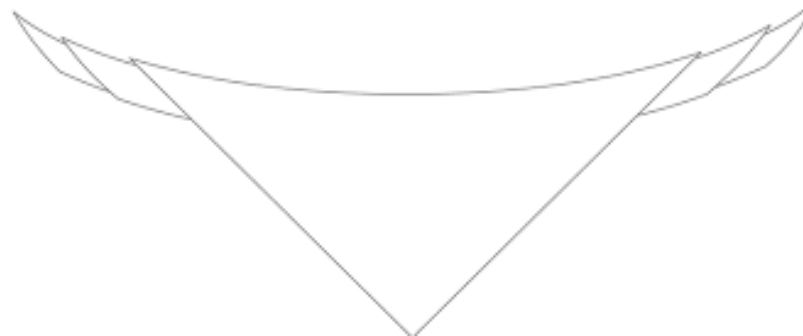


We meet at:

We wear:



Colour your Group necker:



We like to do these activities:

# EXPLORERS

## Explorer Section Information

There are lots of badges! Some of the ones you can get in Explorers are:



Super Chef



Story Time



Let It Grow



Let's Celebrate



Get Creative



Go Wild



Exciting Experiments

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ & I am an Explorer Scout

The Top award I can earn in Explorers is:

**King's Scout Award**



We meet in:



We meet on:

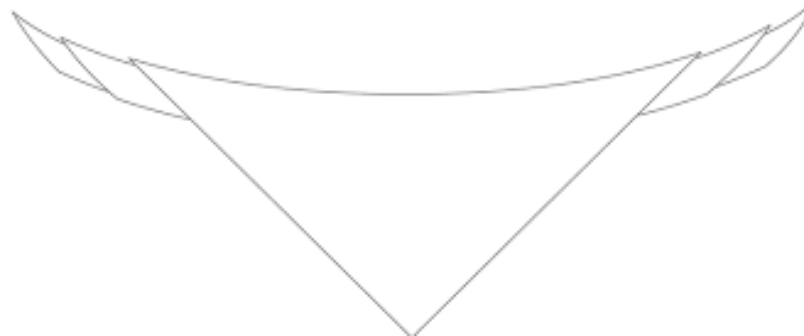


We meet at:

We wear:



Colour your Group necker:



We like to do these activities:



## How are you feeling?



I feel happy,  
everything is good.



I feel sad, something  
is bothering me.



I feel like I might  
explode, I need a  
break.



Cut out the cards to use with your young people

## Upset?



Deep Breaths



Count



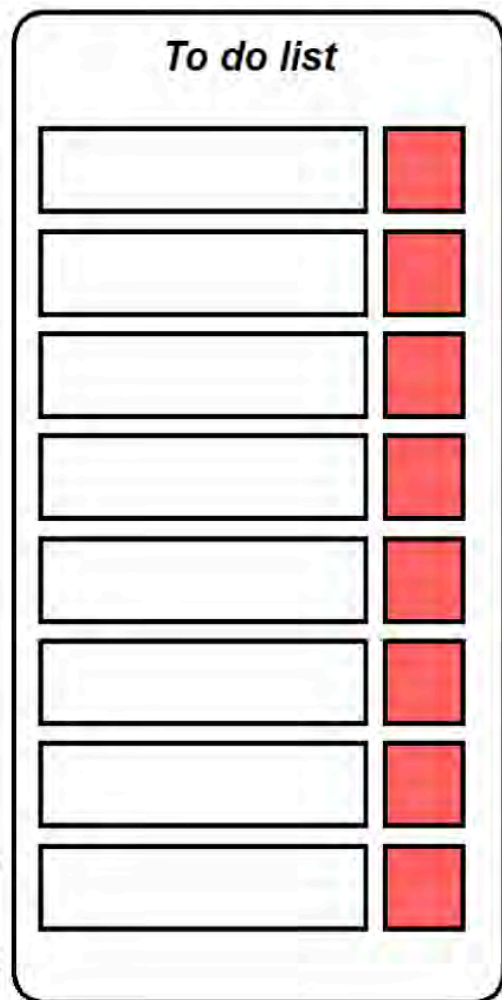
Show Me



Happy Again



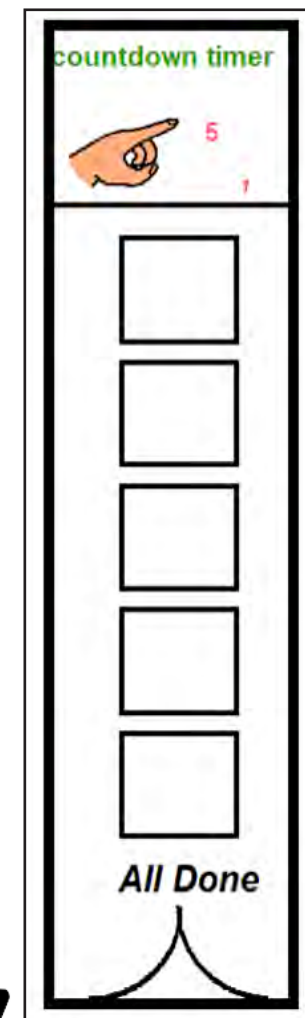
Cut out the cards to use with your young people when they are upset



Having a structure to the Group's activities can be extremely useful to help increase focus and manage anxiety.

You could use this to give structure by putting the different activities into the list along with a number of small breaks.

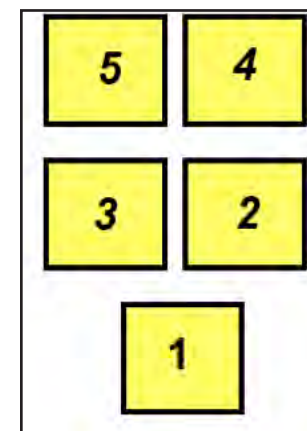
Sticking the ticks into the boxes using Velcro or Blu Tack when complete (or ticking these off/crossing the activities out) can show progress in tasks and help to motivate the young person.



Timers can be really beneficial to support your young person to know what to expect and help them manage transitions.

The timer template works by sticking the numbers onto the timer in descending order (5 down to 1). You can take off the numbers gradually, showing the child that they are moving closer to finishing an activity and moving on.

Once all the numbers are removed, the current activity is 'all done' or finished.



## What are we doing?



Draw your own examples and then cut out the cards to use with your young people

# Visual Communication Ideas



Camping



Games



Craft



Cooking



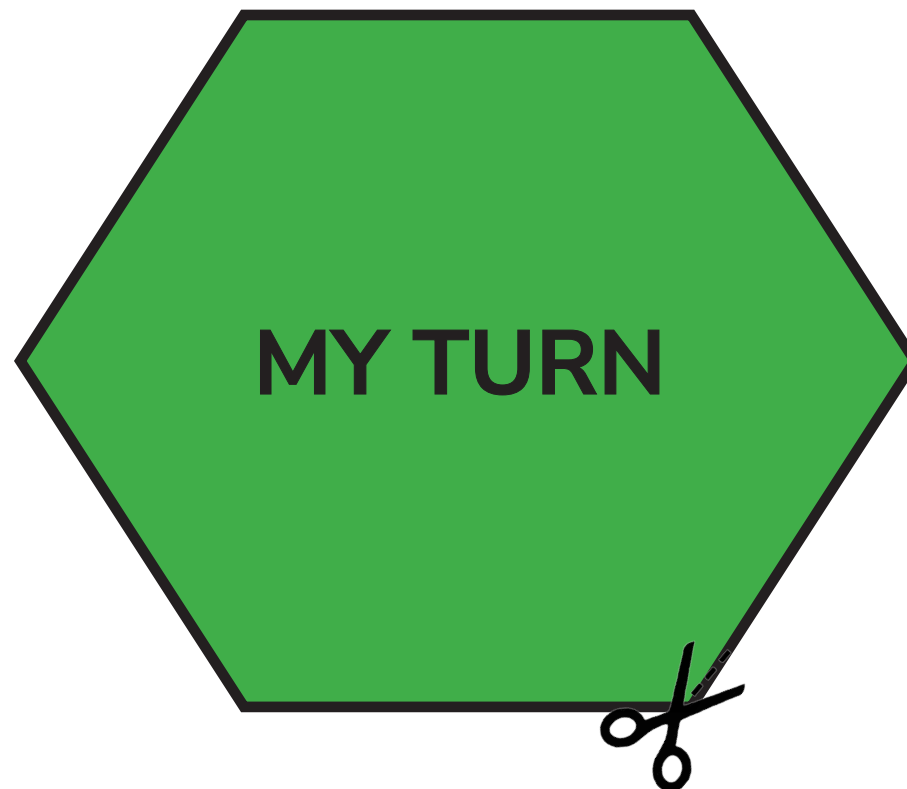
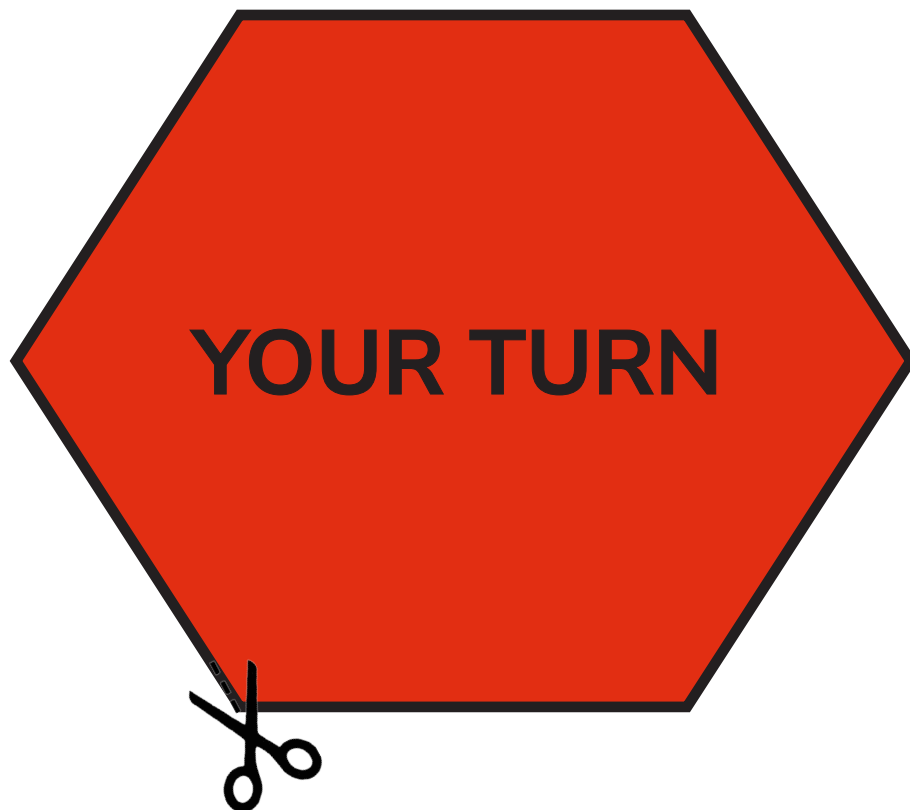
Campfire



Home Time



## Turn Taking



Photocopy and cut out these hexagons. Stick them together (back to back) with a lollipop stick in the centre, so it looks a bit like a stop/go road sign.

You can use this to let the young person know when it is their turn or someone else's.

# Using Visual Strategies

Many autistic individuals will have greater strengths in processing things that can be seen rather than heard. Communication, the processing of words and what they mean can be difficult for some individuals. It can benefit to present things in a visual format to make them easier to understand. Here are some ideas on what visual strategies are and some examples you can implement.

## WHAT?

A visual strategy is anything we see that provides us with information, it can be an online diary, a shopping list or even a road sign. Everyone uses visual strategies.

## WHY?

Visuals will help to explain what is expected of a person. It helps to organise information and allows individuals to understand the environment around them, and to express their feelings, needs and wants.

## BENEFITS?

- Easy to use
- Can be individualised to interests and communication levels
- Not expensive
- Can be used to increase motivation and attention skills
- Can help to develop communication
- Can help teach new skills
- Most importantly to build independence



# What type of Visual Strategy should I use?

This will be different for each individual. It will depend on their level of understanding and their preference. We want to make visuals easy to understand for the individual, so if in doubt stick with the simpler one and we can always work our way up.

## OBJECTS

The simplest of visual is just using an actual object the person owns and uses as communication, e.g. their cup.

You can also use representational objects, e.g. showing a toy car means we are going out.

## PHOTOGRAPHS

Use photographs of places, activities or people. Quick tip - keep photos up to date for literal individuals. If we show a white house for grandparents and then it is painted grey, it may cause issues.

## LINE DRAWINGS

These are clip art images. You don't need fancy software, just google appropriate symbols. You can add words beside the symbol to aid transition to next stage.

## WRITTEN WORD

Lastly, using simple words can be a visual strategy. This can be a simple checklist on a piece of paper.



# Visual Strategy Ideas: Schedules/Routines

These visual strategy ideas will use images printed on cards.

## FIRST/THEN BOARD

The idea behind a first/then board is to give the individual the next two steps of what will happen. The first activity will generally be non-preferred and the second will be a motivator. First eat your dinner, then chocolate. These will use images printed on cards.

## PART DAY SCHEDULE

A part day schedule will give a snapshot of what will happen at certain parts of the day. These should be used before the full day so as not to overwhelm. There may be a part of the day which requires more structure, such as morning and the order to get dressed.

## FULL DAY SCHEDULE

A full day schedule will include everything that will happen during the day. This can be useful for individuals that need a high level of predictability, but this can be anxiety inducing for some due to the level of information. You can cut out and stick on things that will happen, and the individual could take these off and put in an envelope throughout the day.

## CALENDARS

Calendars can be as simple as school, or no school, day using it on a weekly basis. You can use a monthly calendar to count down to a special activity, such as a birthday or Christmas. They can also be useful for secondary school aged young people and colour coded for organisational reasons.



# Visual Strategy Ideas: Social Skills

## VOLUME SCALE

These cards can be used to teach about expected volume in different surroundings. It can be used to increase or decrease a young person's noise level according to what's appropriate.

Please see the visual communication ideas in this document for this resource.

## COMMAND CARDS

Command Cards can have various different simple instructions on them, such as sit down, stop, listen, and so on, along with a simple matching image. The key purpose of these cards is the individual will not have to process just the verbal instructions, but will also visually get the simple instruction along with the verbal.

## HELP CARDS

Help Cards can be useful for individuals that find it hard requesting verbal help with an activity. You can make a simple card that says "I am starting to panic, and might need to use my help card soon" and on the other side, "I need help with my activity". The card can be held up or given to a Leader.

## COMIC STRIP CONVERSATIONS

Comic Strip Conversations provide a visual representation of different levels of communication that take place in a conversation, using symbols, stick figure drawings and colour. By seeing the conversation visually, some of the more abstract aspects of social communication are made more concrete and therefore are easier to understand.



# Visual Strategy Ideas: Emotions

There are a range of visual strategies that can help individuals to understand, communicate and regulate their emotions. Some examples shown here include using basic emoji type symbols, to using the incredible 5 point scale, to giving a person calming ideas. Emotional strategies can be presented in different ways depending on the age and ability of the individual.

See <https://www.5pointscale.com/> for more information.

My 5 point scale

Number	How does it make me feel?	An example of a time you felt like this	What will calm you?
5	I feel out of control	Going to party	Time by myself
4	I feel very worried	Different teacher	A 5-minute walk, break or squeeze
3	Something is bothering me/startling to worry	I need help with something	To talk about it, write it down
2	Doing ok, I can carry on	Lost a game	A hug or deep breath
1	Doing great, I am happy!	Playing with Lego	I do not need anything

I can pick a calm choice!

Squeeze hands



Tear paper



Breathing



take deep breaths

?

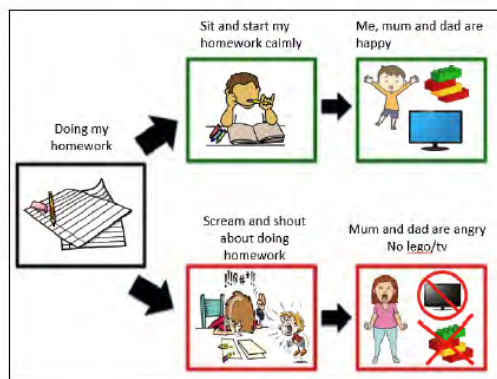


# Visual Strategy Ideas: Behaviour

We can also use visual strategies to help manage behaviours, symbols can be used to set expectations of good vs bad behaviours, or green vs red, if you would prefer. Behaviour maps can be used to show rewards vs consequences of certain behaviours and also for specific behaviours such as toileting.

There are many more ways to use visual strategies that are not included in this handout. The purpose is to provide additional information to get you started thinking about the ways you can use visuals in your own environment.

Autism NI are continuing to develop our range of online visual resources which are free to download from <https://www.autismni.org/resources>



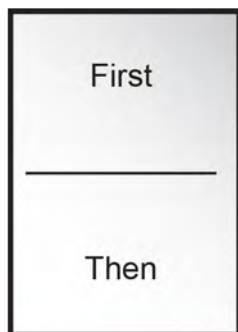


### Resources

- A Treasure Chest of Behavioural Strategies: *Dr Beth Fouse and Maria Wheeler*
- Asperger's Syndrome and Difficult Moments: Practical Solutions: *Brenda Smith Myles and Jack Southwick*
- Challenging Behaviour and autism: *Phillip Whitaker*
- People with Autism Behaving Badly: *John Clements*
- Solving Behaviour Problems in Autism: Visual Strategies Series: *Linda A Hodgdon*
- Visual Strategies for Improving Communication: Practical Supports for School and Home: *Linda A. Hodgdon*
- [www.autismni.org](http://www.autismni.org) website with links to other websites that can offer downloadable resources.
- [www.ich.ucl.ac.uk/gosh\\_families/](http://www.ich.ucl.ac.uk/gosh_families/)



Traffic Light symbol



**First/Then**

A First/Then display is a useful visual helper to show your child that a desired behaviour must be accomplished before he/she can have an agreed upon reward.

Some Hints / Tips for  
managing behaviours

## SOME HINTS/TIPS FOR MANAGING BEHAVIOURS

For many parents the daily challenge in living with a child who has autism is dealing with difficult behaviour. Understanding the principles behind behaviour management is important. This fact sheet gives some tips and hints from other parents that might help.

There are many complex behaviours exhibited by an individual with autism. Some behaviours will be more problematic than others. There may be times when a formal functional behavioural assessment needs to be carried out by a professional and formal strategies or interventions will be used to manage, change or adapt behaviours. This fact sheet is about what you can do as a parent within the home to respond to daily behaviours that can be challenging but manageable, with a common sense approach. For behaviours outside of your scope as a parent, it is important to seek professional help and advice.

### Always base your behaviour strategies around the 4 Ps

**Planning**  
**Preparation**  
**Perseverance**  
**Patience** → **POSITIVE OUTCOMES**

**HOUSE RULES** - Agree house rules to which everyone in the household collectively contributes. Write them up, display them and use visual pictures to reinforce the message. Have no more than 6/8 rules. Everyone must agree. The rules are for everyone and not just an individual with autism.

**QUIET AREA/CHILL OUT SPACE** - Have a place where your child can calm down/reflect on how they feel. This must be the same place each time. Have visual cues around the home to transition to e.g. bedroom or pop up tent. This must not be a place where you punish your child or be filled with distractions or special interests.

**YELLOW CARD/RED CARD** - A yellow card means that they have to stop to think about how they feel or what they are doing. A red card means we are sad with their approach/behaviour and there is a consequence involved. Make sure the consequence is age/child appropriate, you will know how this will affect your child.

**TRAFFIC LIGHTS** - These are often used in school and are an excellent reinforcement for positive behaviour. Make sure it involves your child's SPECIAL INTEREST eg. Dr. Who based

**TECHNIQUES INVOLVED IN MANNERS** - eg. No Snatching. Give an item to your child, take the item gently from their hand and show a visual with a "happy face". Practice and reinforce in a variety of situations to teach the skill.

**COUNT TO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5...** By the time you count to 5 the child must listen "with their Ears", (show a visual), and make you happy by doing what they are told, for example, eating dinner.

### 5 Point Scale

**VOICE CONTROL** - Use a laminated image of a volume control on a stereo with adjustable velcro dots to indicate if they are being too loud or too quiet. This visual helps them to 'see' the volume of their voice.

**SHOWERING/BATHING** - a bath mat. This is a simple visual that shows where they need to stand. Use picture symbols for the sequence of actions needed to shower. Consider using goggles, if your child has difficulty with having a shower or getting their hair washed, it stops water, soap etc. getting into their eyes.

**DAILY PLANNER** - Have a daily planner, an A4 laminated sheet works well, with an ink washable pen and you can complete to the hour or 10 hours etc. A smaller version can be made that is more portable, which your child can carry with them when you are going out. Remember to use pictures or symbols to aid your child's understanding of what happens now, what's coming next etc.

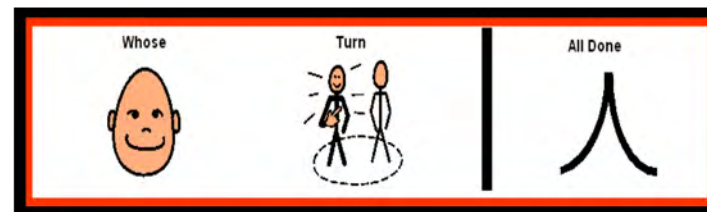
**WEEKLY PLANNERS** - Have a weekly planner, for everyone in the house. Listing days of the week, what is happening, who is going where, and your child will know what everyone is doing, including themselves. This can be particularly helpful at times of school breaks. Your child will have a structure during the school day. However during holidays they can struggle to adjust. Weekly planners can help reduce anxiety, help with transitions and, of course, ease them back to school after breaks.

**MONTHLY PLANNER** - Have a monthly planner, for the days they are at school, activities during the weeks ahead, birthdays, showering, going shopping, whatever reflects your child's week.

**THE ABOVE WILL DEPEND ON THE AMOUNT OF PROCESSING YOUR CHILD CAN COPE WITH. YOU CAN ONLY TRY! IF IT ISN'T WORKING, YOUR CHILD IS NOT READY FOR IT.**

Other useful items can include a countdown timer, time timer, reward charts, stop watch or visual 5, 4, 3, 2, 1...

Investing this time while your child is young will help them in the future to manage behaviours, manage feelings and be more independent, and cope better at school. If you use strategies successfully at home, share that knowledge with extended family, your child's school and other parents.



Turn Taking Schedule



NO symbol

Try to avoid rewards that are food based. Individuals with autism often lead quite sedentary lifestyles and are prone to problems with weight management, which can lead to health problems later in life.

If you use a reward based system remember not to make the reward an expensive one, like a computer game or DVD, as this can work out very costly over time. Having picture rewards such as favourite dinosaurs, Thomas the Tank Engines, Dr Who, cars, etc can be just as effective.

Visuals do not require a lot of expensive equipment, a PC/Laptop, a laminator, a digital camera and imagination. Search the internet for pictures or symbols. Take photos of people, places, items etc. Some children respond better to actual images rather than symbols.

**IF YOU PLAN FOR YOUR CHILD, THEY KNOW WHAT IS HAPPENING AND YOU ARE PREPARING THEM.**

**WITH PERSEVERANCE AND PATIENCE YOU CAN SET ROUTINES AND RULES WHICH WILL RESULT IN POSITIVE OUTCOMES.**



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