

Instructions for Using Pictures as a Communication Tool

Using pictures as a communication tool can help your child express needs, wants, and feelings effectively. Below are step-by-step instructions for setting up and using a picture communication system:

Step 1: Gather Materials

1. **Binder or Folder:** Use a 3-ring binder or folder.
 2. **Laminate pages:** Use plastic page protectors to organize the pictures.
 3. **Velcro Dots:** Attach Velcro dots to the back of each picture and to the pages in the binder.
 - **Using Velcro Dots:** This allows you to control the options available to your child. For example:
 - You can remove or hide specific pictures if those items or activities aren't available, helping teach the concept of "no."
 - Keeping pictures removable also supports flexibility in how you introduce new options or reduce choices during specific activities.
 - **Using Pages:** Keeping pictures on pages supports your child's independence by letting them freely browse the binder and choose options.
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Step 2: Organize Pictures by Categories

1. **Separate by Categories:** Divide pictures into logical categories. Create a tabbed or labeled section for each of the following:
 - **Toys:** Examples: Ball, blocks, tablet, favorite stuffed animal.
 - **Foods:** Examples: Apple, crackers, juice, milk, cookies.
 - **Places:** Examples: Home, school, playground, store, park.
 - **Actions/Needs:** Examples: Bathroom, help, play, stop, eat, drink.
 2. **Label Pages:** Use a clear label at the top of each page to help your child identify the category.
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Step 3: Assemble the Binder

1. Insert pictures into plastic sleeves, separating them by categories.
2. Place the sleeves into the binder in an order that makes sense for your child's day (e.g., food first if they use it often for meals).
3. Add a cover page with your child's name or a visual they recognize to make the binder feel personal.

Step 4: Make it Accessible

1. Keep the binder in a location your child can easily reach, such as on the kitchen counter or their play area.
2. Encourage frequent use by modeling how to grab the binder and find pictures during daily routines.

Step 5: Teach Your Child to Use the Pictures

1. **Start with a small group of Pictures at a Time:** Choose a highly motivating item (e.g., a favorite snack).
 - Show the picture to your child and say, "This is how we ask for [item]."
 - Encourage your child to point or give you the picture when they want the item.
2. **Expand Gradually:** Once your child gets comfortable, add more pictures and categories.
3. **Pair with Words:** Every time your child uses a picture, say the word associated with it to encourage verbal development.

Step 6: Reinforce Use

1. Respond promptly and positively whenever your child uses the pictures to communicate.
 - Example: If your child hands you a picture of juice, immediately give them juice and praise their effort.
2. Use pictures throughout daily activities to ensure consistency (e.g., meals, playtime, outings).

Step 7: Regular Maintenance

1. **Update Pictures:** Add or remove pictures as your child's needs and interests change.
2. **Keep it Organized:** Ensure categories remain clear and accessible for your child.