

Increasing independence in daily routines

Tips for parents and caregivers of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

Why increase independence?

Helping your child to become more independent:

- ✓ Reduces the need for help and involvement of others, such as parents and teachers.
- ✓ It is rewarding because it feels good to do things for yourself. Your child can complete tasks quickly and not have to wait for others.
- ✓ Strengthens your child's self-esteem, confidence and willingness to try new things.
- ✓ Increases opportunities to focus on socialization, school and change.

Tips for increasing independence

- Allow your child some time to complete a task or activity before you offer help. But do help your child through difficult steps he or she struggles with.
- Create lots of opportunities for your child to be independent and practice skills.
- Start with small steps within a larger task. For example, have your child pull his or her socks up, after you have pulled them over his or her toes.
- Be your child's greatest cheerleader. Tell your child what he or she is doing well.

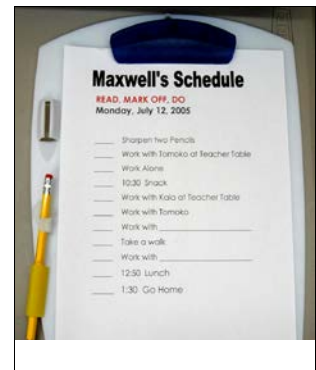
The goal of providing help is to teach skills rather than doing the task or activity for your child.

How does structure help?

All children benefit from structure and routines in their daily lives. Structure makes things predictable, so children know what's going to happen next. This reduces stress, confusion and behaviour problems. Structure can also help lead to independence.

Tips for building structure

- Make a daily schedule for your child that matches his or her skills and abilities. Teach your child how to use a schedule.
- Use the schedule, a calendar and checklists to help your child learn the order of activities and develop routines.
- Focus on what you want your child to do. Visual cues (such as objects, photos, drawings, words, sentences and checklists) can help.



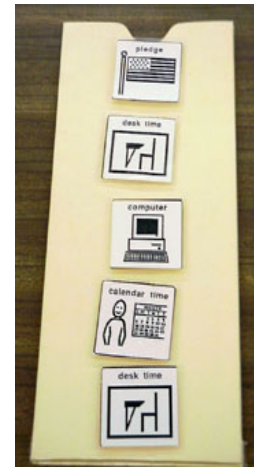
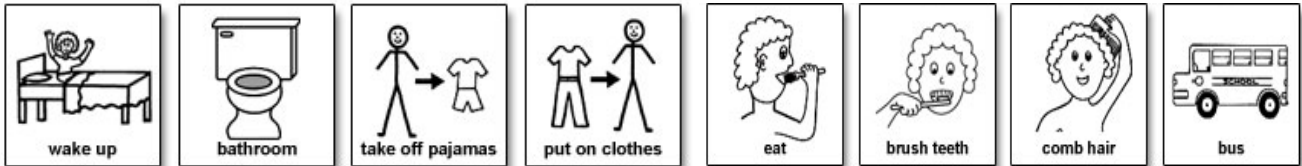
How do visual cues help?

Visual cues help your child:

- understand what he or she has been asked to do,
- how much work is to be done,
- how to know when he or she is done, and
- what to do next.



Here are some examples



When teaching independence, be patient and know that it is okay for your child to need more help on some days than others.

For more information and support, contact the children's services in your community


McMaster Children's Hospital
AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER SERVICE
 905-521-2100, ext. 74136


Haldimand-Norfolk REACH
supporting children, families, communities
 519-587-2441


Lansdowne Children's Centre
Serving children and youth with special needs
 519-753-3153


Bethesda
 905-684-6918