

Especially for preschoolers with disabilities

I See Signs

Symbols and Signs

Preschoolers enjoy seeing symbols and signs that are familiar. Young children with disabilities sometimes have a hard time recognizing familiar things. This practice guide includes ideas for making symbols and signs easier for preschoolers to recognize.

What is the practice?

This guide makes it easier for preschool children to understand that symbols represent different actions and objects in their world. The practice helps preschoolers link what they see with the symbols that stand for those things.

What does the practice look like?

Preschoolers ask for things with symbols or pictures. A child can ask to play a game by pointing to its symbol that's placed within his reach.

How do you do the practice?

Here are some things you can try to make it easier for your preschooler to communicate using symbols and signs.



- Take photographs of your child doing things that are fun for him. Then let him use the photos to ask to do those things. This helps him link the pictures with the things he likes to do.
- Put drawings of things your child does daily in the rooms where your child does them. He can use the drawings to show you what he wants or wants to do.
- Help your child see symbols or letters clearly. Use pictures, symbols, or letters in a contrasting color on solid, open backgrounds.
- Using picture puzzles can be a fun way for preschoolers to link pictures with objects. Preschoolers who have difficulty holding small objects will find puzzles with extra-big pieces easier to do. Puzzle pieces with knobs can make it even easier for your preschooler to grasp them.
- Use a calendar with pictures to show activities. This is a great way to help your child use pictures to know “what happens next” in the day.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your preschooler point to pictures or symbols to “tell” you what she wants?
- Does your preschooler recognize more symbols, signs, pictures, or letters?
- Does your preschooler enjoy playing with picture puzzles?

Take a look at more fun with symbols and letters

Snack-Time Signs

Noah likes to have fruit-gum bears or cheese snacks after his nap. Noah's mother has placed pictures of his favorite snacks, at his eye level, on the refrigerator. Because he has visual difficulties, the pictures are large and clear. The objects in the pictures are set against plain backgrounds. His mother has printed the words "bears" and "cheese" in large block print on a light background below each picture. Noah comes into the kitchen and points to the picture of the gummy bears. "Bear" he tells his mother. "OK, you want the gummy bears today," she replies. She reaches into the cabinet and gets him a small package of his favorite treat.



You Can Puzzle It Out

Marcos and his grandfather are sitting on the floor of the living room with a letter puzzle. The puzzle has knobs on the pieces. That makes them easier for Marcos to handle. "Marcos, can you find the letter *M*?" asks his grandfather. "*M* for *Marcos*." Marcos looks at the pieces and points to a couple of them. "Let's see if those fit here," Grandpa says. He points to the spot for *M*. Marcos picks up a piece by the knob. He tries to place it in the spot. After trying for several seconds, he changes pieces and tries the second one. "Great job, Marcos! You found the *M*. Let's see if we can find the letter *G* for *Grandpa*." Marcos smiles and looks through the pieces again.

"A Picture's Worth..."

Lissa loves to slide. Going to the playground and playing on the slides is one of her favorite things to do. One afternoon, her mom is busy straightening up the living room. Lissa watches her work for a few minutes and then goes to get the photo cards Mom made for her. Lissa puts on her warm jacket and shows Mom the card with a photo they took at the playground. "Slide," she tells her mom. "Oh, it's time to go to the playground, isn't it?" Mom asks. Lissa nods. "OK, put on your hood let's go!" Lissa claps her hands happily.

