

Visual Strategies for Activities and Play

Presenting items for the child needs to do something

To support engagement in an activity or task or to aid completion with as much independence as possible whilst attempting to reduce potential frustration. Consider the order the child needs to do something and place visually in that order either lined up left to right, or in a pile top to bottom e.g.

- Stacking rings placed in the opposite order in a pile
- Puzzle pieces in a pile in joining the order.
- Clothes in a line or a pile in the order in which they should be put on.



Activities with a clear ending

Sometimes children can have difficulty maintaining attention on an activity they may flit from one activity to another, never seeing an activity through. If this is occurring consider presenting a child with an activity that has a clear ending, this will initially need adult support, but it would be hoped that the adult would eventually be able to “wean” themselves off, it would also be hoped that the child would extend concentration and that this would filter into child-initiated and more open-ended experiences. Some good examples of activities with a clear ending:

- Posting boxes – bought or homemade relating to interests
- Inset tray puzzles/ jigsaws
- Building a tower with a reduced number of bricks e.g., five
- Threading beads with a reduced amount of beads



Reducing choice

Sometimes the free flow and freely accessible nature of an early years environment can be overwhelming for some children. It may be necessary to put additional structures in throughout the child’s session or support may only be needed on occasion. When a child appears overwhelmed or without aim (not to be confused with resting, taking the environment in or observing) it may be appropriate to reduce choice by giving the child a choice of a few or two options, using simple language accompanied by gestures e.g., pointing to the items/ areas or holding two objects up representing those choices.



“Choose train or puzzle?”

Playing alongside a child with a similar set of toys

To support children to develop joint attention, extend and engage in new play skills. Have multiple sets of toys as the child is playing with and play alongside initially imitating the child's actions and sounds, as the child becomes more aware of your presence/ actions begin to add occasional new actions and pause to observe if they imitate. This strategy can be extended further by presenting the play to children with the same toys set up opposite each other and adults modelling a simple play script. This is strategy is called Imitiplay.



Visual support play cards

Take photos of children engaging in simple play or find online e.g., feeding a baby, kicking a ball to prompt play (adult to model this play alongside child). You can also take photos of a simple play routine presented in a book or schedule, the child can then follow the routine e.g., making a play sandwich. Have photos/pictures of structures/ items made with construction toys available as a visual prompt for children to follow.

