

Visual Supports

Visual supports help individuals with Asperger Syndrome focus on the task at hand by:

- ◆ Clarifying the task that is to be completed
- ◆ Reminding the individual of the task to be completed
- ◆ Directing the individual's energies toward completing the task at hand

Most children do not want to appear different from their peers. Therefore, care should be taken when designing visual supports for young people with Asperger Syndrome to ensure that they are either used by everyone in the class or that they are not obvious to others in the class except the teacher and student with Asperger Syndrome. Although the use of visual supports may benefit all students, they are essential for students with Asperger Syndrome. A variety of visual supports that can be used to make life easier for students with Asperger Syndrome at the middle and high school levels are shown in the table below.

Visual Supports for Secondary School Students with Asperger Syndrome		
Type and Purpose of Support	Description	Location
Map of school outlining classes: ◆ Assists the student in navigating school halls and locating classes ◆ Helps orient and structure the student	The map shows the student where his or her classes are, the order in which they take place, and when he or she should visit his or her locker.	◆ Taped inside locker ◆ Stuck inside back cover of textbook or folder/notebook
List of classes, room numbers, books, and other supplies needed: ◆ Aids the student in getting to class with needed materials ◆ Works well with students who have difficulty with maps	The list outlines the class, room number, supplies needed, and when the class starts and ends.	◆ Taped inside locker ◆ Stuck inside back cover of textbook or folder/notebook
List of teacher's expectations and routines for each class: ◆ Helps the student understand the environment ◆ Reduces anxiety associated with routines and lack thereof	This support details the routine that is to be followed in the classroom and outlines particular characteristics that can help the student get along in class. For example, the list could describe that a particular teacher does not permit talking with neighbors, or that another teacher allows students to bring a bottle of water to class.	◆ Stuck inside back cover of textbook or folder/notebook ◆ Placed on a key ring that is kept in a pocket or on a backpack

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<p>Schedule of activities within the class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Prepares the student for upcoming activities ◆ Assists in transitions 	<p>This list simply details what activities will occur during a given class. As each activity is completed, it can be erased, crossed out, or checked off.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Listed on chalkboard or whiteboard
<p>Outlines and notes from lectures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Facilitates the student's understanding of content material ◆ Addresses fine-motor difficulties that can make it difficult for a student to take handwritten notes ◆ Reduces anxiety the student may have about listening and taking notes at the same time 	<p>Providing the student with outlines and notes from lectures, rather than expecting the student to take his own notes, allows the student to focus on understanding the content.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Prepared in advance by the teacher and given to the student ◆ Notes taken by a peer during class, using carbon paper or photocopied, and handed out at the end of class ◆ Tape recording of lecture by the teacher, with the tape discreetly given to the student at the end of class
<p>Sample models of assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Helps the student understand exactly what is required ◆ Provides a concrete, visual model 	<p>A model of assignments helps the student be visually aware of format requirements. This allows the student to concentrate his efforts on content. The model can be an actual copy of an assignment that received an "A" grade.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Prepared in advance by the teacher and given to the student discreetly
<p>List of test reminders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ensures that the student knows when a test will occur and what material will be covered 	<p>A study guide that lists content and textbook pages covered in the test is helpful. This study guide should include a timeline for studying and outlining content to be studied each night and the approximate time required to do so. The teacher assumes responsibility for developing it initially, but then works with the student to complete the task independently. A school-wide homework hotline is helpful. If this is not available, a <u>teacher, other adult, or carefully selected</u> peer can serve as the homework hotline for the student.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Prepared in advance by the teacher and given to the student with sufficient time to study ◆ Final reminder given the day before the test

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<p>List of schedule changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Ensures that the student is prepared for changes in routine ◆ Reduces stress and anxiety that can accompany unexpected or even minor changes 	<p>This prompt helps students prepare for a change in routine. Including the responsibilities of the student in the activity helps her complete the activity with minimal stress/anxiety. If the activity is one that the student is not familiar with, it should also include his or her behavioral responsibilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Listed on chalkboard or whiteboard ◆ Prepared at least 1 day in advance by the teacher and given to the student
<p>List of homework assignments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Assists the student in understanding requirements so that he or she can complete homework independently 	<p>Students with Asperger Syndrome need written details of homework. Teachers often write the basic elements of homework on the board and supplement them verbally as students write down the assignment. This is not sufficient for students with Asperger Syndrome. The homework support should include all relevant information, such as the due date, items to complete, and the format.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Prepared in advance by the teacher and given to the student discreetly
<p>Cue to use home base:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Prompts the student to leave class to lower her stress/anxiety level 	<p>Students with Asperger Syndrome often do not know that they are entering the cycle for meltdown. When the teacher recognizes the behaviors associated with the start of the cycle, he or she can use this card to prompt the student to leave the room.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ A small card, approximately the size of a business card, is carried by the teacher who discreetly places it on the student's desk when home base is needed. It is important to cue the student into any missed content when they return from their break so they don't feel "lost" or "out of sync" with the class