



{inclusion outreach}

1031 Lucas Avenue
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Using Tangible Symbols

Tangible symbols are physical, manipulable objects, which are customized for each student to represent words or messages in a way which is meaningful to them. They may be whole objects or parts of objects, and may feature distinctive textures or shapes. They are designed to be as portable as possible, so that they can be used in all circumstances.

Tangible symbols provide a relatively concrete, permanent way to represent language, unlike speech which is transitory. This removes the need for the student to use auditory memory.

Introducing Tangible Symbols

1. Develop a tangible symbol for one of the student's desired objects or activities.
2. Have the student touch or hold the symbol just before engaging with the object or activity. Talk about what the symbol means. Leave the symbol accessible while the student is engaged with the activity.
3. Through modeling and prompting, teach the student to use the symbol to make a request for the desired object or activity.
4. Add new symbols as the student consistently uses the existing symbol. Gradually increase the number of symbols presented.
5. Use the symbols across a variety of different places and communication partners.
6. Use the symbols for a variety of communication functions, such as commenting, asking questions, or starting a conversation.

For information about using tangible symbols in a "Shape of the Day" Schedule, see the handout "Visual and Tactile Schedules".



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Sample tangible symbols from www.perkinselearning.org



3D Symbols from Project Core



Respect

Competence

Inclusion

Presence

Choice



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Sample tactile/tangible schedule from www.simplyspecialized.com

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