



Office of Exceptional Student Education

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[detroitk12.org](http://detroitk12.org)

*Office of Exceptional Student Education*

**Distance Learning Packet**  
**ASD Program**

**Autism Spectrum**  
**Disorders 6-12**

Weeks 1 – 9: April 14 – June 12, 2020

Students Rise. We all Rise

DPSCD does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability and/or religion

Contact Compliance for more information at (313) 240-4377 or [detroitk12.org/admin/compliance](http://detroitk12.org/admin/compliance).

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES PACKET FOR  
ASD PROGRAM CLASSROOMS  
GRADES 6 - 12



April 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

May 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

April 1, 2020

Tips for Parents

Every person with autism is different, so the life skills that will be taught, and the pace that they are taught, will vary from person to person.

There are an endless number of functional academic skills, daily living skills and life skills to learn which will be taught and practiced at home, school, and in the community. Most people with autism benefit from clear, hands-on instruction in life skills that will help them to increase independence.

You can try several strategies to teach functional academics and life skills at home by following a general three-step approach:

1. **Assess the skills (i.e. figure out the person's difficulties and strengths).** Having a list of strengths and areas for improvement can help you clarify the goals you set and provide supportive feedback and encouragement along the way.
2. **Teach new skills in a supportive way.** The use of **visual aids** like charts, checklists and pictures can be a great way to provide support when working on new skills.
3. **Practice these new skills.** Remember to truly master a new skill you must practice in realistic settings. This may mean teaching money skills at home using real dollars and coins, but to practice you go out to a local store and make a purchase.

This packet includes sample activities, templates, visual supports and online resources.



PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

PRAISE, PRAISE, PRAISE

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/>



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 Let's Get  
**STARTed**  
<https://www.gvsu.edu/autismcenter>

ALPHABET LINE

A B C D E F

G H I J K L

M N O P Q

R S T U V

W X Y Z

**NUMBER LINE**

Directions: Cut along dotted lines and attach to a desk in one long row. Use tape or contact paper to keep in place.

1 2 3 4 **5** 6 7 8 9 **10** 11 12 13 14 **15** 16 17 18 19 **20** 21 22 23 24 **25**









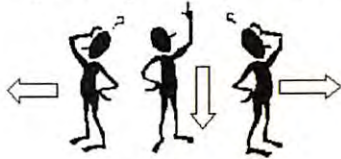



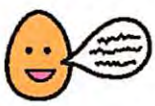


26 27 28 29 **30** 31 32 33 34 **35** 36 37 38 39 **40** 41 42 43 44 **45** 46 47












48 49 **50** 51 52 53 54 **55** 56 57 58 59 **60** 61 62 63 64 **65** 66 67 68

**69** **70** 71 72 73 74 **75** 76 77 78 79 **80** 81 82 83 84 **85** 86 87 88 89

**90** 91 92 93 94 **95** 96 97 98 99 **100**

# Answering Questions

Question Word	Means	
<p>Who</p> 	<p>people</p> 	 <p>animals</p>
<p>What</p> 	<p>things</p> 	<p>actions</p> 
<p>When</p> 	<p>Time of day</p> 	<p>past - present - future</p> 
<p>Why</p> 	<p>the reason</p> 	
<p>How</p> 	<p>Telling or describing</p> 	
<p>Where</p> 	<p>Places</p> 	

<p><b>Who</b> (person, animal)</p>	 <p>Barack Obama</p>	 <p>cat</p>	 <p>doctor</p>
<p><b>What</b> (thing, activity)</p>	 <p>car</p>	 <p>football</p>	 <p>talking on phone</p>
<p><b>When</b> (time, day)</p>	 <p>ten o'clock</p>	<p>Friday</p>	 <p>night</p>
<p><b>Where</b> (place)</p>	 <p>house</p>	 <p>pool</p>	 <p>school</p>

# Weekly Vocabulary Words

Week of: \_\_\_\_\_

**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

**5**

# **Weekly Vocabulary Homework**

**Monday: write words 5 times each**

**Tuesday: write the definitions**

**Wednesday: write a sentence**

**Thursday: draw pictures**

**Friday: write words that are like**

**This week's words:**



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Write your vocabulary words 5 times each:**

**1**

**2**

**3**

**4**

**5**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Write the definition of the vocabulary words.**

**1**

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**2**

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**3**

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**4**

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---

**5**

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**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Write a sentence with each of your vocabulary words.**

**1**

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---

**2**

---

---

**3**

---

---

**4**

---

---

**5**

---

---

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Pick 2 vocabulary words and draw a picture of each.**

**1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Write a word that means the same as your vocabulary word.**

<b>1</b>
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<b>2</b>
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<b>3</b>
----------

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<b>4</b>
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--

<b>5</b>
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# DAYS OF THE WEEK

<b>SUNDAY</b>	
<b>MONDAY</b>	
<b>TUESDAY</b>	
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	
<b>THURSDAY</b>	
<b>FRIDAY</b>	
<b>SATURDAY</b>	

## Time Concepts

If today is Friday, what day is tomorrow? \_\_\_\_\_

If today is Tuesday, what day was yesterday? \_\_\_\_\_

If yesterday was Wednesday, what day is today? \_\_\_\_\_

If today is Monday, what day is tomorrow? \_\_\_\_\_

If today is Thursday, what day was yesterday? \_\_\_\_\_

If yesterday was Saturday, what day is today? \_\_\_\_\_

If today is Thursday, what day is tomorrow? \_\_\_\_\_

# My City and State

You may want to consult a parent, friend or teacher when doing the research necessary to complete this worksheet. Your local library will have helpful reference books on local history, almanacs, and encyclopedias.

## The City I Live In

The name of my city is \_\_\_\_\_.

The mayor of my city is \_\_\_\_\_.

The school I attend is \_\_\_\_\_.

My city has a lot of \_\_\_\_\_.

The best place for you to visit in my city is \_\_\_\_\_.

I think my city is great because \_\_\_\_\_.

My favorite restaurant in my city is \_\_\_\_\_.

I think the prettiest street in my city is \_\_\_\_\_.

## The State I Live In

I live in the state of \_\_\_\_\_.

The capital of my state is \_\_\_\_\_.

The governor of my state is \_\_\_\_\_.

The colors of my state flag are \_\_\_\_\_.

The abbreviation for my state is \_\_\_\_\_.

My state is called the \_\_\_\_\_.

A famous person from my state is \_\_\_\_\_.

The state bird is \_\_\_\_\_.

The state flower is \_\_\_\_\_.






The state tree is \_\_\_\_\_.




















**COIN MATCHING SHEET**

1		2		3		4
	+.25		+.25		+.25	
= 25¢		= 50¢		= 75¢		= \$1.00

1		2		3		4		5
	+.10		+.10		+.10		+.10	
= 10¢		= 20¢		= 30¢		= 40¢		= 50¢

1		2		3		4		5
	+.05		+.05		+.05		+.05	
= 5¢		= 10¢		= 15¢		= 20¢		= 25¢

1		2		3		4		5
	+.01		+.01		+.01		+.01	
= 1¢		= 2¢		= 3¢		= 4¢		= 5¢

6		7		8		9		10
	+.01		+.01		+.01		+.01	
= 6¢		= 7¢		= 8¢		= 9¢		= 10¢

**BILL REPLICAS**

**IMPORTANT!** Cut on the dotted lines. Dotted lines represent actual bill size.

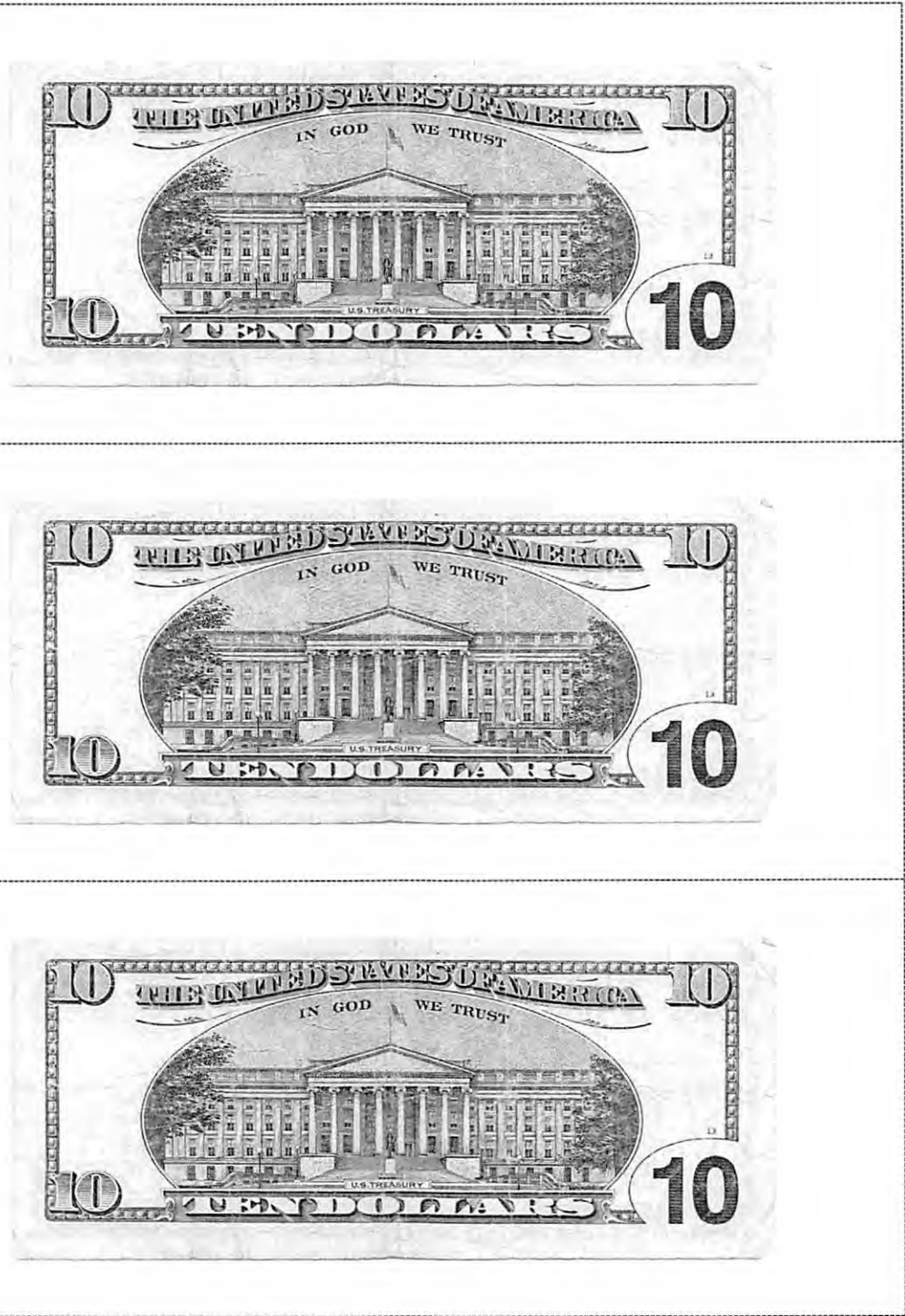


















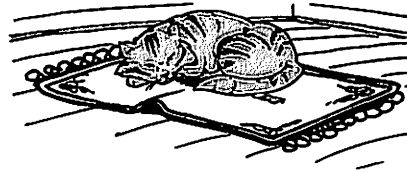
# Activity 1

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Read the sentences and look at the picture in each box. Decide which sentence matches the picture. Draw a line from that sentence to the picture.

The cat is on the rug.

The cat is by the rug.



The dog is by the ball.

The dog has the ball.



His hat is fat.

His hat is tall.



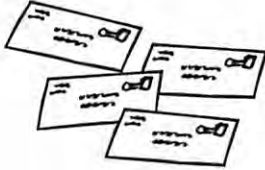
# Activity 2

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Read the sentences and look at the picture in each box. Decide which sentence matches the picture. Draw a line from that sentence to the picture.


There are four letters.

There are five letters.

A line drawing of four envelopes scattered together. Each envelope has a small square stamp in the top right corner.


The lady is with two birds.

The lady is with a dog.

A line drawing of a woman in a long-sleeved shirt and pants walking a dog on a leash. The dog is a small, fluffy breed.

He has one book.

He has three books.

A line drawing of a young boy in a t-shirt carrying a stack of three books under his arm.


# Activity 3

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Read the sentences and look at the picture in each box. Decide which sentence matches the picture. Draw a line from that sentence to the picture.

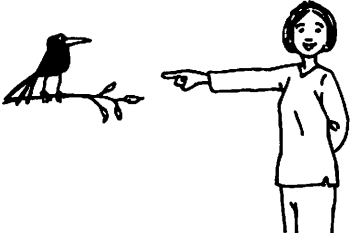
The girl has a pail.

The boy has a pail.

A black and white line drawing of a young girl with pigtails, wearing a dress and boots, holding a bucket or pail in her right hand.

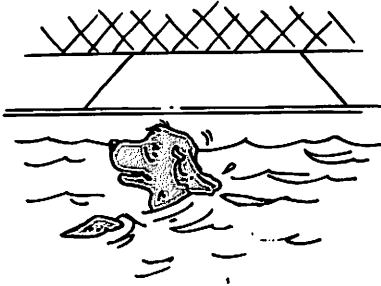
That bird is black.

That bird is white.

A black and white line drawing of a girl pointing her right hand towards a black bird perched on a branch.

The boy is in the water.

The dog is in the water.

A black and white line drawing of a dog swimming in water. In the background, there is a wooden structure with a lattice roof, possibly a dock or a bridge.

# Activity 4

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Read the sentences and look at the picture in each box. Decide which sentence matches the picture. Draw a line from that sentence to the picture.

The girl has a hat on.

The girls have hats on.



The ball is in the air.

The hat is in the air.



The boat is in the water.

The boat is by the water.




# Activity 5

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Read the sentences and look at the picture in each box. Decide which sentence matches the picture. Draw a line from that sentence to the picture.

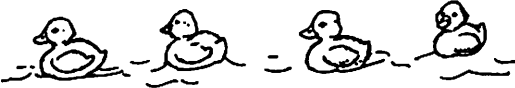
The boy is on a bike.

The boy is on a sled.

A black and white line drawing of a boy wearing a winter hat and jacket, sitting on a sled and sliding down a snowy hill. There are clouds in the sky.

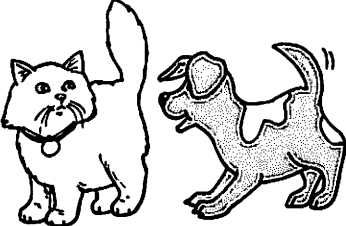
There are four ducks.

There are five ducks.

A black and white line drawing of four ducks swimming in a row on a body of water.

The dog is by the cat.

The dog is by the door.

A black and white line drawing of a fluffy white cat sitting on the left and a dog on the right.

# Activity 6

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Read the sentences and look at the picture in each box. Decide which sentence matches the picture. Draw a line from that sentence to the picture.

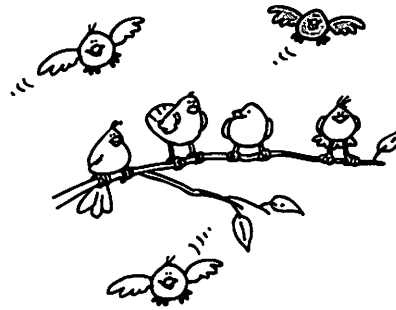
The dog is in his house.

The dog is out of his house.



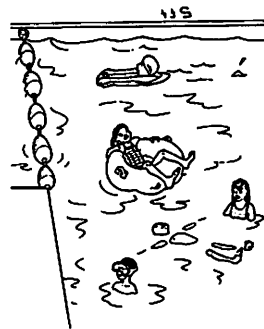
There are many birds.

There are a few birds.



They are by the pool.

They are in the pool.






# Activity 7


Name \_\_\_\_\_

Read the sentences and look at the picture in each box. Decide which sentence matches the picture. Draw a line from that sentence to the picture.


The cook has a cake.  
The cook has a pie.



The man has a cup.  
The man has a bat.



The woman is sad.  
The woman is happy.



# Activity 8

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Read the sentences and look at the picture in each box. Decide which sentence matches the picture. Draw a line from that sentence to the picture.

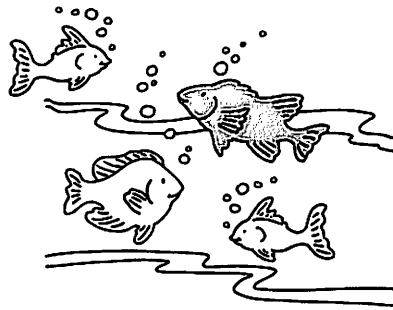
The baby has a bear.

The baby has a cat.



There are two fish.

There are four fish.



The bike is moving.

The bike is not moving.



# Activity 9

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Read the sentences and look at the picture in each box. Decide which sentence matches the picture. Draw a line from that sentence to the picture.

The bird has a worm.

The worm has a bird.



The fish is in the bowl.

The fish is by the bowl.



The dog is in front of the cat.

The dog is chasing the cat.




# Activity 10

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Read the sentences and look at the picture in each box. Decide which sentence matches the picture. Draw a line from that sentence to the picture.

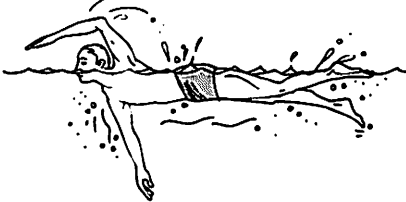
The man is in the sun.

The man is in the rain.

A black and white line drawing of a man wearing a long raincoat and holding an open umbrella. He is standing in the rain, with vertical lines representing rain falling around him. There is a puddle on the ground to his right.

The man is in the water.

The man is not wet.

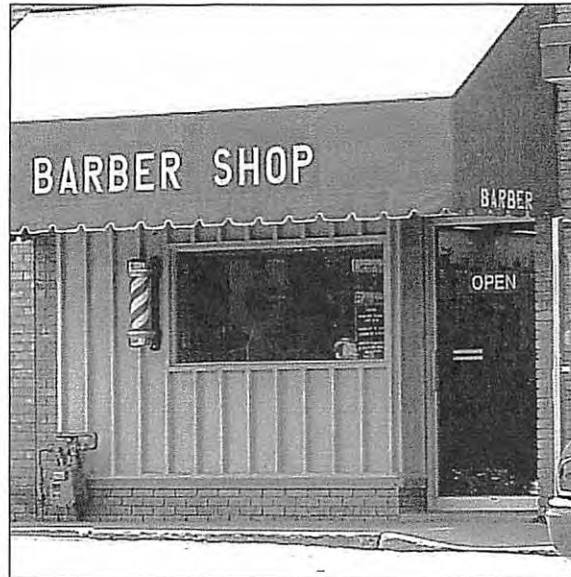
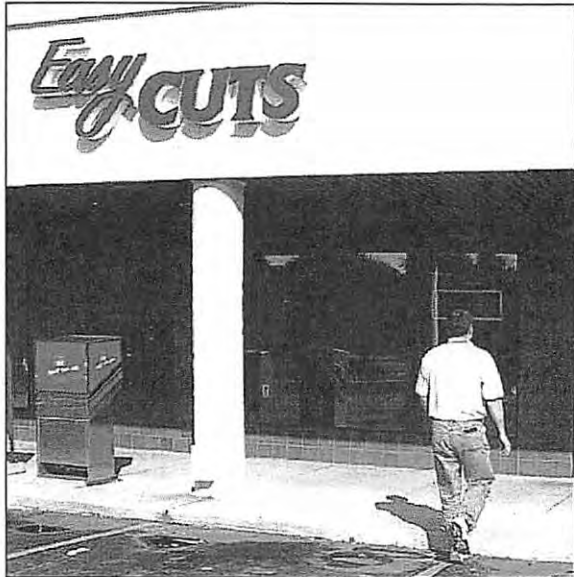
A black and white line drawing of a man swimming in water. He is on his stomach, with his head above water and arms extended forward. There are splashes of water around him.

The dog is dry.

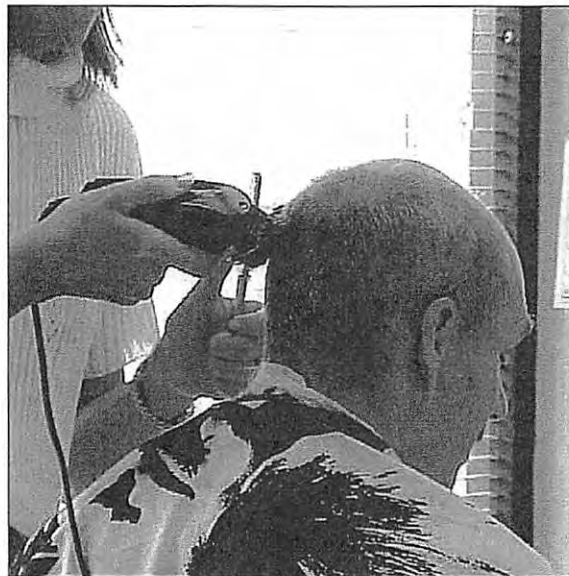
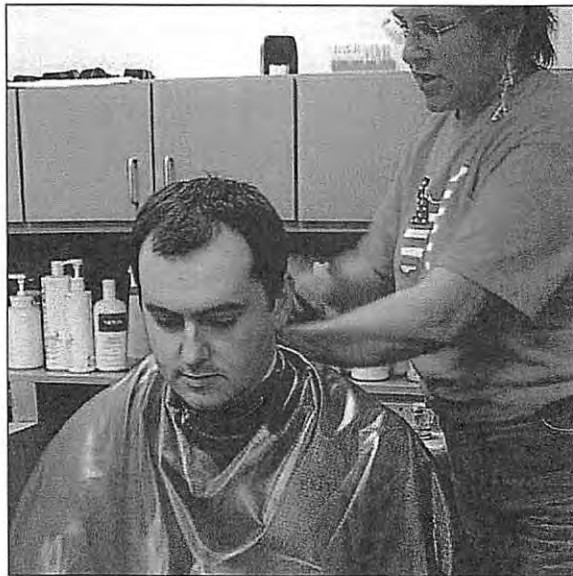
The dog is wet.

A black and white line drawing of a dog standing in a puddle. The dog is facing left, and there are vertical lines representing rain falling on it and the puddle.

# Barbershops 1

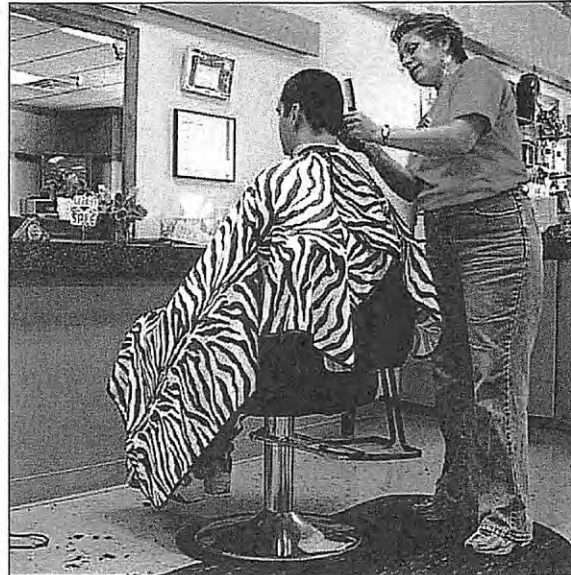
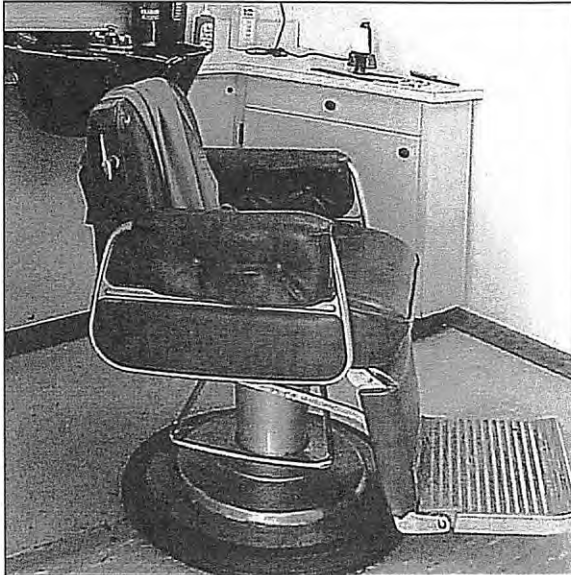


People go to barbershops to get their hair cut or styled.



The person who cuts your hair is called a barber.

# Barbershops 2

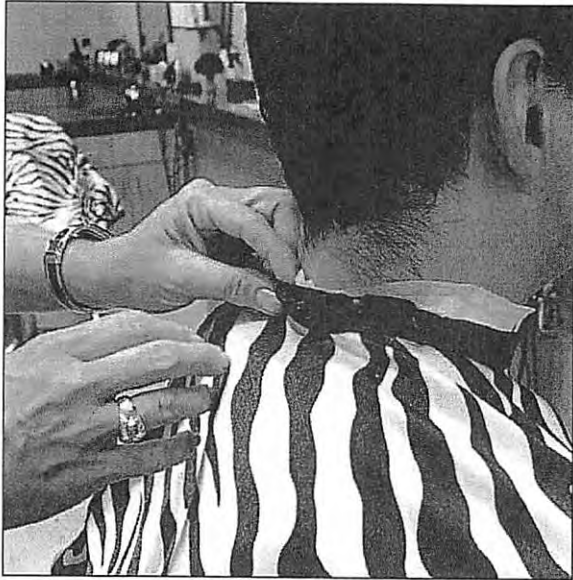


When you get your hair cut you sit in a special chair that turns and moves up and down.



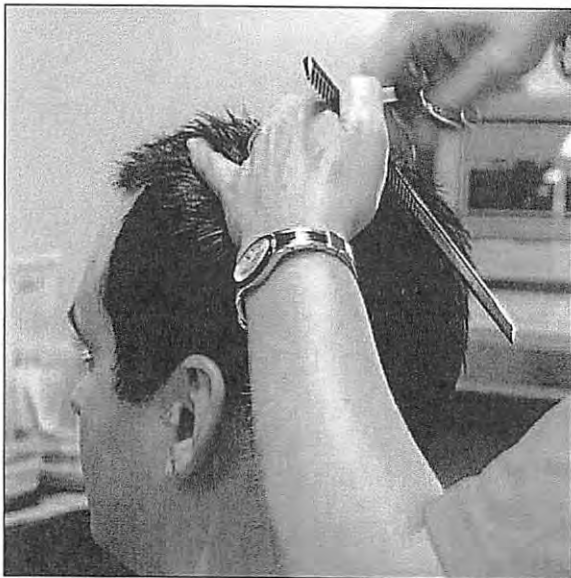
Some barbershops have sinks for washing hair.

# Barbershops 3



The barber wraps a sheet around your shoulders so hair does not fall on your clothes.

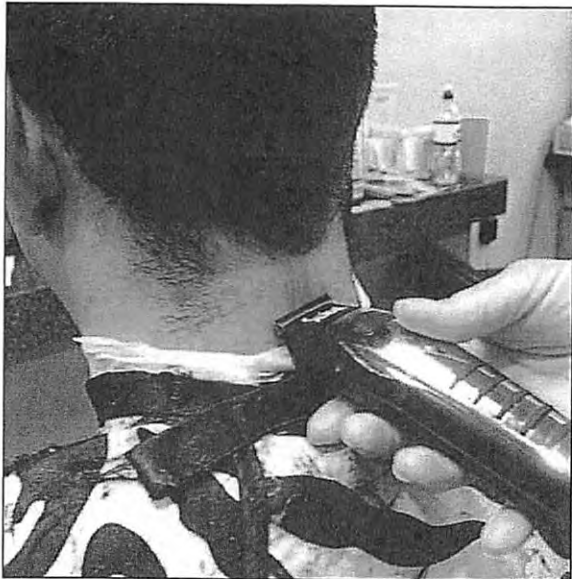
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Barbers use a comb and scissors to cut hair.

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# Barbershops 4



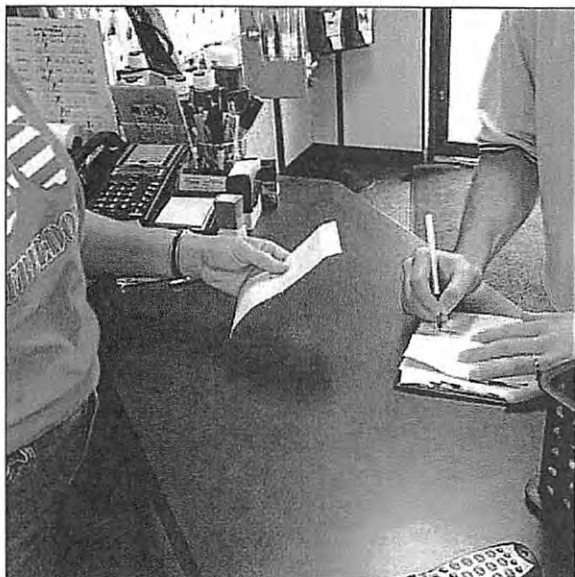
Sometimes they use an electric hair clipper.



After the haircut, the barber brushes loose hair from your face and neck.

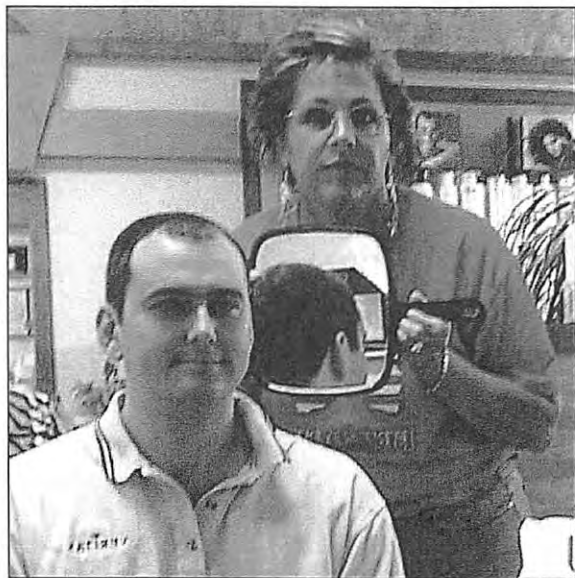


# Barbershops 5



The barber tells you how much to pay for the haircut.

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You look good after you get your hair cut.

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# Study Questions Barbershops 6

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions: Circle the answer.**

1. People go to the barbershop to get:

- a. laundry washed.
- b. hair cut and styled.
- c. drinks and food.

2. Barbers use:

- a. books, magazines and CDs.
- b. drinks, food and desserts.
- c. combs, scissors and electric clippers.

**Directions: Write the word to complete the sentence.**

3. A person who cuts hair is called a \_\_\_\_\_.

[barber]

**Challenge: Answer.**

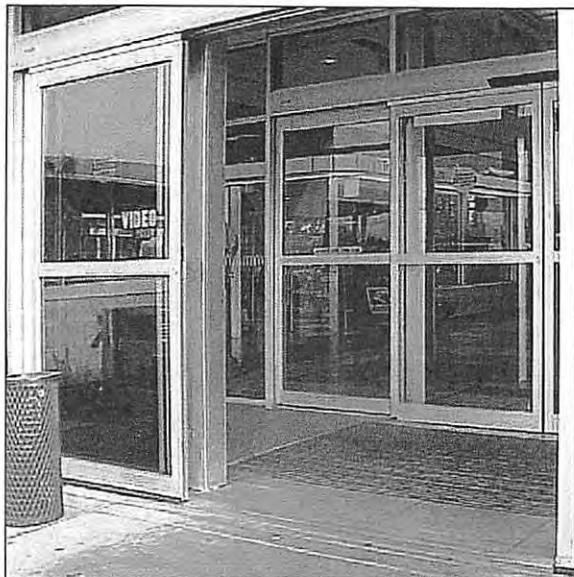
4. How often do you go to a barber?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Name something you can buy at the barbershop.

\_\_\_\_\_

# Doors 1



Many large buildings have automatic doors that open before you touch them. Some doors open when you pull them sideways.

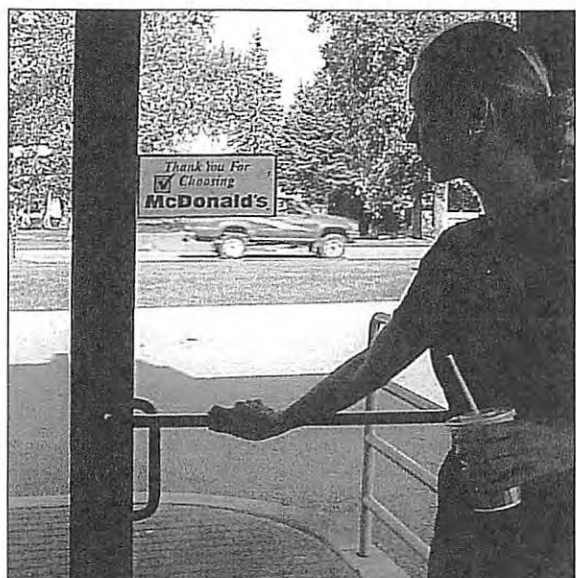


Do not play around automatic doors because you could get injured.

# Doors 2



Some doors have buttons that people in wheelchairs can push to open automatically.



When you open a glass door use the handle to push it open.

# Doors 3



It is important to know how to get out of buildings if there is a fire.

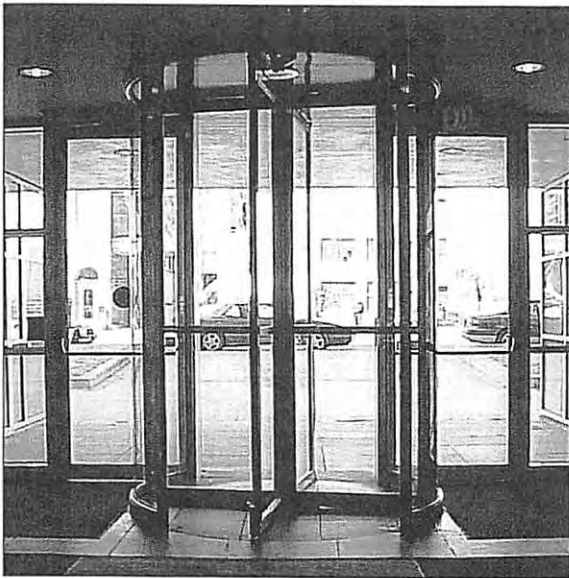


Look for a door with a sign that says EXIT and go outside. Most EXIT signs are bright red so you can see them easily.

# Doors 4



Some doors are used only when there is an emergency. If you open these doors you will hear an alarm.



Many buildings have revolving doors.

# Doors 5



To use a revolving door, push on the door handle and keep walking until you get through.



It is important to know how to use different kinds of doors.

# Study Questions Doors 6

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions: Circle the answer.**

1. Doors that open before you touch them are:

- a. revolving doors.
- b. manual doors.
- c. automatic doors.

2. Doors that have alarms on them are:

- a. automatic doors.
- b. emergency doors.
- c. revolving doors.

**Directions: Write the word to complete the sentence.**

3. To go out of a building, look for a sign that says \_\_\_\_\_.

(EXIT)

**Challenge: Answer.**

4. What is a safety tip about automatic doors?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What kind of door does your school have?

\_\_\_\_\_



# Fast Food Restaurants 1



At a fast food restaurant, your food is ready for you as soon as you order it.



A menu board behind the counter shows prices of food you can order.

# Fast Food Restaurants 2

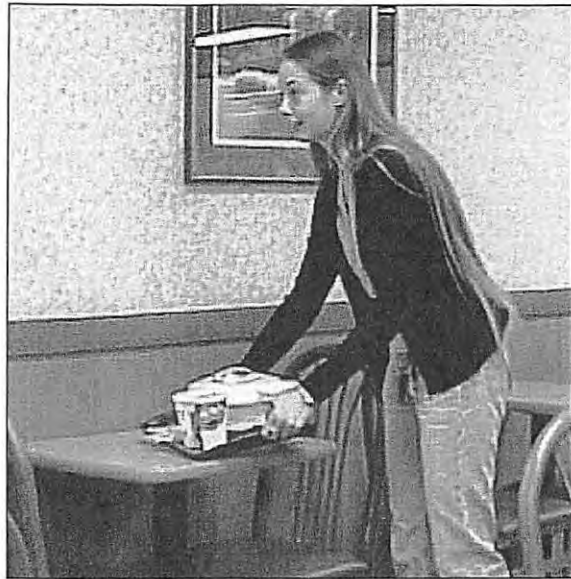
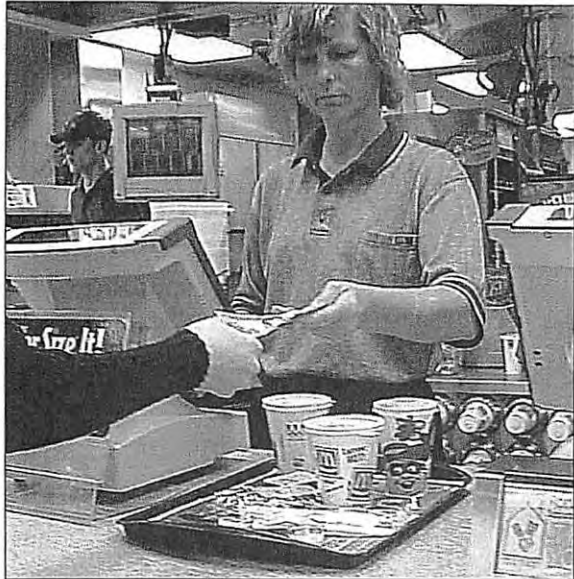


Cashiers type your order on a computer and tell you how much to pay.



Then the cashier puts your food on a tray.

# Fast Food Restaurants 3



After paying for your meal, you take the tray and find a place to sit.



Some fast food restaurants let you pour your own drink.

# Fast Food Restaurants 4



Put a lid on your drink so it does not spill and use a straw to drink it.



Use napkins when you eat. Some restaurants put napkin holders on every table.

# Fast Food Restaurants 5



When you are done eating, empty your tray and put it on top of the trash bin.



Fast food restaurants are good places to eat when you are in a hurry.

# Study Questions

## Fast Food Restaurants 6

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions: Circle the answer.**

1. A menu board:

- a. shows prices of food.
- b. shows prices of rooms.
- c. shows prices of tickets.

2. What does the cashier at a fast food restaurant do?

- a. combs and cuts hair.
- b. gives you a key to a room.
- c. puts food on a tray and takes your money.

**Directions: Write the word to complete the sentence.**

3. Use a \_\_\_\_\_ when you eat.

(napkin)

**Challenge: Answer.**

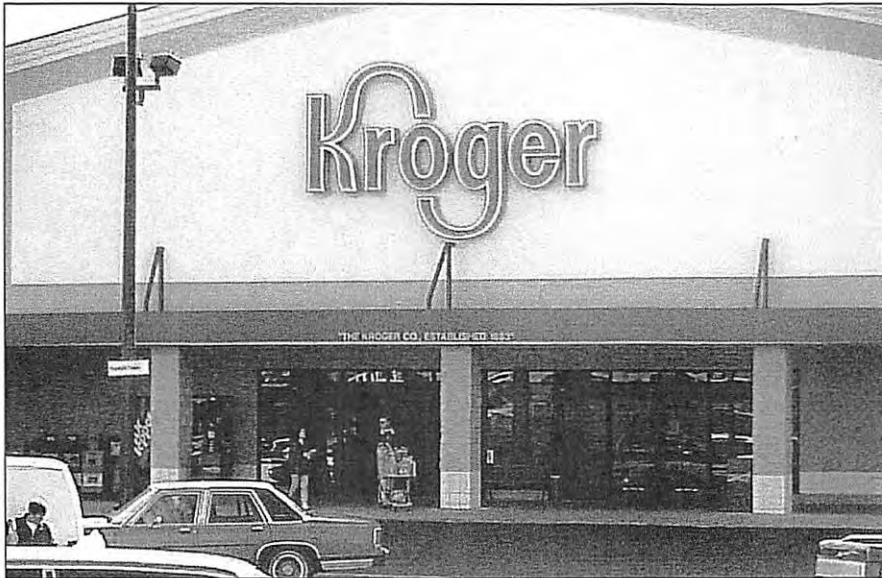
4. When is a fast food restaurant a good place to eat?

\_\_\_\_\_

5. What is your favorite fast food restaurant?

\_\_\_\_\_

# Grocery Stores 1



Grocery stores are an important part of the community.  
People shop in them for food to take home.



Make a grocery list before you go shopping.  
The list should include all the items you need to buy.

# Grocery Stores 2



Use a shopping cart or basket when shopping.  
They help you carry your groceries.



Grocery stores have products on shelves on both sides  
of the aisles.



# Grocery Stores 3



Walk down the aisles to look for items on your grocery list.

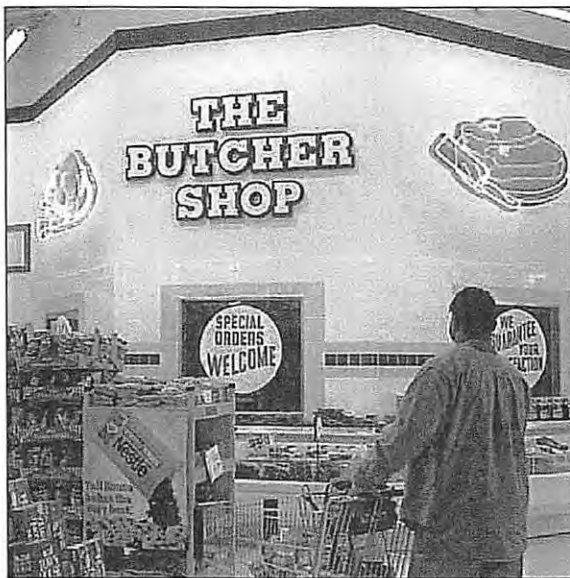


When you find items you are looking for, put them in your cart or basket.

# Grocery Stores 4

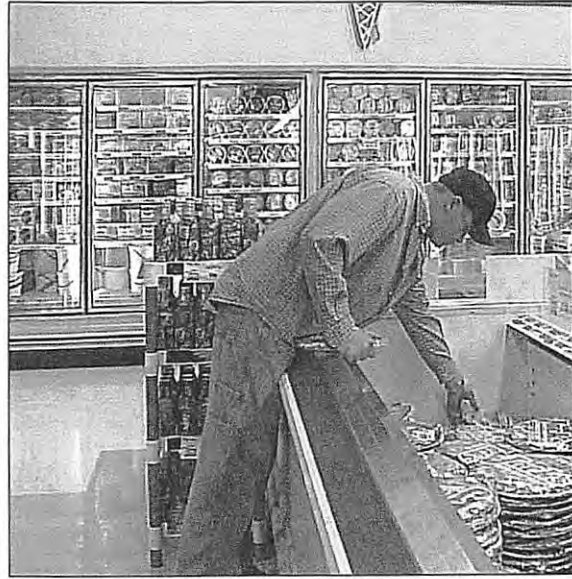


Some products are found in special sections. The dairy section has products like milk, cheese and butter.



The meat department has products like pork, beef, chicken and turkey.

# Grocery Stores 5



Some products are kept in the frozen food section.  
The big freezers keep food cold so it doesn't spoil.



Fresh fruits and vegetables are found in the produce section.

# Grocery Stores 6



When you are done, take your basket or cart to the checkout line. The clerk scans the products you selected and tells you how much you owe.

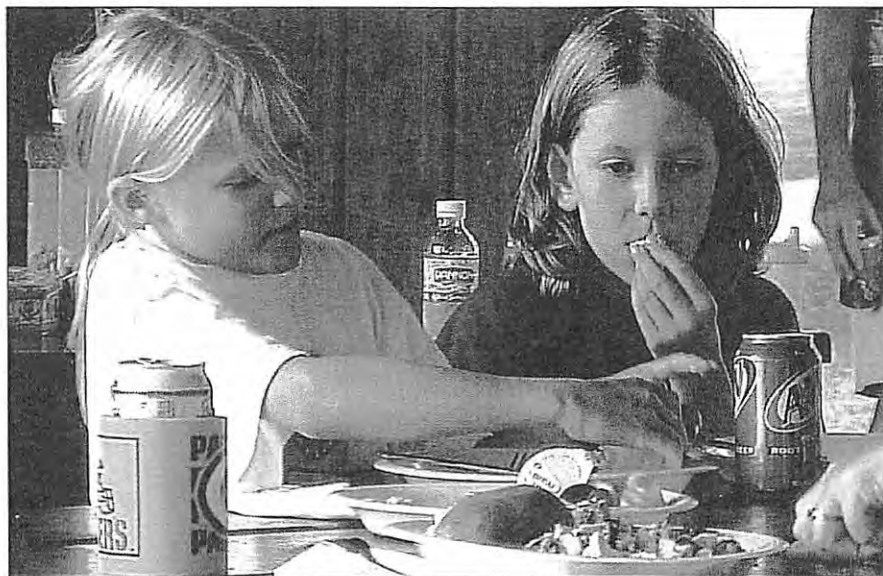


Most stores put your groceries in bags so they are easy to take home.

# Grocery Stores 7



Some people pay for their groceries with cash. Others write checks or use credit cards.



Grocery stores are important because they sell food we eat everyday.

# Study Questions Grocery Stores 8

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions: Circle the answer.**

1. The dairy section of a grocery store has:

- a. pork, beef and chicken.
- b. fruits and vegetables.
- c. milk, cheese and butter.

2. The produce section of a grocery store has:

- a. frozen foods.
- b. fruits and vegetables.
- c. milk, cheese and butter.

**Directions: Write the word to complete the sentence.**

3. Freezers keep food \_\_\_\_\_ .  
(cold)

**Challenge: Answer.**

4. Make a list of three things you can buy at a grocery store.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Name two ways you can pay at a grocery store.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_

# Community Signs 1



There are many different signs in the community. Signs give us important information. Some are for your safety and others help you find your way around.



Some signs look different but give the same information. Both signs show the location of a woman's restroom.

# Community Signs 2



Other signs always look the same.



Some signs may have pictures or symbols on them, while others are written.



# Community Signs 3



Some signs combine pictures or symbols with words.



Everywhere you look you will find signs.

# Study Questions

## Community Signs 6

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions: Circle the answer.**

1. Community signs give you:
  - a. information.
  - b. tickets.
  - c. transportation.
  
2. Community signs have either:
  - a. bright colors or tickets.
  - b. seatbelts or buttons.
  - c. pictures or symbols.

**Directions: Write the word to complete the sentence.**

3. Everywhere you look you will find \_\_\_\_\_ .  
(signs)

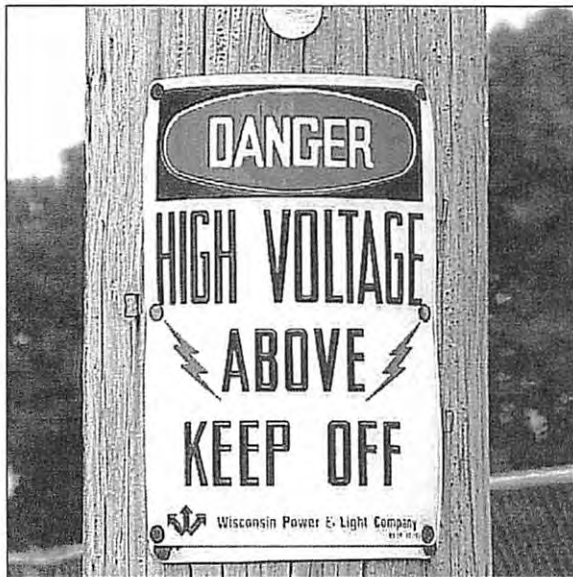
**Challenge: Answer.**

4. What is one sign you see on your way to school?  
\_\_\_\_\_

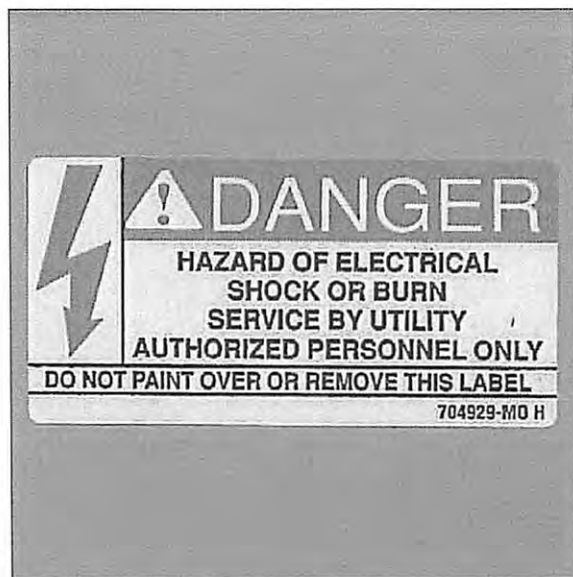
5. List three signs you see in your school.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

# Safety Signs 1



Safety signs are everywhere. They have bright colors like red and yellow so we see them and pay attention.

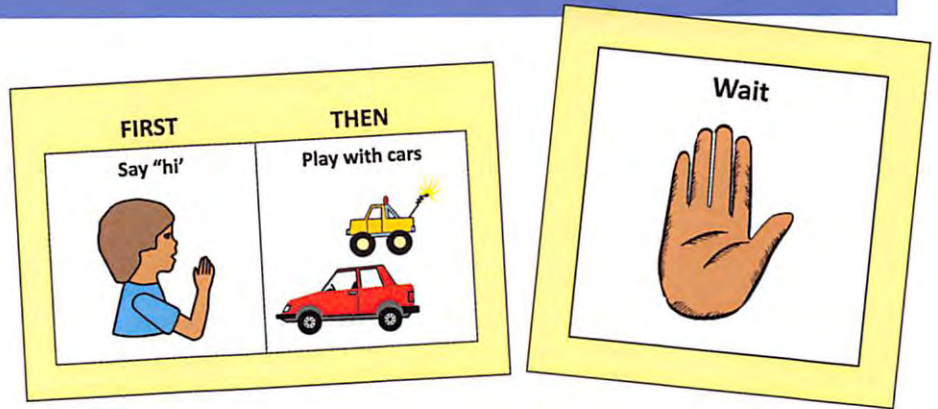


Some have important words like Danger, Warning or Caution.

# Visual Supports and Autism Spectrum Disorders

## Introduction

**What are visual supports?** A visual support refers to using a picture or other visual item to communicate with a child who has difficulty understanding or using language. Visual supports can be photographs, drawings, objects, written words, or lists. Research has shown that visual supports work well as a way to communicate.



Visual supports are used with children who have autism spectrum disorders (ASD) for two main purposes. They help parents communicate better with their child, and they help their child communicate better with others.

This brochure introduces parents, caregivers, and professionals to visual supports and provides instruction on how to use them effectively. Visual supports can be used with persons of any age, although this brochure refers to children. Also, visual supports can be used by caregivers other than parents.

**Why are visual supports important?** The main features of ASD are challenges in interacting socially, using language, and having limited interests or repetitive behaviors. Visual supports help in all three areas.

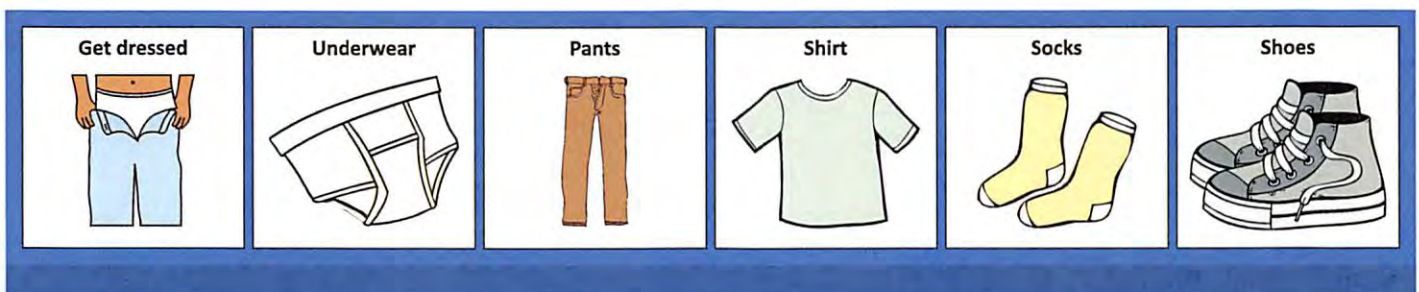
First, children with ASD may not understand social cues as they interact with others in daily activities. They may not grasp social

expectations, like how to start a conversation, how to respond when others make social approaches, or how to change behavior based on unspoken social rules. Visual supports can help teach social skills and help children with ASD use them on their own in social situations.

Second, children with ASD often find it difficult to understand and follow spoken instructions. They may not be able to express well what they want or need. Visuals can help parents communicate what they expect. This decreases frustration and may help decrease problem behaviors that result from difficulty communicating. Visuals can promote appropriate, positive ways to communicate.

Finally, some children with ASD are anxious or act out when their routines change or they are in unfamiliar situations. Visuals can help them understand what to expect and will happen next and also reduce anxiety. Visuals can help them pay attention to important details and help them cope with change.

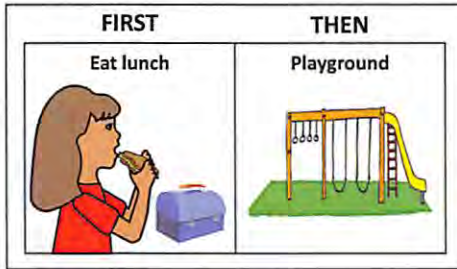
*Continued on next page*



## First – Then Board

### ❑ What is it?

A First-Then Board is a visual display of something your child prefers that will happen after completing a task that is less preferred.



### ❑ When is it helpful?

A First-Then Board is helpful in teaching children with ASD to follow directions and learn new skills. A First-Then Board motivates them to do activities that they do not like and clarifies when they can do what they like. A First-Then Board lays the language foundation needed to complete multi-step directions and activities and to use more complex visual systems.

### ❑ How do I teach it and use it?

Decide what task you want your child to complete first (what goes in the “first” box) and the preferred item or activity (what goes in the “then” box) that your child can have immediately after the “first” task is done. This preferred item/activity should be motivating enough to increase the likelihood that your child will follow your direction.

Put the visuals on the board (e.g., photos, drawings, written words) that represent the activity you identified. Present the board to the child with a brief, verbal instruction. Try to use the least amount of words possible. For example, before beginning the “first” task, say, “First, put on shoes, then swing.” If needed, refer to the board while your child is doing the task. For example, say “One more shoe, then swing” when your child is almost done.

When the “first” task is completed, refer back to the board. For example, say “All done putting on shoes, now swing!” and immediately provide the preferred, reinforcing item or activity.

In order to teach children with ASD the value of the First-Then Board, you must give them the reinforcing activity or item after they complete the “first” task. Otherwise, your child may not trust the board the next time you use it.

### ❑ What if challenging behaviors occur?

If challenging behaviors occur, continue by physically prompting your child to complete the “first” task. Keep your focus on the task rather than on the challenging behavior. Then it is important to still provide the reinforcing item or activity, since the focus of the board

is on completing the “first” task, and not on addressing challenging behaviors.

If you think challenging behaviors may happen, begin by introducing the First-Then Board for a task that your child usually completes willingly and successfully. If challenging behaviors become more difficult to control, it may be appropriate to consider behavioral consultation with a professional to address these behaviors directly.

## Visual Schedule

### ❑ What is it?

A visual schedule is a visual representation of what is going to happen throughout the day or within a task or activity.

### ❑ When is it helpful?

A visual schedule is helpful for breaking down a task that has multiple steps to ensure the teaching and compliance of those steps. It is also helpful in decreasing anxiety and rigidity surrounding transitions by communicating when certain activities will occur throughout the day or part of the day.

### ❑ How do I teach it and use it?

After your child understands the concept of sequencing activities through the use of a First-Then Board, you can develop a more complex schedule for a series of activities during the day.

Decide the activities that you will picture in the schedule. Choose activities that really will happen in that particular order. Try to mix in preferred activities with non-preferred ones.

Put on the schedule the visuals (e.g., photos, drawings, written words) that show the activities that you have identified. The schedule can be portable, for example, on a binder or clipboard, or it can be fixed to a permanent place, like a refrigerator or wall. Your child should be able to see the schedule before beginning the first activity on the schedule. It should continue to be visible to your child during the rest of the activities.

When it is time for an activity on the schedule to occur, cue your child with a brief, verbal instruction. For example, say “Check the schedule.” This helps your child pay attention as the next activity begins. At first, you may need to physically guide your child to check the schedule (e.g., gently guide by shoulders and prompt your child to point to the next activity on the schedule). You can gradually decrease physical prompts as your child begins to use the schedule more independently.

When a task is completed, cue your child to check the schedule again, using the procedure described above, and transition to the next activity.



Provide praise and/or other positive reinforcement to your child for following the schedule and for transitioning to and completing activities on the schedule. It may be helpful to use a timer that your child can hear to make transition times clear to your child.

Mix variability into the schedule by introducing a symbol that represents an unknown activity (e.g., “oops” or “surprise activity”). Begin to teach this concept by pairing this with a positive activity or surprise. Gradually use this for unexpected changes in the schedule.

**❑ What if challenging behaviors occur?**

If challenging behaviors occur, continue by physically prompting your child to complete the task that is occurring. Keep your focus on the task rather than on the challenging behavior. Then transition to the next activity as communicated by the schedule and still provide the reinforcing item or activities indicated on the schedule, since the focus of the schedule is on completing the tasks, and not on addressing challenging behaviors.

If you think challenging behaviors may happen, begin by introducing the visual schedule during tasks that your child usually completes willingly and successfully. If challenging behaviors become more difficult to control, it may be appropriate to consider behavioral consultation with a professional to address these behaviors directly.

## Visually Setting Parameters

**❑ What is it?**

Setting parameters involves using visuals to set clear boundaries around items or activities and to communicate basic expected behaviors, like waiting.

**❑ When is it helpful?**

Visually setting parameters is helpful in communicating limits that are part of an activity and that may seem unclear to your child. Some examples of situations where this might be useful follow. Communicate physical boundaries of an area or activity, for example, use a “stop” sign to mark where to stop in the backyard. Or show how much of an item or activity is available before it is gone. For example, place a “not available” picture on the computer when it is not time to play on the computer. Or place pictures of 3 juice boxes on the refrigerator and remove or cover one each time

juice is given. Show the need to wait for something that is delayed but will be available soon, for example, by providing a “wait” card paired with a timer.



**❑ How do I teach it and use it?**

Begin to teach the use of these visuals in situations that have clear, defined, brief parameters. As your child understands these visuals better, gradually increase their use in more long-term activities and with more abstract parameters.

**❑ Examples:**

**Physical boundaries:** Place the visual on physical boundaries that already are defined (e.g., a door) and refer to it when the rule is followed. For example, when your child stops at the door, point to the stop sign and say, “Stop.” Give praise or reinforcement for complying with this parameter. After you have taught the concept, use the same visual during other activities or in other settings where the same boundary is needed but is not as clear, such as a “Stop” sign on the playground.

**Limited availability:** Decide the number of times or length of time that the item or activity is available. Indicate that through the visual, for example, 3 pictures of a juice box on the refrigerator to indicate that 3 juice boxes are allowed that day. After the item or activity has been used or done, show the change by using the visual, for example, cross out or remove one of the juice box pictures. When the item is no longer available, use the visual to show this. For example, show your child that there are no more pictures of juice on the refrigerator after they have used them all.

**Wait:** Begin by presenting the symbol for “wait” for a very brief amount of time before your child can have a preferred item or activity. It may help to pair the use of the “wait” symbol with a timer. Have your child trade the “wait” card for the item or activity. For example, when your child asks for a snack, hand your child the “wait” card, set the timer for 10 seconds, and then praise your child’s waiting and trade the snack for the “wait” card.

As your child learns to use visuals for setting parameters, gradually increase the length of time or the number of situations in which your child is expected to wait for items or activities.

**❑ What if challenging behaviors occur?**

If you think that challenging behaviors may occur, introduce these parameters during less difficult situations or begin with simple expectations.

If problem behaviors occur, be consistent with the parameters you have set. Focus on praising any aspects of the parameters that are being followed, rather than shifting your focus to the challenging behaviors.

Using visual supports can help you and your child with ASD communicate and manage everyday activities in positive ways.

This publication was written by Whitney Loring, Psy.D., TRIAD Postdoctoral Fellow, and Mary Hamilton, M.Ed., BCBA, TRIAD Educational and Behavioral Consultant. This work was supported through Beth Malow, M.D., M.S., Professor of Neurology, Principal Investigator, Vanderbilt Autism Treatment Network Site, and Zachary Warren, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Co-Principal Investigator, Vanderbilt Autism Treatment Network Site. It was edited, designed, and produced by the Dissemination and Graphics staff of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities. We are grateful for review and suggestions by many, including by faculty of the Vanderbilt Kennedy Treatment and Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders (TRIAD) and by the Autism Society of Middle Tennessee. This publication may be distributed as is or, at no cost, may be individualized as an electronic file for your production and dissemination, so that it includes your organization and its most frequent referrals. For revision information, please contact [courtney.taylor@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:courtney.taylor@vanderbilt.edu), (615) 322-5658, (866) 936-8852.

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**VANDERBILT  
KENNEDY CENTER**

## Resources for Using Visual Supports:

- ❑ [www.do2learn.com](http://www.do2learn.com)
- ❑ [card.ufl.edu/content/visual.html](http://card.ufl.edu/content/visual.html)
- ❑ [www.kidaccess.com/index.html](http://www.kidaccess.com/index.html)
- ❑ Eckenrode, L., Fennell, P., & Hearsey, K. (2004). *Tasks Galore for the Real World*. Raleigh, NC: Tasks Galore.

## Resources on Autism Spectrum Disorders:

- ❑ **Treatment and Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders (TRIAD)**, Vanderbilt Kennedy Center, is dedicated to improving assessment and treatment services for children with autism spectrum disorders and their families, while advancing knowledge and training. For information on TRIAD and Vanderbilt autism services and resources:

### Vanderbilt Autism Resource Line

Local (615) 322-7565

Toll free (1-877) ASD-VUMC [273-8862]

Email: [autismresources@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:autismresources@vanderbilt.edu)

### TRIAD Outreach and Training

(615) 936-1705

Web: [triad.vanderbilt.edu](http://triad.vanderbilt.edu)

- ❑ **Tennessee Disability Pathfinder**, a free information and referral service for all types of disabilities, all ages, provides information on autism resources external to Vanderbilt. Local (615) 322-8529, (1-800) 640-4636. Web: [www.familypathfinder.org](http://www.familypathfinder.org)
- ❑ Local chapters of the **Autism Society of America (ASA)** ([www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org)) provide information, support, and advocacy for individuals with ASD and their families.

### Autism Society of Middle Tennessee

Phone: (615) 385-2077, (866) 508-4987

Email: [asmt@tnautism.org](mailto:asmt@tnautism.org)

Web: [www.tnautism.org](http://www.tnautism.org)

### Autism Society of the Mid South

Phone: (901) 542-2767

Email: [autismsocietymidsouth@yahoo.com](mailto:autismsocietymidsouth@yahoo.com)

Web: [www.autismsocietymidsouth.org](http://www.autismsocietymidsouth.org)

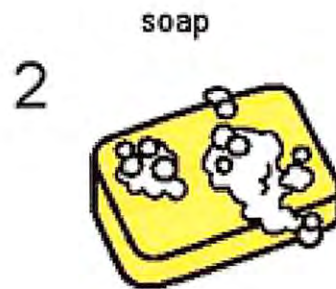
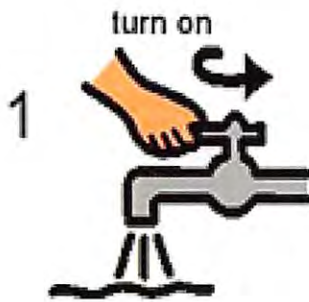
### Autism Society of East Tennessee

Phone: (865) 247-5082

Email: [asaetc@gmail.com](mailto:asaetc@gmail.com)

- ❑ **Autism Speaks** ([www.autismspeaks.org/](http://www.autismspeaks.org/)) provides resources and support for individuals with ASD and their families.

# Wash Hands





\_\_\_\_\_

Student  
Photo

The image shows a vertical scale of emotions represented by a black ladder-like structure. From top to bottom, the levels are:

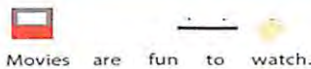
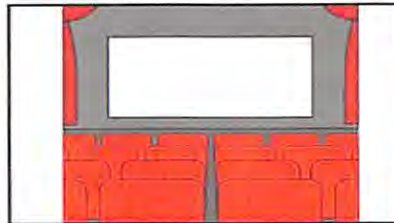
- angry**: A red circle containing a cartoon face with a furrowed brow and a downward-curving mouth.
- mad**: An orange square containing a cartoon face with a straight line for a mouth and a slightly furrowed brow.
- frustrated**: A yellow square containing a cartoon face with a wide-open mouth, a sweat drop, and a frustrated expression.
- happy**: A light blue square containing a cartoon face with a wide, toothy smile and radiating lines around the head.
- okay**: A light green square containing a cartoon face with a neutral, straight-line mouth and a neutral expression.
- content**: A light pink circle containing a cartoon face with a slight smile, closed eyes, and a hand on the chin, appearing relaxed.

\_\_\_\_\_

# **ASD Program Community-Based Instruction Curriculum Requirement**

## **Bel Air Cinema CBI Activity Rationale**

The goal of the ASD Program Community-Based Instruction (CBI) Curriculum Requirement is to teach students with Autism to function as independently as possible, in as many community environments as possible, in order to enhance their quality of life. CBI is an instructional method that promotes the teaching and use of academic and functional skills in natural, non-school environments that students frequent individually, with peers or with their families.



**The Bel Air Cinema CBI activity is aligned with the ASD Program Curriculum and provides students the opportunity to generalize and practice the following concepts and skills that have been taught during classroom instruction:**

### **ASD Program Styer-Fitzgerald Functional Reading/Math Curriculum**

Communication, Comprehension, Community Access, Community Safety,  
Time Management, Money Math

### **ASD Program CBI Curriculum Domain Area: Recreation and Leisure**

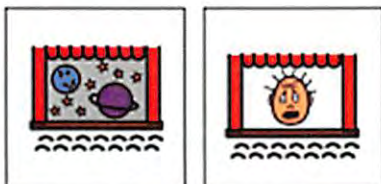
Community Access, Community Safety, Independent Skills, Social Skills,  
Self-Management, Daily Living Skills



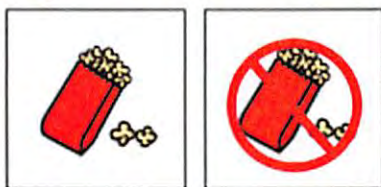
# Movie Theater

by: Sasha Hallagan

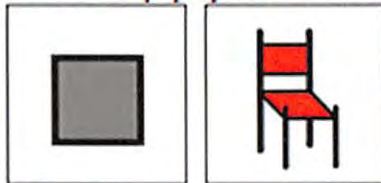
Picture Communication Symbols ©1991-2010 by Mayer-Johnson L.C. All Rights Reserved Worldwide. Used with permission. Boardmaker™ is a trademark of Mayer-Johnson LLC.



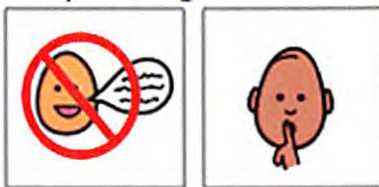
I love going to the movie theater! I can go see new movies.



Sometimes we buy popcorn. Sometimes we don't. It's okay!



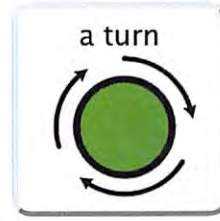
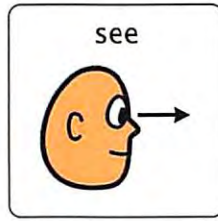
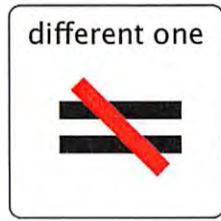
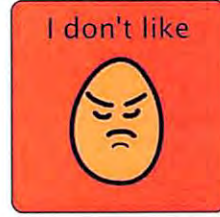
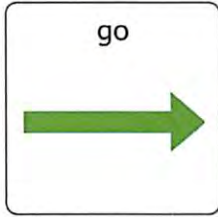
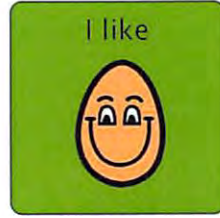
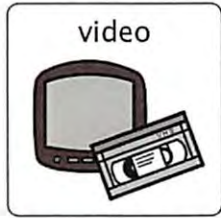
When we get into the movie theater, it is dark. We pick a seat. I need to sit nicely during the movie.



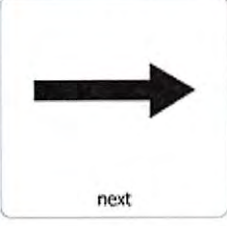
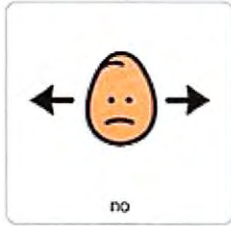
When the movie starts, I have to stop talking. I need to stay quiet so everyone can hear the movie.



When the movie is over, I stand up and leave. It was a great movie!



**Watching Videos**



quiet hands



quiet feet



quiet



inside voice



listen



do your work



sit in chair



stand up



walk



## **Educational Websites**

These are websites that may be helpful in supplementing or providing instruction to students.

### **All Learning Areas**

#### **Khan Academy**

Videos regarding various subject matter. Great for teaching sciences and maths.

#### **PBS Kids**

The educational games are great for younger students.

#### **Primary Games Arena**

Educational games for kids.

#### **Adrian Bruce**

Educational activities and games.

#### **FunBrain**

Some educational and some games just for fun.

#### **Sporcle**

Mentally stimulating games and trivia.

#### **Literacy Center Education Network**

Basics for maths and literacy.

#### **Disney**

There are a few educational games in here.

#### **The Kidz Page**

Free educational games at various levels.

#### **Play Kids Games**

Some educational games and some fun games.

#### **Brain Pop**

Animated educational site for kids with lots of subject areas.

#### **Count Us In**

An ABC.net.au maths website.

#### **Math Is Fun**

Various maths topics.

#### **BBC - Schools: Educational Resources**

Fantastic variety of information.

#### **Woodlands Junior**

Great variety of activities - literacy, maths, science.

#### **Gamequarium**

Variety of educational games.

#### **Kinderweb Games**

Various learning activities.

#### **School Time Games**

Various learning areas/subjects.

#### **Knowledge Adventure**

Various games by age group.

#### **Learning Games for Kids**

Various educational games.

#### **Study Ladder**

Lots of interactive activities. Need to sign up, though.

#### **Speech Teach UK**

Various resources for working with children. A speech therapy section, as well.

#### **Knowmia**

A video resource library for mostly High School. A great way to add a visual representation of the concept to the lesson.

### **Maths**

#### **Cool Math 4 Kids**

Lots of maths lessons and some games.

#### **The Math Games**

Higher primary maths

### **Literacy (Reading, Writing, Spelling)**

## **StoryBird**

Fantastic writing website.

## **Spelling City**

Spelling and vocab website.

## **Kids Spell**

Spelling website with games and activities.

## **News-2-You**

A newspaper for kids with picture symbols.

## **Fodey.com**

Create newspaper clippings.

## **StarFall**

This is excellent for teaching the basics of reading.

## **Seussville**

Dr. Seuss activities and games.

## **Into The Book**

Literacy explanations and interactive activities.

## **GameGoo**

Literacy games and activities.

## **Interactive Sites for Kids with Autism**

### **Poisson Rouge**

Interesting website, but appears as though it would be quite appealing to kids with autism.

### **Sensory World**

Explore different senses.

### **Mouse Trial**

Basic skills. Repetitive and simple for kids with autism.

## **Health and Science**

### **Kids Health - CYH**

Great information about many different health topics for kids and in kid-friendly language.

### **Mission H2O**

Game about saving water.

### **Kids Health**

A section for kids and a section for teens about lots of different health issues.

### **Picasso Head**

A fun one for artists.

## **Art**



# Top 10 Autism Websites Recommended by Parents

[Home](#)  
[Top 10 Autism  
Websites](#)  
[Recommended...](#)

By Maureen Higgins, Eden II Marketing Intern

Searching for autism information on the web can be overwhelming. The word “autism” alone results in over 64 million hits on Google. So, where do you turn to for the most relevant information and resources when there are so many different options? We polled parents of Eden II participants, asking them this question, and these were the top 10 results:

1. [www.autismspeaks.org](http://www.autismspeaks.org) -One of the leading autism science and advocacy organizations. Autism Speaks provides a comprehensive resource guide for all states. The site also boasts an impressive list of apps that parents may find useful, including games that focus on communication and social skills.
2. [www.autism-society.org](http://www.autism-society.org) -Another great site that includes helpful resources for those with autism, family members, as well as professionals. Autism Society also gives updates on the latest autism news and press releases.
3. [www.disabilityscoop.com](http://www.disabilityscoop.com) – Sign up for Disability Scoop’s e-mail news to receive the most current updates on developmental disabilities. Disability Scoop’s experts have been cited by multiple online news sites, including USA Today and People.com.
4. [www.autismnj.org](http://www.autismnj.org) -Run by a network of professionals and parents, Autism New Jersey strives to provide New Jersey residents affected by autism with the most up to date information, including info on Health Care and insurance mandates in New Jersey.
5. [www.autism.com](http://www.autism.com)– The Autism Research Institute focuses on researching the causes of autism, as well as developing safe and effective treatments for those currently affected by the disorder.
6. [www.autismweb.com](http://www.autismweb.com) – Managed by parents, AutismWeb includes great insights on different autism teaching methods. The site also provides a forum where parents can go to share their stories, give updates on their children’s progress, and share recipes that may be useful for picky eaters.

7. [www.ahany.org](http://www.ahany.org) – The Asperger Syndrome and High Functioning Autism Association website offers some great resources for those with higher functioning autism. Ahany also provides a great list of summer programs and day camps in New York, as well as useful questions to ask when choosing a camp or summer program for your special needs child.

8. [www.autismhwy.com](http://www.autismhwy.com) -Started by a woman whose son was diagnosed with autism, Autism Highway is both informative and fun. Easy to navigate, Autism Highway provides an extensive list of Autism related events and specialists. In addition, Autism Highway includes many fun games that children are sure to enjoy!

9. [www.autismbeacon.com](http://www.autismbeacon.com) – Also started by the parent of a child with autism, Autism Beacon strives to supply the best resources for autism treatments. Autism Beacon presents a lengthy range of articles on autism, including sensitive topics such as bullying and sexuality.

10. [www.autism.healingthresholds.com](http://www.autism.healingthresholds.com) – Healing Thresholds includes information on many different therapy treatments for children with autism. The site focuses on the top 12 used by parents, but also includes useful information on nearly 100 additional therapies.

**BONUS Link!**


11. [Potty Training a Child with Autism using ABA](#) – Potty training an Autistic child can be daunting for parents and caregivers because of the unique challenges the child faces. For this reason, traditional approaches to toilet training may not always be effective. This is where applied behavioral analysis (ABA) comes into your potty training program.

## GVSU COVID-19 Update:


For the health and safety of the Grand Valley community, remote academic instruction will continue through April 25. Residence halls and living centers to close. Additional instructions and updates at [www.gvsu.edu/coronavirus](http://www.gvsu.edu/coronavirus)

# START Project


## Parents and Families: Frequently Asked Questions

My child has an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) diagnosis from the doctor. Why do they need another evaluation at school? 

When schools evaluate a child for ASD, it is not considered a diagnosis, but rather whether the child meets eligibility requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) for special education services, supports, or accommodations. If they are found eligible for a disability, it becomes the school's obligation to provide and a child's right to receive a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) according to the law.

I have questions about the educational process and timeline for the IEP. Who do I contact? 

The Michigan Alliance for Families (MAF) is a state-based agency that provides parent mentors by region across Michigan. They also have a very informative website on education and do presentations to parents and parent groups across the state. For more information, go to: [Michigan Alliance for Families](http://MichiganAllianceforFamilies.org).

How does START teach educators about autism spectrum disorder? What type of training do they get? 

The START training is focused on using evidence-based practices in the school setting to help students be successful learners and interact with their peers. START teaches about the

characteristics of ASD, managing behavior, setting up peer to peer programs, writing effective IEP goals, and promoting collaboration by the student support team, which include parents and the student.

I am not sure if my child should go to school or I should home school. ▼

The benefits of participation in school and inclusion with other children is supported by years of research. Eventually a child will leave an educational setting and become part of a community with non-disabled peers. Having that exposure and the benefits of peers modeling behavior, providing academic support, and creating a natural support situation is usually very beneficial to the student with ASD or other disabilities. It also is helpful when peer to peer programs are formally set up in schools and peers are trained about the student(s) they might be assisting. There is more information on the START website about setting up a program.

My child has ASD. Should I expect the same things from him as I do from my other children? ▼  
Will he get a job someday?

Some things might be harder for your child, but you will find some things that other children struggle with might come easier for your child. It is very important to remember that children with ASD and other disabilities are children first, and they often live up to the expectations you have. If you have high expectations and offer the support needed to do what your other children do, like set the table and pick up their room, they will learn skills that will allow them to be more independent and successful adults. With that said, the expectations must be realistic too. It is also important to remember to continue increasing expectations as current ones are met. The more independent a child becomes as he develops, the more he will be able to do as an adult. This is important when getting a job in the future.

I want to be collaborative and work with my school team, but we are not agreeing on my child's school programming. What do I do? ▼

First, talk to your child's teacher(s). Make sure that you have clearly communicated your goals and expectations to each other – listen and share. This might also involve talking to your child's school team. If you and the teacher are not able to resolve differences, talk to the building principal. Work on coming to a shared understanding of the issues and how you can solve the differences. If you are not able to resolve the concerns at the building level, then talk to the district special education director. Please consider communicating with all of these people before you contact a superintendent or ISD level administrator since the building and district staff will know your child the best and ultimately, that is where you will need to

resolve any issues. If you need assistance mediating conversations with your school team, you can also pursue mediation through the [Special Education Mediation Services](#) (SEMS). Finally, if you have followed this progression for escalating your concern and it is still not resolved, contact the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) Office of Special Education (OSE) help desk: (888) 320-8384, [mde-ose@michigan.gov](mailto:mde-ose@michigan.gov). For information on complaint procedures, review the [Resolving Differences process](#).

### What is the START Passport?

The START Passport is not a part of the formal IEP process. However, it helps define what kids at given grade levels are usually doing at home and socially. It helps define some of these skills for home and school, and educators and parents can work as a team to define the goal, how to meet the goal, and check for progress toward the goal. An example might be independently brushing teeth or putting clothes in the hamper at home. Discussion can be had around how a family might approach teaching this skill. The idea is to connect home and schools in a collaborative way, which directly benefits the student. Find more information at: [START Passport](#).

### What other services should we be considering for my child after school hours?

Depending on the needs of your child, certain therapies and interventions can be done after school hours in your home, community, or clinic. This includes Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), speech therapy, occupational therapy, and others. Social skills groups may also be helpful to work on social communication with peers.


### How do I motivate my child to do homework after being in school all day?

This can be challenging. What may work is using intense interests as part of the homework routine. For example, if your child loves to play his Xbox 360, make that a reward for doing his homework. It might go something like: "You have this worksheet to do for math. Let's finish that and you can play Xbox for 10 minutes." Let him play as soon as he finishes it, warn him when he has a minute left (maybe set a timer so he knows it is coming), and say "ok, let's finish your writing assignment now, then you can have 10 more minutes playing Xbox." If this is a new approach for your child, you might start with easy tasks and shorter windows of time between having access to the reward, and gradually increase difficulty of tasks and the amount of time over several weeks. Always give a lot of verbal praise when you are giving the reward.

You might build their interests into the homework. If he needs to write a story, develop an idea around an interest or if he is working on math, and he loves sports statistics, try to work that into the practice. It also helps to offer choices. Do you want to work on math or writing first? Do you want to do your homework at the table or at mom's work desk? Make it a positive experience and reduce the amount of tension and high emotion related to homework.

How do I explain ASD to other people? 

A very basic response: it is a developmental disorder that affects the way a person thinks, acts, perceives the world around them, and communicates. You can also talk about how it specifically impacts your child. You want people to know that all people with ASD are different. If people view have a negative view of your child's behavior, explain that behavior is communication and help them understand that your child is working on other ways to communicate. For example, a child who has limited language might get frustrated and tantrum when he can't get what he wants. But if he is using a picture system to learn to communicate, eventually he will be able to ask for what he needs in a more appropriate way.

My child has a lot of sensory issues which are causing her behavior at school and at home. How do I change this? 

Many people with ASD have some type of sensory over or under sensitivity. This differs greatly from person to person. A sensory assessment by your school's occupational therapist (OT) can help define the sensory concerns and ways to help. Sometimes sensory inputs trigger behaviors, but sometimes it is more than sensory. There could be other reasons a child is having a behavior such as aggression or a tantrum. They may be frustrated while trying to get attention or access to a toy or activity and not know how to ask for it. They might be trying to get away from something such as a request by a teacher or parent, or something that is unpleasant to them such as noises, smells, or other sensory inputs. Sometimes a functional behavior assessment (FBA) may be needed to better determine what might be triggering a behavior and how it may unintentionally be reinforced. By understanding what is causing the behavior, support strategies can be put in place to assist the student. To find out more about behavior interventions, go to: [START Behavior Support Tools](#). Access the Identifying Interventions for Behavior link to learn more about interventions for specific behaviors.

My child really seems like she likes to just be alone. Is that ok? 

Often children with ASD do not know how to start or join conversations or social activities. These are skills that often can be improved with interventions. Peers can be an important

part of this process. Peers in school are in the child's everyday (or natural) environment and having a peer to peer program can help children with ASD and other disabilities socialize and be included. The peer is trained about the student with ASD, and accompanies the student during certain activities like academic classes, recess, transitioning between classes, and other places. START has an established peer to peer program that many schools use in Michigan. Your school may offer this program, and if your school does not offer it at this time, your child's education team may be interested in learning more about it. For more information, go to: [START Peer to Peer Program](#).

However, it is also important to get to your child's needs for down time. Children with ASD, like everyone else, vary in their desire for time alone vs. time with others. Just be sure your child does not become isolated and he/she has opportunities to interact with others.

My child is on Medicaid but in school full time. Are there therapies that I might be able to get for my child? ▼

If you meet the qualifications for Medicaid, and your child is under 21 years and is assessed by your local Community Mental Health (CMH) agency as eligible for services, you may be able to receive additional services. Contact your local CMH office, or go to: [Autism Medicaid Services](#).

My family will be moving to Michigan from another state (or we are moving to another part of the state). What types of questions should we be asking schools about how they support students with ASD? ▼

Contact the school district special education director or the building principal in the district where you are planning to move. Ask questions such as: Are students with disabilities integrated into general education classes? Does your building have a START trained team? Does your district have peer to peer support programs and in what buildings? How do you support students that have challenging behavior? How do you involve parents in their child's education? Can I come to visit the school and meet the principal and teachers? Important features of a classroom for a student with ASD or another developmental disability can be found on the START [Classroom Environment and Teaching Assessment \(CETA\)](#).

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# Life Skills and Autism

For people with autism, learning life skills is essential to increase independence at home, at school and in the community. By introducing these skills early and building block by block, people with autism gain the tools that will allow him or her to increase self esteem and lead to more happiness in all areas of life.

## What Are Life Skills?

Life skills are sometimes referred to as independent living skills or daily living skills. Basic life skills include self-care activities, cooking, money management, shopping, room organization and transportation. These skills are learned over time, beginning at home at a very young age and developing further throughout adolescence and adulthood.

Learning a wide range of life skills that apply to many areas of life is critical. It is also important to include [executive function skills](#) or thinking skills such as organizing, planning, prioritizing and decision making related to each life skill being taught. Categories of life skills include:

- Health and safety
- Career path and employment
- Self-determination/advocacy
- Peer relationships, socialization and social communication
- Community participation and personal finance
- Transportation
- Leisure/recreation
- Home living skills

## How To Teach Life Skills?

Every person with autism is different, so the life skills that will be taught, and the pace that they are taught, will vary from person to person. For example, one young adult with autism may ultimately be able to live on his or her own with very little, if any, outside support, while another may require supports and services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Starting to develop life skills to the best of a child's ability at a young age will make a difference as they get older.

There are endless life skills to learn which will be taught and practiced at home, school, and in the community. Most people with autism benefit from clear, hands-on instruction in life skills that will help them to increase independence.



# Teaching Life Skills At Home

You can try several strategies to teach life skills at home by following a general three-step approach:

1. **Assess the skills (i.e. figure out the person's difficulties and strengths).** Having a list of strengths and areas for improvement can help you clarify the goals you set and provide supportive feedback and encouragement along the way.
2. **Teach new skills in a supportive way.** The use of visual aids like charts and checklists can be a great way to provide support when working on new skills.
3. **Practice these new skills.** Remember to truly master a new skill you must practice in realistic settings. This may mean teaching money skills at home using real dollars and coins, but to practice you go out to a local store and make a purchase.

## Using Visual Supports for Life Skills

Many people on the autism spectrum work best with visual cues and supports. There are several helpful options for teaching life skills. A great way to start is to create a visual aid that breaks up a complex daily routine into smaller tasks. For example, you can create a checklist for each part of the day, such as a 'Morning Checklist', 'Lunch Checklist', 'Bedtime Checklist'. This can help a person with autism get accustomed to the daily routine by checking off items on the list as the day goes on. See example below:

### Sample Morning Checklist

- Wake Up
- Put workout clothes on
- Eat breakfast in the kitchen
- Clean up breakfast
- Morning workout/exercise
- Put workout clothes in hamper
- Take shower
- Hang towel
- Put on deodorant
- Brush teeth
- Make bed
- Get school bag ready
- Catch the bus - off to school!

This daily checklist can help a person with autism complete all the tasks that make up a morning routine.

If a person requires more supports, you can also break down each specific task into its own checklist, to make sure each task is completed correctly and efficiently.

# Ten Ways to Build Your Child's Independence

## **1. Strengthen Communication**

If your child struggles with spoken language, a critical step for increasing independence is strengthening his or her ability to communicate by building skills and providing tools to help express preferences, desires and feelings. Consider introducing Alternative/Augmentative Communication (AAC) and visual supports. Common types of AAC include picture exchange communication systems (PECS), speech output devices (such as DynaVox, iPad, etc.).

## **2. Introduce a Visual Schedule**

Using a visual schedule with your child can help the transition from activity to activity with less prompting. Review each item on the schedule with your child and then remind him or her to check the schedule before every transition. Over time, he or she will be able to complete this task with increasing independence, practice decision making and pursue the activities that interest him or her.

## **3. Work on Self-Care Skills**

Introduce self-care activities into your child's routine. Brushing teeth, combing hair and other activities of daily living (ADLs) are important life skills, and introducing them as early as possible can allow your child to master them down the line. Make sure to include these things on your child's schedule so he or she gets used to having them as part of the daily routine.

## **4. Teach Your Child to Ask for a Break**

Make sure your child has a way to request a break – add a “Break” button on his or her communication device, a picture in his or her PECS book, etc. Identify an area that is quiet where your child can go when feeling overwhelmed. Alternatively, consider offering headphones or other tools to help regulate sensory input. Although it may seem like a simple thing, knowing how to ask for a break can allow your child to regain control over him or herself and his or her environment.

## **5. Work on Household Chores**

Having children complete household chores can teach them responsibility, get them involved in family routines and impart useful skills to take with them as they get older. If you think your child may have trouble understanding how to complete a whole chore, you can consider using a task analysis. This is a method that involves breaking down large tasks into smaller steps. Be sure to model the steps yourself or provide prompts if your child has trouble at first!

## **6. Practice Money Skills**

Learning how to use money is a very important skill that can help your child become independent when out and about in the community. No matter what abilities your child currently has, there are ways that he or she can begin to learn money skills. At school, consider adding money skills to your child's IEP and when you are with your child in a store or supermarket,

allow him and her to hand over the money to the cashier. Step by step, you can teach each part of this process. Your child can then begin using these skills in different settings in the community.

## **7. Teach Community Safety Skills**

Safety is a big concern for many families, especially as children become more independent. Teach and practice travel training including pedestrian safety, identifying signs and other important safety markers; and becoming familiar with public transportation. The GET Going pocket guide has many useful tips to help individuals with autism navigate public transportation. Consider having your child carry an ID card which can be very helpful to provide his or her name, a brief explanation of his or her diagnosis, and a contact person. You can find examples of ID cards and other great safety materials.

## **8. Build Leisure Skills**

Being able to engage in independent leisure and recreation is something that will serve your child well throughout his or her life. Many people with autism have special interests in one or two subjects; it can help to translate those interests into age appropriate recreational activities. The [Autism Speaks Resource Guide](#) contains activities that your child can get involved with in your community; including team sports, swim lessons, martial arts, music groups and more.

## **9. Teach Self-Care during Adolescence**

Entering adolescence and beginning puberty can bring many changes for a teen with autism, so this is an important time to introduce many hygiene and self-care skills. Getting your teens into the habit of self-care will set them up for success and allow them to become much more independent as they approach adulthood. Visual aids can be useful to help your teen complete his or her personal hygiene routine each day. Consider making a checklist of activities to help your child keep track of what to do and post it in the bathroom. This can include items such as showering, washing face, putting on deodorant and brushing hair. To stay organized, you can put together a hygiene “kit” to keep everything your teen needs in one place.


## **10. Work on Vocational Skills**


Starting at age 14, your child should have vocational skills included on his or her IEP as a part of an individualized transition plan. Make a list of his or her strengths, skills and interests and use them to guide the type of vocational activities that are included as objectives. Consider all the ways up to this point that you have been fostering your child’s independence: communication abilities, self-care, interests and activities and goals for the future.


## It's Time to....


Time to watch  
some television 



Time to do my  
homework 



Time to go  
outside 



Place my dirty  
dishes in the sink 



Place backpack  
in my special place 





Place  
dirty clothes  
in laundry  
basket 



Make  
my bed 



Check my  
schedule 



Time for dinner 



Clear table 



Feed my pets 



It is bedtime 



Time to eat  
breakfast



Time to go to  
school



Eat snack  
at table



Tell Mom or Grandma  
3 things  
I did at school to earn  
my school dollars



Listen or  
exercise to  
my music



Practice  
my cheers



Reading time



Bath time



Play games



Clean floors



Place my things  
on my shelf



Pick up my toys



Get Up



Use Bathroom



Wash Face



Eat Breakfast



Brush Teeth



Get Dressed



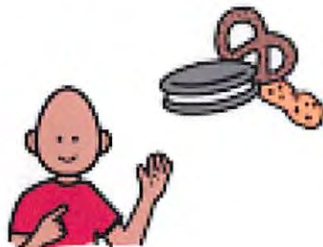
Go To School



Walk Inside House



Ask for Snack



Physical Activity



Chores



Play I-Pad  
(after Chores)

