

AUTISMAG

11 AUTISM TEACHING STRATEGIES

*Ash
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**THAT YOUR CHILD WISHES
FOR YOU TO ADOPT**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
STRATEGY 1: USING VISUAL CARDS	4
STRATEGY 2: CREATING ROUTINES	6
STRATEGY 3: USING TRANSITION CUES	8
STRATEGY 4: LIMITING CHOICES	10
STRATEGY 5: USING VISUAL PLANNERS	12
STRATEGY 6: SETTING SPECIFIC GOALS	14
STRATEGY 7: BECOMING SUPPORTIVE	16
STRATEGY 8: USING SENSORY ITEMS	18
STRATEGY 9: CREATE ENVIOURMENT	20
STRATEGY 10: DECOMPOSE PROBLEM STATEMENT	22
STRATEGY 11: ADOPTING PREVENTATIVE BREAKS	24
GET 1000+ MORE PCES IN FULL COLOR	26



DEAR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS,

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I hope you enjoy this resource and please feel free to reach out to me at ash@autismag.org with your feedback.



Ash Bhattacharya

Founder, Autism 360 Club

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STRATEGY 1: USING VISUAL CARDS

USING VISUAL CARDS

When it comes to teaching your child, Visuals form the basis of a successful learning process. Utilizing PECs, Icons, and Photographs can help reinforce teaching your child. This primary strategy will help your child learn new words, thoughts, ideas, and objects. It will help them to relate and remember.



These are our Top 5 Tips:

✦ Keep yourself at level with the child while teaching.

When working with your child, get on the floor with them. Sit at a desk, or chair, that is at level with them. This will help you get their attention. It will be easier for them to see your face and see the items you are working with. Do not force eye contact. Holding the item next to your face helps guide their eyes.

✦ Always make sure to mention your child's name

When teaching your child, be sure to use their name. Use their name to gain attention and to praise them. Using their name helps focus their attention on you so that you can begin teaching them a new word.



STRATEGY 1: USING VISUAL CARDS

✦ **Use vocal exchanges with the child while using Visuals**

When you are teaching your child, please do not exclude vocal exchanges. Pronounce the word clearly. Repeat if necessary. Allow your child time to process and learn. Use the same method each time you teach your child a new word.

✦ **Remember Visuals are a form of Communication**

When a child is non-verbal, or pre-verbal, they may not use words to communicate. Children with ASD are visual learners and will most likely use PECs and/or pictures to communicate their needs. Be sure to acknowledge when the child points or hands you a PEC when working on instruction.

✦ **Remember to hold the Visuals next to your face**

Teaching your child new words and ideas can be challenging. Children are easily distracted. If they are not looking directly at you or the object you are discussing then they are not learning.

Make sure to hold the item or the PEC next to your face. When the child looks at the item and makes eye contact, say the word/item you are trying to teach.

Pro-Tip

Always hold the PEC/VISUAL next to your face, to keep your child focused on you.



STRATEGY 2: CREATING ROUTINES

CREATE A ROUTINE. BE CONSISTENT

Our children thrive on Routine. Consistency plays a key role when it comes to teaching and adapting. Keeping a schedule and following it creates an expected pattern, that keeps your child calm and easier to teach.



These are our Top 3 Tips:

✦ Have a consistent Routine for everything

Try to break your day in to consistent routined pattern. Each activity should have a stipulated time each day. Keeping to the clock will prepare your child to know what to expect next.

Keep your schedule the same. Keep the time of the day consistent. This will help your child learn the routine.



STRATEGY 2: CREATING ROUTINES

✦ **Always have a plan for transitions**

Transitions are very hard for some children. Have a plan for transitioning from one activity to another. Using vocal exchanges, music and the same routine will help your child to end one activity and move on to the next.

✦ **Always prepare your child for transitions**

Before making any changes, however minor, always prepare your child. Unexpected changes are confusing. Let your child know what is the next thing she needs to do. As before, using a song for each transition, or some kind of activity will help your child understand transition cues.

✦ **Start and End activity the same way each time for consistency**

We all know consistency is key in teaching our children. Be sure to start and end your activity the same way each session when you are working with your child. This prepares your child for the beginning of the activity and cues them that the activity is coming to a close.

Pro-Tip

Keep a Visual Routine. Allow your child to see and understand it. This helps to keep the day in an expected pattern.



STRATEGY 3: USING TRANSITION CUES

USE CUES AND PREPARATORY COMMANDS FOR TRANSITIONS

When we are teaching our children new concepts, it is crucial that we implement cues for transitions. This prepares them for what is coming next. Preparatory Commands ease our children with transitions when we are teaching.



Our Top Tips:

✦ Use Action Words and explain the associated action after

Using Action Words and explaining what you are wanting your child to do is important. Keep it simple. Say exactly what you are wanting them to do. At times, doing the action yourself as an example will help them understand the desired goal.



STRATEGY 3: USING TRANSITION CUES

✦ **Prepare your child for the next activity**

Pre-planning the next activity and having transition cues planned and in place will ease your child for the next activity. When teaching, keep them informed on what is coming next.

✦ **Share the daily plan with your child**

Having a daily visual schedule that the child can see will assist with teaching our children. Informing them about the planned activities for the day can reduce behavior issues and anxiety associated with change.

✦ **Use the same patterns each time**

Transition Cues need to be the same every time. Repeat whichever form of cue you are using to create the expected pattern. If it is music, or vocal cues or visual cues, repeated use will help ease your child into the next activity.

Pro-Tip

Action words and Visual schedules can be used as Transition Cues to let your child know what the day looks like going ahead.



STRATEGY 4: LIMITING CHOICES

LIMIT CHOICES (TOYS, TECHNOLOGY APPS, ETC)

When teaching with toys, puzzles, and technology, limit the choices your child will have. Too many choices can be overwhelming and confusing. Limiting choices also keeps consistency with the items they are learning. Keep it simple!



Our Top 3 Tips:

- ✦ **Remember less is more**
Too many choices can be overwhelming. They are all exciting and fun but can make it difficult for your child's concentration. Keep your choices to a minimum. Limit choices to 2-3.



STRATEGY 4: LIMITING CHOICES

✦ **More choices can overwhelm the child**

Multiple choices can overwhelm a child with sensory issues. When children become overwhelmed they may shutdown, not participate, or have a meltdown. Teaching your child does not require a lot of stuff.

✦ **Less clutter is more conducive in a learning environment**

Along with too many choices, too much clutter can also cause our children to be overwhelmed. Teach your child with minimal options and items, keep the teaching space clear and open. A few selections will suffice for teaching your child new concepts.

Pro-Tip

Less options mean less choices to make. Limit options to help your child choose without feeling confused.



STRATEGY 5: USING VISUAL PLANNERS

USE VISUAL PLANNERS TO AID TEACHING

Visual planners, schedules, agendas and graphic organizers are all great tools to use when teaching your child. These planners create a chart and prepare your child for what comes next during the day, or during the activity that you are working on.



Our Top 4 Tips:

✦ Use diagrams and PECs

It is easier for your child to use visuals to see what happens next. Use diagrams the same way each time. PECs are a very popular visual communication tool for schedules and activities.

✦ Visual tools help create representation of facts

Many teachers and parents use graphic organizers. These organizers create a visual representation of facts and ideas so your child can follow along, and even create their own stories. These can be easily found online. Keep practicing the use of visuals for them to incorporate into their graphic organizers.



STRATEGY 5: USING VISUAL PLANNERS

✦ **Planners help keep track of schedule and assignments**

Planners and Agendas are great tools to incorporate into your lessons and home-works. In school, these are regularly used for daily required assignments. Implement the use of preparing your child for activity by creating a schedule for them. Keep your child informed on their schedule, assignments and activities.

✦ **Organization helps alleviate stress and anxiety**

Your child will do well with organised day to day activities, including school assignments. Organization can be used to manage toys for smaller children, and more complicated tasks for school going kids. It can be used to work on projects, home-works and learning.

Finding items in place, where they should be, doing things the same time everyday, successfully reduce anxiety and stress.

Pro-Tip

Looking at a Planner will help your child organize the day. It will reduce stress and anxiety associated with facing unexpected changes.



STRATEGY 6: SETTING SPECIFIC GOALS

HAVE SPECIFIC AND QUANTIFIABLE GOALS

Teaching your child can be overwhelming for you and them. Remember to establish specific goals. Quantifiable goals will help you can measure your child's success.



Our Top 5 Tips:

- ✦ **Create specific goals**
Measure success by deciding what you want your child to accomplish. How many times should they accomplish this goal? Be specific.
- ✦ **Breakdown goals into smaller ones**
Take your educational goal for your child and break it down into smaller units. You want them to accomplish the overall goal, but learning is a small step by step process. Be patient.



STRATEGY 6: SETTING SPECIFIC GOALS

✦ **Use a step-by-step approach**

Breaking goals down into small achievable milestones makes them easier to achieve. For example: Counting (1-10). You can start with small goals. Our main goal is counting to 10. Start with numbers 1-5. Use visuals, use activities to familiarize with these initial numbers. Once you feel they have learned those numbers, start with 6-10. Then take the final step to achieve the main goal of learning 1-10.

✦ **Measure Success**

The feeling of success while attempting to achieve a goal is important. It helps keep you motivated to try the next, more difficult steps of the goal. Let your child know what you deem as success. Appreciate their achievements, however small they are.

✦ **Trial and error is part of the process**

Goals are a great start to teaching your child. Some goals will work, others will not. Remember that the process of learning, and the tools we use, are trial and error. Don't give up!

Pro-Tip

Having specific step-by-step goals helps make achievements easier. Not only for your child, but also, for you.



STRATEGY 7: BECOMING SUPPORTIVE

BE A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION PARTNER

Because this learning process starts with you, here are some essential tips on how both you and your child can gain the most out of your learning outcomes. I suggest you take a printout of this sheet and keep it in a prominent place.



Our Top 5 Tips:

✦ Use your child's name

While teaching call out your child's name, then pause. Follow up with saying what you want to say. This will allow your child to focus attention on what you are saying.

✦ Use Precise Language

Use precise, clear language. Keep it simple. Say exactly what you mean. You child may not be able to infer meaning.



STRATEGY 7: BECOMING SUPPORTIVE

✦ **Use Positive Language**

Use positive language. Praise and excitement. Praise them for their efforts, even if the goal is not met. Be clear on what you want your child to do.

✦ **Allow Time to Process**

Allow your child to “think” about their response. Allow them to respond. If your child does not respond, try again. Do not change the directions or requests of the activity. Be consistent.

✦ **Timing is Everything**

Choose the time of day your child is most happy and rested. Pick a time they are relaxed and can focus on activities and goals.

Pro-Tip

Use precise clear language, choose your words to make your child understand exactly what you need them to do.



STRATEGY 8: USING SENSORY ITEMS

USE SENSORY TOYS TO IMPROVE LEARNING

Children often seek out sensory activities, like chewing, twirling, or even fidgeting. They find specific sensory experiences calming, e.g rocking, flicking, visual patterns, flapping. Holding an object in their hands can often enhance learning. For example, if given a sensory toy to hold at mat time a child can sit for longer, concentrate better, be less disruptive to peers, is calmer and has reduced anxiety levels. Sensory toys can also replace inappropriate behaviours.



Our Top 4 Tips:

- ✦ **Fidget Toys are great while teaching**
Offer your child a fidget toy. Use this toy when working and teaching your child. A small 'fidget toy' can dramatically improve your child's learning and behaviour.
- ✦ **Sensory Toys can be Calming and Soothing**
Remember, although these are toys, the items can reduce stress and anxiety and help your child focus and learn.



STRATEGY 8: USING SENSORY ITEMS

✦ **How to know if your child needs it**

If you take the fidget away from your child. Observe their behaviors. Are they moving around, not sitting still, picking at themselves? If these behaviors are calmed with the toy, they need it.

✦ **Remember to Have Rules**

Have rules around sensory toys. Have set times they put in their pocket, on the desk, in their hands, etc.

Pro-Tip

Providing a sensory toy is a great way to calm down your child and let them concentrate on the task at hand.



STRATEGY 9: CREATE ENVIOURMENT

CREATE COMMUNICATION ENRICHED ENVIRONMENTS

Many children do not find the need to communicate as everyone in their environment thinks for them, gives them what they want or even anticipates their needs. When you create a communication enriched environment it is VITAL you create as many opportunities as possible for you to communicate.



Our Top 4 Tips:

✦ Teach Common Phrases to Create Communication Situations

Use common words. Phrase. Go, Up, More, Again, Help, Yes, No. Repeat these and keep them part of the communication when teaching your child.

✦ Create Situations So They Have to Request

Put items from lunchbox on top of the lunchbox – make your child request, or tell you what he/she wants to eat next. Use this as a learning situation.



STRATEGY 9: CREATE COMMUNICATION ENRICHED ENVIRONMENTS

✦ **Use Photos and PECs on Your Refrigerator**

Put photos on the fridge or pantry door of favourite food or drink so they have to request it. Using pictures of foods, snacks and drinks will help your child to begin communicating their needs.

✦ **Create a Communication Enriched Home**

Breakfast: Select Visuals of cereal, toast, juice.

Daily Visual Schedule: Breakfast, Get Dressed, School, Home, etc.

Getting Dressed: Visual Schedule (take off pyjamas, put on undies, t-shirt).

Afternoon Snack: Choice/Visual board with food/drink options.

Pro-Tip

If you anticipate what your child needs and provide it, all the time, then the child will not feel the need to communicate, delaying speech development. Create a communication supportive environment to enhance speech development.

STRATEGY 10: DECOMPOSE PROBLEM STATEMENT

BREAK-UP COMPLEX DIRECTIONS AND PROBLEMS

Your child may have problems understanding complex sets of instructions. It is likely that your child could be much more receptive if you break up a problem statement into smaller components—each of which should have a unique answer.



Our Top 4 Tips:

✦ Use Small Questions

By splitting a complex problem into smaller, tangible questions, your child can address each question while you help them organize those thoughts into the right order or priority.

✦ The 5 W's

Who? What? When? Where? Why?

Work with your child so they can solve these complex directions. Who can they ask for help? What do they need to do? Help them find the answers to these smaller components.



STRATEGY 10: DECOMPOSE PROBLEM STATEMENT

✦ **The How**

Of course, the process to How is the complex part for your child. Work through each question, help them find the answer. The final component is finding the How and using the information previous to solve the complex problem.

✦ **Complex Questions**

Once you can help solve these smaller units. You can begin using a planner or organizer for school work and assignments. These will help with re-enforcing the requirements requested of them, and the outcome of them being organized and learning.

Pro-Tip

Just as breaking the day down in to a routine is important, it is also important to break down complex instructions and problems.

Breaking them down into steps makes them seem manageable, and reduces anxiety about solving them.



STRATEGY 11: ADOPTING PREVENTATIVE BREAKS

ADOPTING PREVENTATIVE BREAKS

Your child will become tired, fatigued, and frustrated when learning new concepts. Your child will use a self-regulating process for their anxiety. It is a VERY important part of their behaviour management program. Your child being able to request a break before a meltdown is a fantastic strategy.



Our Top 3 Tips:

✦ Brain Breaks

We all get exhausted mentally when learning new concepts. Take breaks.
Take frequent breaks.

Brain breaks are important in the process of learning and retaining the information your child learned.

✦ Too Much Information

Don't overwhelm your child with too much information in a small window of time.
Break up your lessons with your child and take frequent breaks.



STRATEGY 11: ADOPTING PREVENTATIVE BREAKS

✦ **Review the Information**

Before adding additional lessons and concepts, review what you have already taught them. Review it many times. It may be something you review daily. Make sure they are clear on concepts before adding additional concepts that could overwhelm them or provoke a meltdown from overload.

Pro-Tip

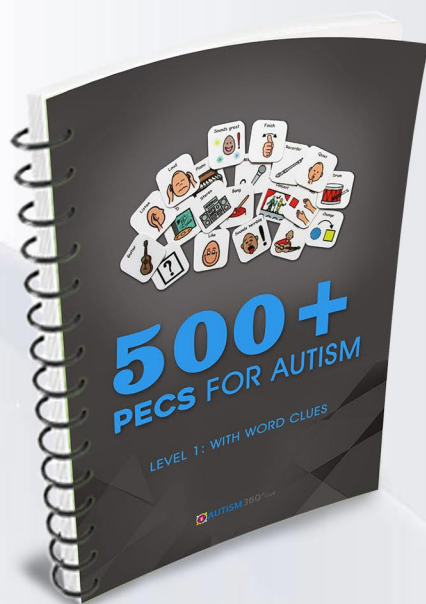
When it comes to learning new lessons, slow-and-steady is the best approach. It avoids meltdowns and keeps you in control of the situation.



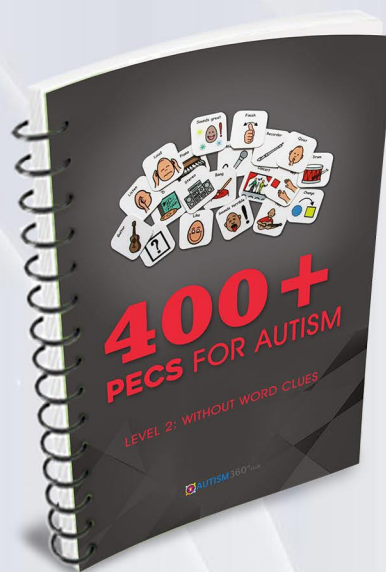
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Level 1: With word clues



Level 2: Without word clues

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