



Tips for Home or School How Can I Help My Child Understand What is About to Happen?

By MaryAnn Demchak



January 2004

Does your child or one of your students get upset when he is uncertain regarding what is about to happen to him or about to happen in his setting? Has she ever startled when you approach her? Does your child seem to be "lost" if she does not know if you are still with her? You can use various cues to accompany spoken words to help your child or student to understand your message. Using concrete cues will help your child to understand what is happening.

Important Guidelines to Remember

Cues should:

- Be easy and convenient
- Have an obvious relationship to the referent
- Be "accessible" to the child (i.e., consider the child's vision & hearing)
- Be pleasant or neutral for the child
- Immediately precede an action or activity
- Alert the child that something will follow the cue
- Focus the child's attention on the interaction or activity that follows

Whenever you are interacting with a child who benefits from extra cues, you should remember to:

- Always let the child know you are present by using a cue that tells the child someone is present.
- Let the child know who you are. Each person should have a specific cue or way of telling the child who is with

her.

- Do not act on the child without letting him or her know what is going to happen.
- Allow the child a brief period of time to respond to your message.
- When finished with an activity, let the child know that the activity is over.
- When you are going to leave the child, use a cue to let him know you are leaving.

Encouraging Consistency

In order for the child to learn the meaning of the cues, it is important that each person who interacts with the child use the same cues. As a result, the cues will have meaning for the child and will allow him to anticipate and participate in activities. Strategies that can encourage consistency:

- Use a touch cue map that shows the location of cues and explains how to use specific cues (see Figure 1).
- Use a chart to indicate cues to be used to signal new activities (Figure 2).
- Use a chart to indicate cues to be used within routines (Fig. 2).
- Model the cues for communication partners who are just beginning to use the cues with the child.

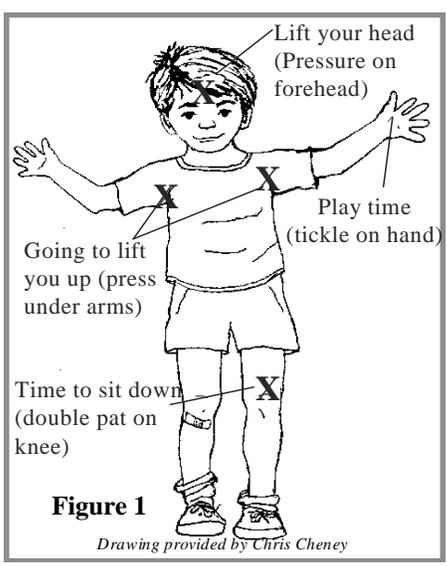


Figure 1

Drawing provided by Chris Cheney

Child's Name: <u>Susie</u> Date: <u>2/304</u>	
Activity: <u>Brushing teeth after lunch</u>	
Cue for the activity: <u>Have Susie smell the toothpaste</u>	
Steps for the Activity	Cue
Have Susie open her mouth for the toothbrush	Touch the corner of her mouth with the toothbrush
Wipe Susie's mouth with a cloth	Show Susie the brightly colored washcloth & touch it gently to her cheek
Have Susie take a drink	Show Susie her brightly colored cup and tell her "drink"

Figure 2