

OBJECTS OF REFERENCE

UNDERSTANDING AND USING OBJECTS OF REFERENCE



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WHAT ARE OBJECTS OF REFERENCE?

Objects of reference are tangible items used to represent a person, activity, place, or event. They serve as communication aids for individuals who have difficulty understanding verbal language. These objects are particularly effective for individuals with speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN) or neurodivergence, as they offer a concrete, visual, and tactile way to communicate and understand the world around them.



WHY USE OBJECTS OF REFERENCE?

- Supports Understanding: Helps individuals link objects to specific meanings or actions.
- Aids in Choice-Making: Offers a way to make choices by selecting an object that represents a desired activity or need.

- Promotes Independence: Enables individuals to anticipate what will happen next or express preferences without relying solely on words.
- Reduces Anxiety: Provides clarity and structure, helping individuals feel more in control of their environment.

EXAMPLES OF OBJECTS OF REFERENCE

DAILY ROUTINES

- To represent snack time: A spoon or a plate they use for snack time.
- To represent bath time: A small sponge or a toy rubber duck.

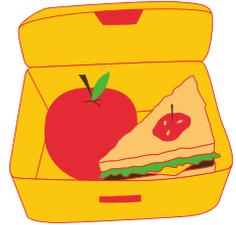


ACTIVITIES

- To represent going outside: A hat or welly boots.
- To represent story time: A small book or a bookmark.

PLACES

- To represent the park:
Welly boots or a jacket.
- To represent
nursery/school: backpack
or lunch bag.



PEOPLE

- To represent a caregiver: A
piece of their clothing (like
a scarf or keychain they use
often).
- To represent a teacher: A
lanyard or a badge.

HOW TO USE OBJECTS OF REFERENCE

1. Introduce Objects Gradually

- Start with a few key objects linked to familiar and meaningful routines.
- Show the object to the individual and say the associated word or phrase (e.g., show a spoon and say, “Snack time”).

2. Consistency is Key

- Use the same object for the same activity or concept every time. This reinforces the connection between the object and its meaning.



3. Pair with Verbal and Visual Cues

- Combine the object with spoken language and gestures to strengthen understanding.
- For example, hold up the object of reference for “bath time” and say, “It’s time for a bath,” while guiding them toward the bathroom.



4. Encourage Engagement

- Allow the child to hold, touch, or explore the object before transitioning to the associated activity.

5. Use During Transitions

- Offer the object of reference before a transition to help prepare the child for what is happening next. For example, hand them the car key object when it’s time to leave the house.

6. Build Independence

- Encourage the individual to use objects of reference to express their choices or needs. For instance, offer two objects (e.g., a spoon and a ball) and let them pick the one that represents their preferred activity.



TIPS FOR SUCCESS

CHOOSE MEANINGFUL OBJECTS:

- To represent the park: Welly boots or a jacket.
- To represent nursery/school: backpack or lunch bag.

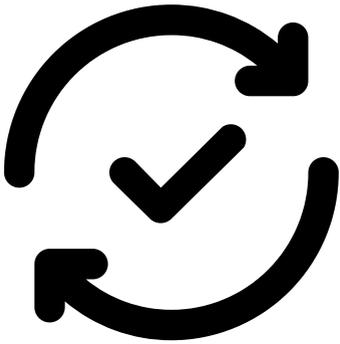


MAKE THEM PORTABLE:

Small, lightweight objects work best so they can be easily carried or stored.

INVOLVE THE INDIVIDUAL:

- Let them explore and interact with the objects to build familiarity and comfort.



REGULARLY REVIEW AND ADAPT:

Update objects of reference as the individual's preferences, needs, or routines change.



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