

# **Visual Support Toolkit**

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**January 2012**

## A Letter From A Person with Asperger's Syndrome

Hi all

Have thought long and hard about adding my thoughts to this post and finally feel it would be worth while as there seems to be alot of misunderstanding about aspergers. I have aspergers and was diagnosed 3 years ago amd since then I spent a huge amount of time researching it. In my opinion Sheldon has aspergers you only need to read the diagnostic criteria to see he matches it almost perfectly. He displays examples of it in every episode. Yes Sheldon is a genius and has a very high IQ but there are different types of intelligence. Though he has a very high IQ he has almost no EQ or emotional intelligence.

IQ and EQ are not mutually exclusive it is possible to have both, not every genius is socially inept. Just read the bio on a scientist like Shrodinger he was a complete ladies man but also a genius. Or for example someone like Tony Stark aka Iron Man just thought I would mention that as he was mentioned in an episode and yes I know he is a fictional character hehe.

Sheldon has so many aspects of aspergers I will list some that come to mind.

### Social Skills

Can't read body language has very basic social interactions ie. can't detect sarcasm, has great difficulty lying, takes everything litrally, lacks empathy, very bad at social repair (ie. apologising) dislikes physical contact ie. hugging. Can't engage in "small talk" as there is no obvious point to it. Truth is more important then the emotional state of his peers or friends. Can't fake his emotional state ie. Smile for the sake of others. Relates better to people much older or younger then him.

Has sensory issues

Can't stand whistling or loud music.

### Ritualised behaviour

He has more Rituals then I do such as what food to eat on what day. What cutlery to use. Has a favorite seat. Even going to the bathroom the same time everyday. He almost has a set routine for everyday, and when this is interrupt causes a fair amount of stress. Cannot cope with change or supprises everything has it's routine.

Sheldon himself views himself as different from other people in the very first episode he makes a comment about of not being of the same species to Lenard. However he puts this down to his great intellect but his social difficulties are nothing to do with intelligence. There are plenty of very intelligent people who have no social difficulty at all. Obviously his family are aware he his different as well otherwise they would not have him tested but all they concluded was that he was not "Mad" Aspergers is often misssdiagnosed or not

diagnosed at all. In fact in some cases aspies can be misdiagnosed as schizophrenic for example.

I can go into a lot more detail if people are interested.

Asperger's is not a disease or a degenerative disorder. The only disability it causes is because aspies have to live in an NT (Neuro typical ie normal people) world. Although we might use the same language we communicate in quite different ways. The brain of someone with aspergers is wired differently, this is not brain damage it's just different from the norm.

NT communication is 70% body language 20% how you say something ie tone of voice 10% what you actually say

Aspie communication is almost 100% what you say. It's why Sheldon takes everything very literally all the time and often has to ask how someone is feeling as he can't tell otherwise. Aspies can "learn" to act like a NT if they see and observe social behaviour so they have an example to compare it to (see the flow chart he made to try and make a friend), but they are lost when faced with a new social situation. It's why we like routine and tend to treat social interactions as equations ie if you do A and B you get C, we struggle to deal with unpredictable behaviour. This should give you an idea as to how big the difference is between aspies and NTs it's very subtle but significant and often missed as Aspies learn to emulate NTs to get along with people. In fact some Aspies make great actors because of this mimicking. Sheldon is not that type of aspie there are many flavours of aspie as there are different coping strategies to get along with NTs.

I have noticed on the previous posts there seems to be some hostility to the idea of Sheldon having aspergers. I think this is because those people who identify with Sheldon might feel that if Sheldon has it they might have it. To accept a diagnosis of aspergers as an adult can be very difficult I know I found it very hard to accept and the initial response is often one of anger and denial. Only about 50% of aspies if that are diagnosed.

Anyways just my thoughts on this issue I felt it important to get the view point of someone who actually has aspergers across.

Hope this might provoke a more thoughtful discussion and raise awareness.

Regards

## **Individual Schedules**

# CREATING SCHEDULES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM TO PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE

*Kelly Shepperd, M.Ed., Kentucky Autism Training Center*

We all use calendars, memos, recipes, to do lists, and shopping lists; these environmental supports help us to plan our time, organize our tasks, and better understand what is expected of us. **Teachers and parents can make use of environmental supports to help persons with autism become more independent** (Quill, 1995). Schedules are one type of environmental support that can be used to present information to persons with autism. Schedules provide the following:

- Sequence of events
- Alert changes in routine
- Redirects the learner back to an activity
- Outlines expectations

There are many types of schedules, ranging from daily schedules to mini-schedules that break down an activity into parts. This article details the use of daily schedules.

**A daily schedule gives individuals information about major events and activities of the day.** Daily schedules can be printed, pictorial or a combination of the two. Daily schedules can be posted in the classroom or home, or carried in a notebook or clipboard.

One type of schedule is designed as a check-off system. The student should check off each activity as he completes it. By using this type of schedule, the student can predict the upcoming activities. The adults can alter the schedule by marking changes in events, thus alerting the student of any upcoming changes. By using a sheet of paper that has been laminated, and marking completed tasks with a grease pencil or dry erase marker, the student can use the schedule anywhere.

___ Arrival	___ Music
___ Daily Oral Language	___ Outside
___ Math	___ Social Studies
___ Reading Group	___ Science
___ Lunch	___ Home
___ Spelling	

The below schedule is an example of a stationary picture schedule posted in the classroom. This type of schedule was developed and used with a preschool student during a school-based consultation.

Schedule process is as follows:

- The child is prompted to check his schedule by the teacher or assistant
- He pulls off the picture representing the upcoming activity
- He takes the picture of the upcoming activity to that area of the classroom and matches it to a picture in that area.
- When the activity is complete, the child takes the picture of the completed activity, places it in the finished pocket and pulls off the picture representing the next activity.

By using pictures velcroed to a strip, the teachers were able to alert the child of changes in his schedule when needed. This eased anxiety in the classroom for the child. Initially, the child required physical prompts to check his schedule. As time progressed, however, he was able to check his schedule independently and

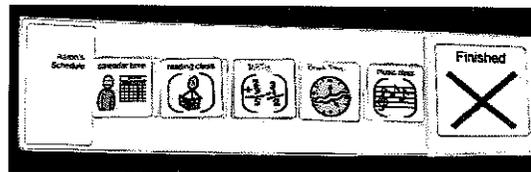
transition from one activity to another occurred with little difficulty. His teacher remarked, "I am using picture schedules with several of my students now. It helps keep them connected with what is going on in the real world."

**Daily schedules may be used at home as well.** These provide persons with autism information about upcoming events at home. As with school schedules, home schedules could be used with pictures or print, depending on the individual. A printed example of a home schedule could be:

___ Homework	___ Shower
___ X-Box	___ Read
___ Dinner	___ Bed
___ TV	

The same schedule could be made with pictures to assist the emerging reader in predicting events at home. **This could aid the individual in understanding the events that are coming up at home, making the routine predictable.**

**The primary function of daily schedules is to clarify the sequence of daily events. They specify where to go, what to do, and what comes next** (Quill, 2000). They should be presented in the communication mode of the individual. Creators may use print, blackline pictures, color drawings, photographs or even concrete objects.



## RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING VISUAL SUPPORTS AND SCHEDULES

**Do-Watch-Listen-Say: Social and Communication Intervention for Children With Autism**, Kathleen Ann Quill. (Paul H Brookes Pub, 2000).

**Teaching Children with Autism: Strategies to Enhance**

**Communication and Socialization**, Kathleen Ann Quill, ed. (Delmar, 1995).

**Visual Strategies for Improving Communication: Practical Supports for School and Home**, Linda A. Hodgdon. (Curke, 1995).

**Different Roads to Learning** (Time-Timers, PECS Products, Videos and Software), 1-800-853-1057, <http://www.diflearn.com>

**Boardmaker** is a graphics database containing over 3,000 Picture Communication Symbols. To order contact t Mayer-Johnson, Inc., 800-588-4548, [www.mayer-johnson.com](http://www.mayer-johnson.com)

**Visual Schedule Systems**, <http://www.setbc.org/projects/vss/default.html>.

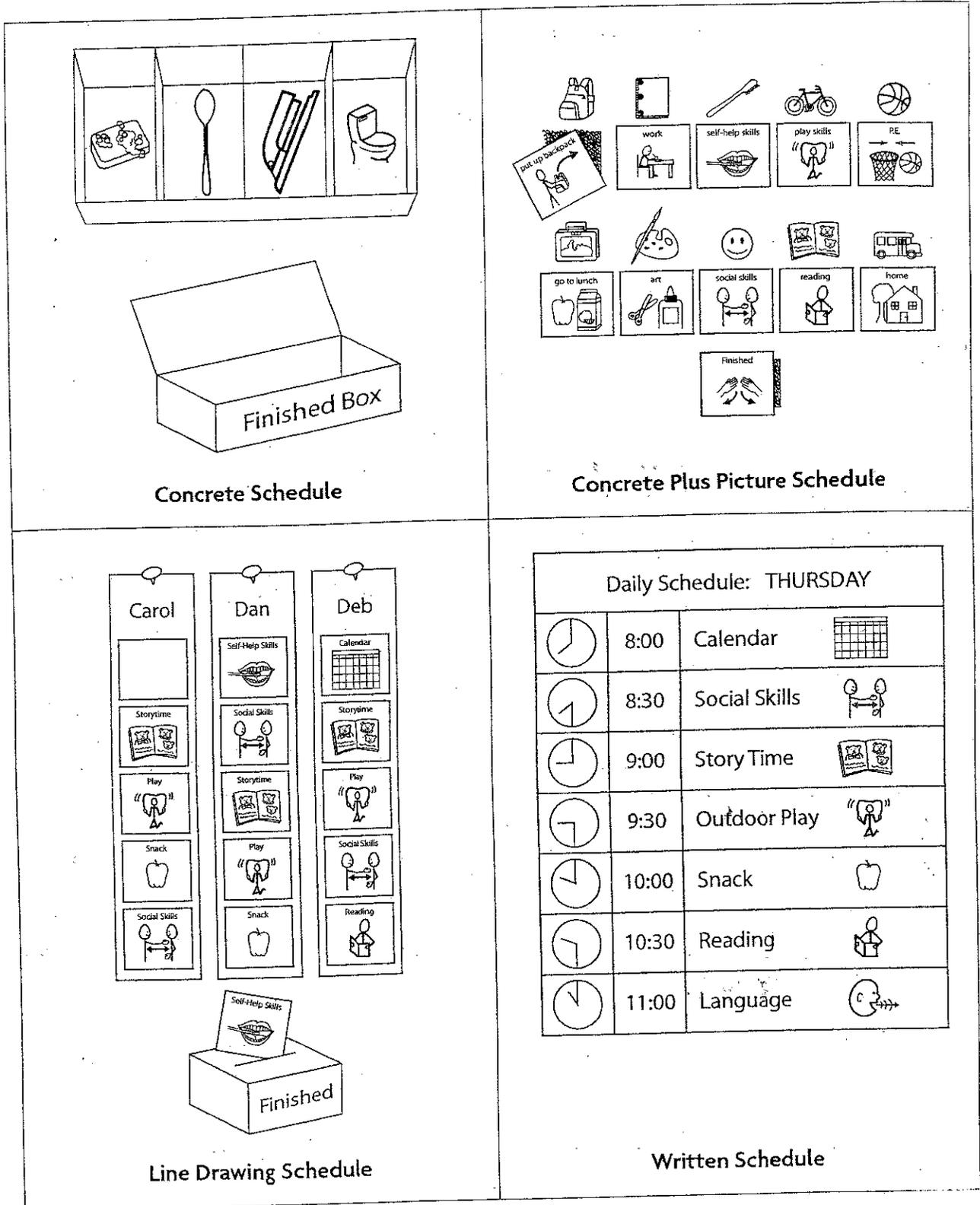
Online information about how to develop and use visual schedules. Downloadable pdf files are also available at this site.

**See it, Say it, Write it**, <http://www.seeitsayitwriteit.com>. To provide educators (K-12) with simple innovative methods for creating adaptive materials (using familiar computer software, scanners, and digital cameras) which will enhance the writing skills for all students including diverse learners.

**dot2learn**, [www.dot2learn.com](http://www.dot2learn.com). Products and software to develop schedules and visual supports with free examples of activities.

## SCHEDULES AT A GLANCE

Type of Schedule	Variation of Types	Length of Schedule	Location of Schedule	Routine to check Schedule	Manipulating Schedule
<b>OBJECT</b>	Actual object Part of object Representative object	Transitional objects Single object First __, Then __ Sequence of 3 Sequence of 4 Sequence more than 4	Next activity Individual transition area Group transition area	Physical guidance Give transition object Give transition card	Uses object in task Match object to object Place object in box
<b>PICTURE</b>	Labels or logos Realistic drawings Symbolic drawings Commercial pictures Photographs Black & White pictures Color pictures	Transitional picture Single picture First __, Then __ Sequence of 3 Sequence of 4 Sequence more than 4 Half day Full day	Next activity Individual transition area Group transition area *Name tags *Highlight info *Color code *Favorite picture	physical guidance Give transition object Give transition card Say "check schedule" Ring bell Flash classroom lights	Match picture to picture Match picture to box Place picture in pocket Place picture in box Turn pictures over *Pockets *Paper clips Draw line through picture Check box next to picture Check line next to picture
<b>WRITTEN</b>	Single word w/ picture Single words Short phrases Sentences Words with highlights Words w/work system	First __, Then __ Sequence of 3 Sequence of 4 Sequence more than 4 Half day Full day	Individual transition area Group transition area *Name tags *Highlight info *Color code *Favorite picture Back pack Folder Notebook Clipboard	Say "check schedule" Ring bell Flash classroom lights Clock Timer	Draw line through word Check box next to word Check line next to word



Concrete Schedule

Concrete Plus Picture Schedule

Line Drawing Schedule

Written Schedule

Figure 5.2. Sample individual schedules (concrete, pictures, line drawings, written).

Time	Class	Location
7:20-7:40	Homeroom	Room 101
7:40-7:44	Hall time	Hallway, walk to class
7:44-8:40	Algebra	Room 108
8:40-8:44	Hall time	Hallway, walk to class
8:44-9:40	English	Room 118
9:40-9:44	Hall time	Hallway, walk to class
9:44-10:44	Reading	Room 103
10:44-11:40	Lunch	Cafeteria
11:40-11:44	Hall time	Hallway, walk to class
11:44-12:40	Physical Education	Gym
12:40-12:44	Hall time	Hallway, walk to class
12:44-2:05	Resource Room	Room 211
2:05-2:09	Hall time	Hallway, walk to class
2:09-2:20	Homeroom	Room 101
2:20	Dismissal	Go to bus #45

**FIGURE 6.2.** Sample daily schedule (middle/high school).

**Work I need to finish before lunch:**

**Morning Work**



**Journal Writing**



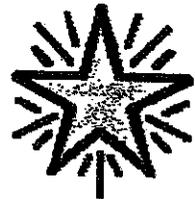
**Math**



**Language Arts**



**Choice**



**Work I need to finish after lunch:**

**Social Studies**



**Computer Lab**



**Science**



**Group Work**



**Choice**



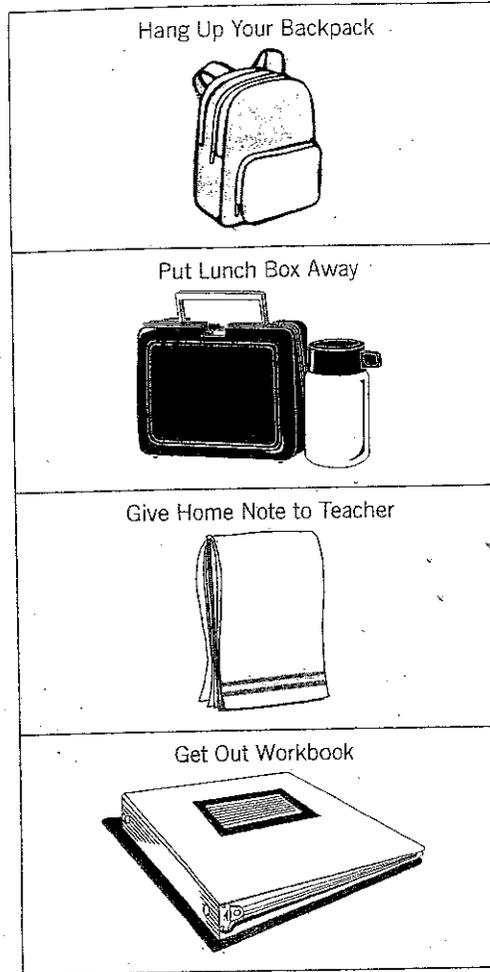


FIGURE 6.4. Sample morning routine checklist.

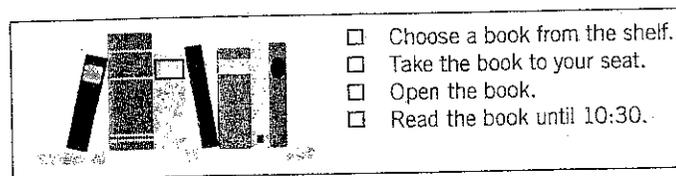
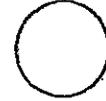
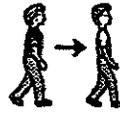


FIGURE 6.5. Sample independent reading activity checklist.

**Work Systems  
or Task Directions**



Pack and Stack Monday through Thursday



\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Write in planner Follow model on white board



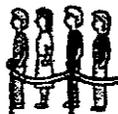
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Put Planner in desk



\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Get Backpack and lunch box



\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Stack Chair



\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Line Up to Go

## Reading

### Task 1

1. Get the Task 1 folder out of file box. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Open Spotlight on Literacy book to page 60. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Read page 60. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Return book to folder. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Put folder in the file box. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Computer for 5 minutes. \_\_\_\_\_

### Task 2

1. Get the Task 2 folder out of the file. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Complete worksheet 1. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Return worksheet to folder. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Put folder in the file box. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Computer for 5 minutes. \_\_\_\_\_

### Task 3

1. Get the Task 3 folder out of the file. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Write name. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Return name page to folder. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Put folder in the file box. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Computer for 5 minutes. \_\_\_\_\_

### Task 4

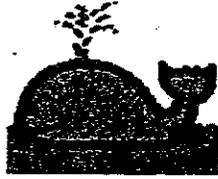
1. Get the Task 4 folder out of the file. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Complete worksheet 2 side 1 and side 2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Return worksheet 2 to folder. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Put folder in the file box. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Computer for 5 minutes. \_\_\_\_\_

After you have finished your reading tasks you may read silently.

United States



whale



car racing



soldier



## Steps in Writing an Essay

1. Choose a topic
2. Find information
3. Organize the information
4. Write
5. Proofread
6. Peer review
7. Re-write
8. Publish

**Today in \_\_\_\_\_ we will:**

1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



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

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

To finish my work in \_\_\_\_\_

I need to: -

Check the numbers as I complete each step.

1

2

3

4

5

Raise my hand to tell my teacher when I have finished all the steps.

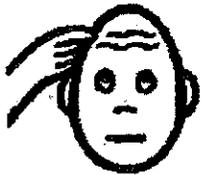
## Rules for Asking Questions

teacher



When my teacher says,  
"Does anyone have a question?"

think



Think in my head.....  
Does my question match the topic?

ask



If it does.....then I can  
ask my question.

raise my hand



I can raise my hand.

wait



Wait for the teacher to call my name.

If I get lost in a store I need to

look for adult



I'm lost



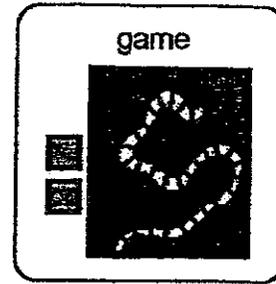
my name is



don't get upset



# Playing a Board Game



I choose a game piece



We decide who goes first



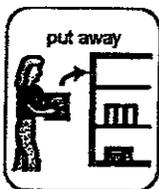
I take turns



I share with my friends

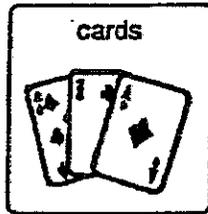


I compliment my friends

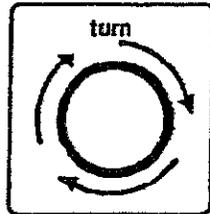


I help clean up

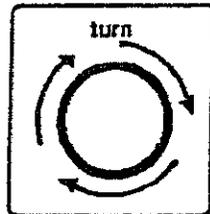
# MEMORY



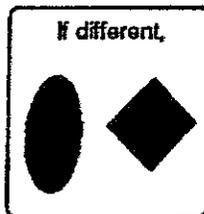
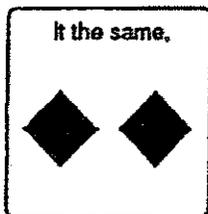
Put the cards down on the table.



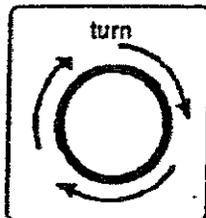
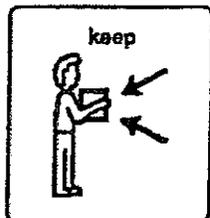
Turn over 1 card.



Turn over 1 more card.

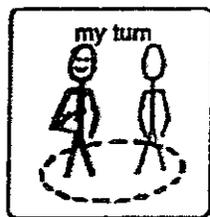


Keep them.



Turn them over.

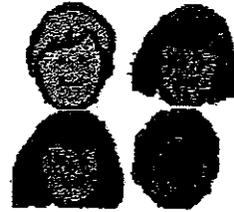
Go again.



Someone else's turn.

## **Social Stories or Social Narratives**

## **Working in Groups**



Sometimes in class we need to work in groups.

This means that two or more people need to work together to complete an assignment.

This can be very hard because:

- Everyone has a different job to do.
- I don't always know what everyone's job is.
- Everyone talks at the same time.
- Other kids don't always want to follow my ideas.

These are some rules for working in groups:

1. Make sure I know the names of my group members.
2. Everyone should name his/her job and tell what it means.
3. Take turns talking.
4. Listen to others' ideas without interrupting.
5. Ask questions if I don't understand.
6. Follow the idea that most of the group members like – most of the time that won't be my idea but that's okay.

If there is a problem in the group one person should get the teacher to let her know.

## Raising my hand.

When I want to answer a question, I can raise my hand.

I have to wait for the teacher to call my name before I can answer a question.

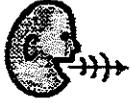
If I need to ask a question I can raise my hand.

I have to wait for the teacher to call my name before I can ask a question.

When I raise my hand and don't call out, this makes my teacher very happy. She will be very proud of me.

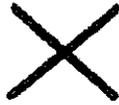


Talking to My Friends



I can talk to my friends at lunch or on the playground.

I can talk about what we are doing in school, places I like to go or what I am going to do on the weekend.



My friends do not like it when I talk about AGC all the time. They do not know about AGC. They do not want to know about AGC.



I need to talk about things, my friends want to talk about like recess, games, sports, or TV shows.

If my friend asks me a question, I need to answer the question. This will make my



friend happy.



When I talk to my friends, I need to take turns. After I talk, I need to listen to what my friend says without interrupting. This makes my friend happy.



Friends want to talk to me when I talk about things they like.

# Power Cards

## Calming Choices

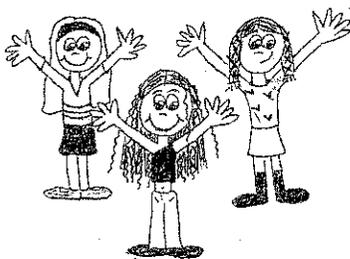
When I feel I am getting angry, I can:

1. Count to 10 in my head and tell the adult I would like to negotiate.
2. Write my feelings in my special journal while the adult gives me my space.
3. Tell the adult I need a break. I can get a drink of water and chill until I am ready to work again.



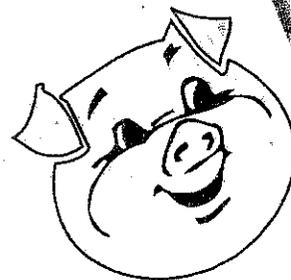
## Power Puff Girls Play a Game

1. Games should be fun for everyone.
2. If you win a game, you can: smile, give a high five, or say, "yea!"
3. If you lose a game you can: take a deep breath, say, "good job" to the winner, or say, "maybe next time."



## Charlotte's Three Rules for Taking Charge

1. If you are not sure what to do, check your schedule.
2. Don't wait for someone to tell you what to do. Just do it!!
3. If you need help say, "I need help."



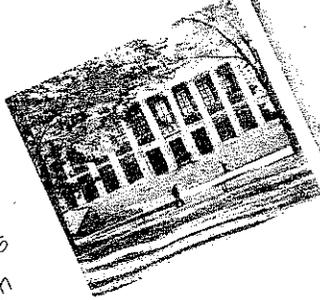
# Power Cards

## A Harvard Student

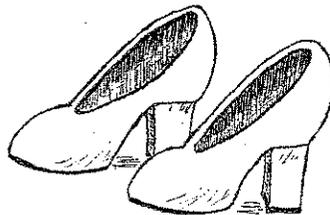
1. Take class notes and write all assignments in a calendar.

2. Ask questions when you don't understand.

3. Break down assignments into small steps, assign deadlines for each step, and write all deadlines and assignment due dates in a calendar.



## Minie Mouse & the Pink Shoes



1. Say "I want pink shoes" to your teacher.
2. Have a quiet mouth (no giggling).
3. Look at your shoes or your Minnie Card to remember the rule.

## Superman & the Bathroom

1. When you are at home, don't wait for someone to ask if you need to go to the bathroom. Just go when you need to go.
2. When you are at school, tell your teacher that you need to go to the bathroom. Try and go every time there is a scheduled break, even if you don't feel you need to.
3. If you are away from home, tell an adult you are with that you need to use the bathroom and have them show you where it is located.



## **Behavior Supports**

# USING A FIRST-THEN BOARD

Kelly Shepherd, M.Ed.  
Field Training Coordinator,  
Kentucky Autism Training Center

A major challenge when working with individuals with autism is giving directions that are clear to the individual. (Quill, 1995). Individuals with autism often have difficulty understanding direction or rules as given to peers. Visual supports are a common tool used to assist individuals with autism with this understanding. Visual supports include schedules, scripts, calendars, choice boards and First-Then boards. These supports can be created using pictures (Boardmaker or photographs), print, or a combination, depending upon the level of the child.

Many individuals with autism are motivated differently and often have difficulties "waiting" for the reinforcer. Professionals and parents alike must come up with creative ways to motivate the individual to complete a task. First-then boards are one such way. These boards are designed to make a nonpreferred task seem more pleasing and to help the student understand that a "fun" task or reinforcer is coming after the work is completed. To use a First-then board, the following steps should be taken.

- Using a reinforcer assessment, assess what will motivate the individual
- Make a picture (photo or Boardmaker) of the preferred item
- Make a picture of the nonpreferred task
- Place these pictures together on a board with one side labeled First the other side labeled Then
- Show the board to the individual prior to beginning the nonpreferred task
- Using the board, say, First \_\_\_\_\_ Then\_\_\_\_\_.
- Once the nonpreferred activity is completed, the student is immediately given the preferred item/activity.
- The initial use of the First-Then Board should involve an activity that is relatively brief in time in order for the child to see and understand the rule of first doing some work, then getting something fun.

As a part of a school based consultation at James T. Alton Middle School in Hardin County, the team incorporated first-then boards at both school and home. Team members included: Stephanie Thomas, parent, Debbie Vogel, teacher, Teresa Wilson, SLP, Penny Amerine, Instructional Assistant and Kelly Shepperd, field training coordinator, KATC.

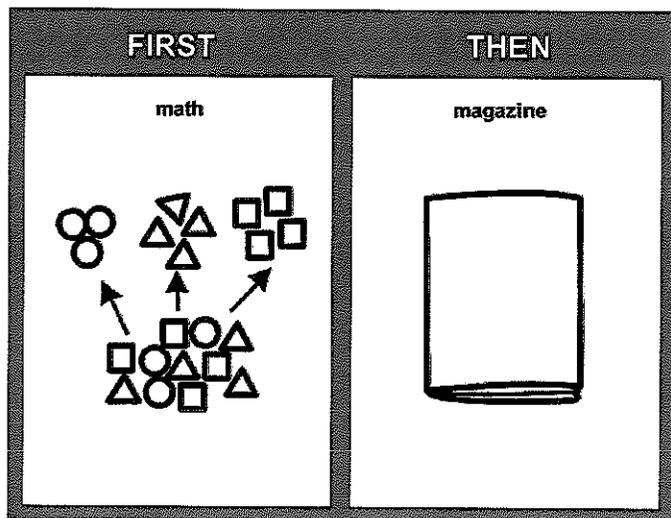
Below: (left to right) Penny Aminine, Debby Vogel, Jay Thomas and Teresa Wilson



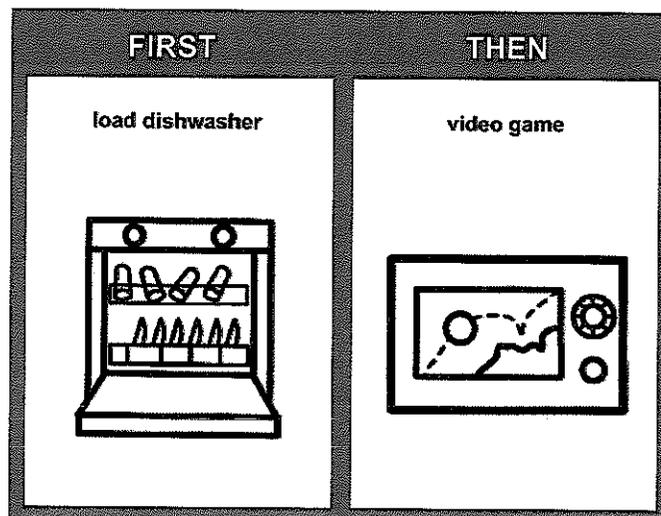
Jay Thomas, a middle school student in a self-contained classroom seemed unmotivated to complete his class work. He was not disruptive; however, he would not complete class work without multiple prompts. The classroom staff needed a way to get him to complete work such as hands on math with less prompts.

The team implemented a First-Then Board. As a part of the training agenda for the school based consultation, Jay's team completed a reinforcer assessment. By doing this, the team determined that particular NASCAR items, sports magazines, computer games and certain videos would motivate Jay. Each of these items have been used as a part of a first-then board with Jay. For the purpose of this article we will discuss the sports magazine as an example.

## SCHOOL



## HOME



Jay was highly motivated by looking at sports magazines so a picture representing a magazine was placed under then. A picture representing schoolwork was used under first. Using the First-then board prompted Jay to complete his work with minimal prompts. The staff showed him the board saying, "First work, then magazine."

Initially, Jay was given one nonpreferred activity (such as a calendar activity or functional math) to complete and then he was allowed look at a magazine for a set amount of time. Over days, Jay was able to complete nonpreferred tasks more independently and the First-Then board was expanded so that he was expected to complete multiple tasks prior to earning the magazine.

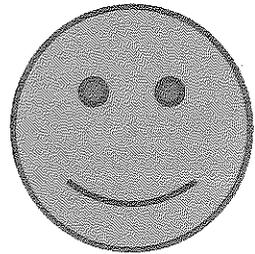
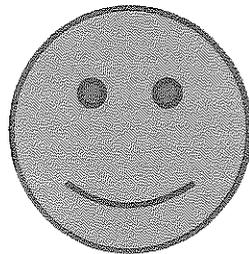
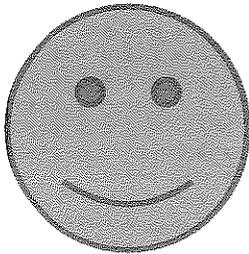
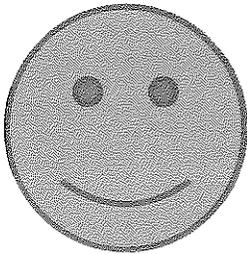
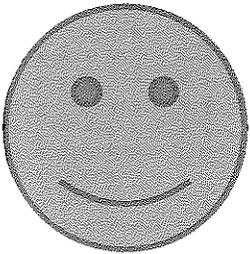
This process is used not only at school, but at home as well. His mother, Stephanie, is an active participant in the school based consultation process. She utilizes the first-then process at home and in the community. For community outings, such as shopping at the local grocery or discount store. His mother knows that he likes to visit the magazine and toy rack at the grocery. In order to finish her shopping, Stephanie uses first-then. Jay is told, "First groceries, then magazines". The same principle is applied when at the discount store, however, there, he enjoys looking at NASCAR merchandise. Jay is told, "First shop for mom, then NASCAR." According to Stephanie, shopping trips with the First-then method are a lot easier than without. She also uses this method when prompting Jay to clean up his room, "First clean, then video". Short errands around town may also prove to be a time when First-then is used. Jay may be prompted to participate in a short trip by using, "First bank, then Nana's." This procedure has proven to be a positive tool in Jay's life at home, school and the community.



# First

# Then

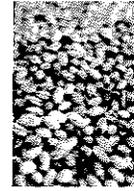
**DRO**



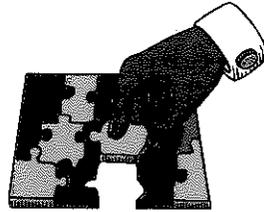
# Billy's Reward Choices



Hand-held  
Electronic games



Beans



Puzzle



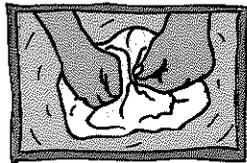
Play with Legos



Crayons



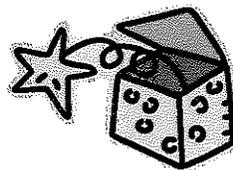
Playing Cards



Theraputty

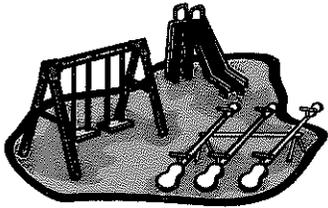


Bionicles figures

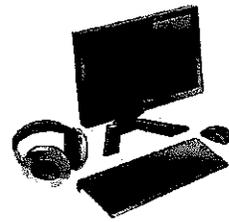


Sensory Box

# Billy's Favorite Rewards



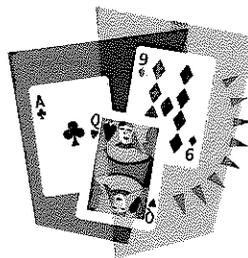
Playground



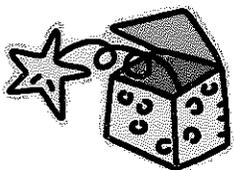
Computer



Play Ball



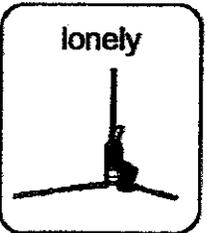
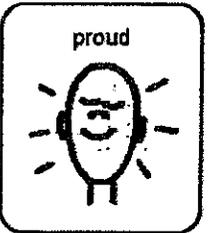
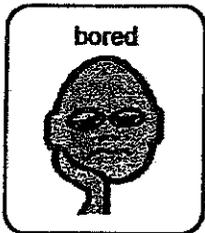
Playing Cards



Sensory Box Items



# What are you feeling?

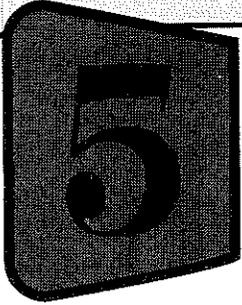


because...

# We All Have Feelings

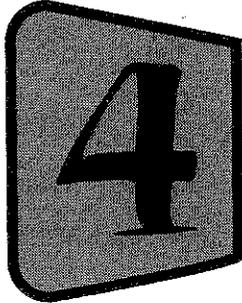
Grouchy	Depressed	Lazy
Sad	Jealous	Rejected
Happy	Left out	Enthusiastic
Mad	Foolish	Exhausted
Angry	Uneasy	Content
Nervous	Surprised	Resentful
Frustrated	Smart	Joyful
Upset	Proud	Irritated
Lonely	Brave	Pressured
Worried	Naughty	Helpless
Scared	Silly	Homesick
Furious	Crazy	Curious
Excited	Cool	Confused
Embarrassed	Hurt	Envious
Ashamed	Kind	Confident
Guilty	Disgusted	Heart-broken
Disappointed	Sorry	Discouraged
Frightened	Anxious	Apologetic
Bored	Grateful	Stubborn
Loving	Shocked	Determined
Shy	Relieved	Annoyed

# Voice Scale



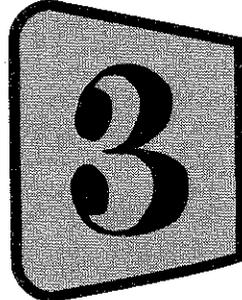
Screaming / emergency only

---



Recess / outside voice

---



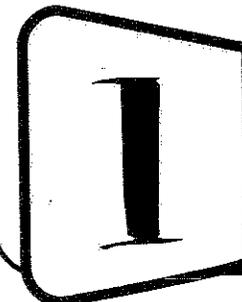
Classroom voice / talking

---



Soft voice / whisper

---



No talking at all

# The Stress Scale

5

I could lose control

---

4

Can really upset me

---

3

Makes me nervous

---

2

Bugs me

---

1

Never bothers me

Name: Ben's Perspective My Big Sister's Anger Scale

Rating

Looks/sounds like

Feels like

Safe people can help/I can try to

5

Bitching  
Yelling  
Screaming  
Throwing  
"You're grounded!"

Sick to stomach

4

Ben says he doesn't know about "4" for his sister

3

Ben says he doesn't know about "3" for his big sister

2



Not talking  
Grumpy

Upset with another

Ben says he wishes his sister would leave.

1

Ben says he doesn't know about "1" for his sister

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ My \_\_\_\_\_ Scale

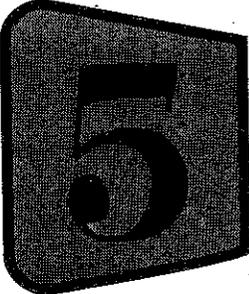
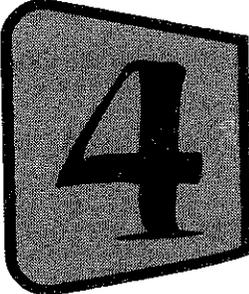
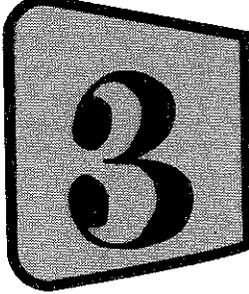
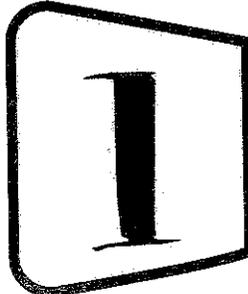
Rating

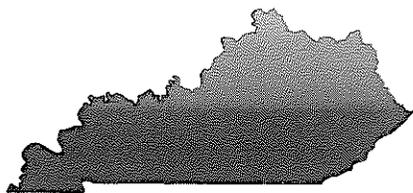
Looks like

Feels like

I can *try* to

5			
4			
3			
2			
1			

OK	Not OK	Topic: _____
		 <input data-bbox="873 359 1419 470" type="text"/>
		 <input data-bbox="878 695 1424 806" type="text"/>
		 <input data-bbox="883 1010 1429 1121" type="text"/>
		 <input data-bbox="888 1346 1433 1457" type="text"/>
		 <input data-bbox="893 1667 1438 1778" type="text"/>



**Angie Lilly, OT/RL**  
**Occupational Therapist**  
**Hardin County Schools**

# INCORPORATING SENSORY SUPPORTS INTO THE SCHOOL DAY

## Intro

We take in and interpret sensory input from the environment every second of our day, to include lighting, sounds, and smells. Input we receive from the environment can serve to impact our behavior in terms of eliciting responses such as being calm, alert, cautious, and ready to work. In addition, our brains and bodies respond to input in a way that helps us be ready for the demands of a particular task. Individuals diagnosed on the autism spectrum frequently interpret sensory input differently and have sensory preferences. It is important to recognize that each individual has their own preferences and although there is a general set of "best practices, it is imperative to tailor sensory programming towards the individual. I have enjoyed working with many teams of individuals who use determination and planning to excel at meeting the communication, social, behavior, and sensory needs of individuals with autism spectrum disorders. This article will focus on two teams who have worked hard to use sensory supports throughout the school day to support individuals with autism.

## Background

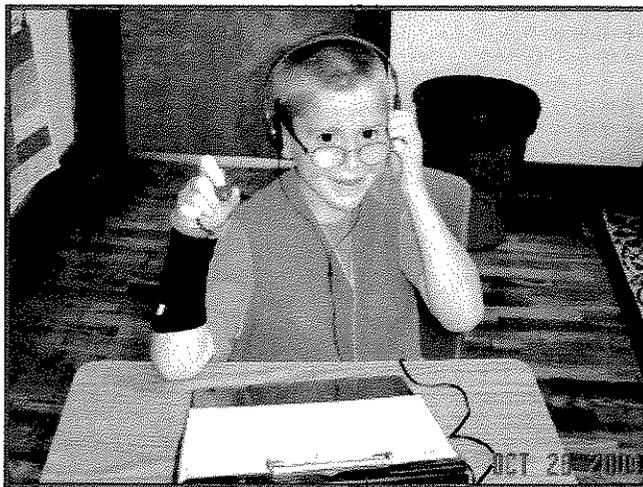
One very loveable 9-year-old student, Brad Smallwood, attends Howe Valley Elementary School in Hardin County. Brad was diagnosed with autism at age 2 and received early intervention. His family, T.R. and Sheila Smallwood, are dedicated to pursuing knowledge and intervention that will aid Brad. This combined with being surrounded by a supportive class setting has helped him to excel and be able to maintain programming in the regular education (2nd grade) setting with collaborative and resource special education support. Brad's teachers, Kathy Cofer (regular education), Lori Blair (special education), and Vickie Morris (paraprofessional) do a terrific job of communicating with each other about modifications to help Brad succeed. In addition, the Kentucky Autism Training Center has been instrumental in supporting and suggesting strategies for Brad.



*Brad takes a short sensory break in a ball pit.*

Brad has multiple sensory needs. He seeks out movement and touch input. He craves hugs and deep pressure. Some loud noises and environments do bother him such as the cafeteria. He loves low frequency noise such as vacuums and lawn mowers and he likes to rattle paper. Sitting during circle time and for seated work tends to be difficult for him. Brad can perform the academic work with modifications but when work is hard he tends to seek out sensory input and will demonstrate heavy breathing.

In the past, Brad has needed a variety of sensory supports in order to be able to successfully participate and perform tasks that are required, for his educational needs. These supports were tangible objects such as Sit-n-Move cushions, ball pits, trampoline, ball chair, oral motor supports, and fidgets. These supports were built into the routine and listed on his schedule as a "break". As Brad has matured and his needs have become better known to all that work with him, we are now better able to incorporate Brad's sensory needs within the routine of the day. Examples include:



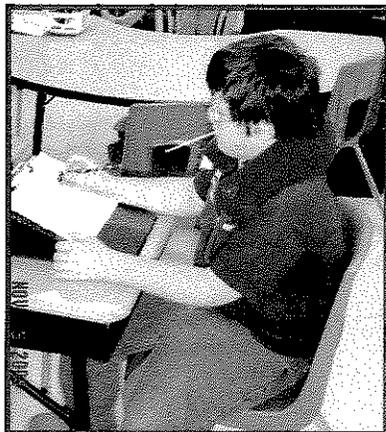
*Brad works at his seat using a vest, headphones, and a forearm weight.*

- Sitting next to a peer at circle that holds his hand or rubs his head.
- Sitting on a movement cushion for hard work.
- Listening to a tape with headphones of paper rattling - so as not to disrupt the class.
- Taking mini breaks to get tickled in the room using the "First/Then" concept. ("First you write a sentence; then you get a tickle.")

Brad also has sensory supports in relation to writing to provide him with extra input for heavier pencil pressure; this includes a forearm weight for writing.

As Brad's expressive communication skills have improved, he has learned to make requests to meet his sensory needs such as tickle, walk, listen to music, etc. In addition, as Brad has gotten into the routine and understood the behavioral expectations, his need for sensory supports has lessened and these supports have been effective for use as motivators. For instance, since Brad loves low noises, if he is working on a hard task, instructions may be given in a deep slow voice, which Brad responds to as a motivator. Lori Blair, special education teacher, expressed "Sensory supports have helped Brad participate and be included in the regular education setting with much more success. **When Brad's sensory needs are met, he is much more able to attend, communicate, and participate in class.**"

Nathan Bennett, 9 years old, is always on the go; he has a great sense of humor and keeps his dedicated special education teachers Sue Knapp and Rebecca Meredith on their toes. Nathan attends Lakewood Elementary in Hardin County Schools. Nathan has made great strides towards being included and participating in a special education classroom and with same age peers during the day. Nathan has a strong support system outside the school system with his mother Stacey, taking the lead. A strong combination of behavioral supports (to include reward system, social stories, and teaching expected behavior) combined with sensory techniques (to include visual supports, quiet area, using weight for calming, and oral motor chews) have led to Nathan maintaining better control of his behavior.



*Nathan sits at his seat using weighted neck wrap and a straw for oral input.*

Prior to implementation of these techniques, Nathan would frequently tantrum and threaten his own safety and others. Through minimizing the environmental stimulus and teaching appropriate behaviors, Nathan is much more successful at being independent. Nathan's sensory issues include becoming over excited very easily which then can lead to behavior outbursts. By keeping the environment and routine as predictable as possible, Nathan's teachers were allowing his sensory system to stay more regulated for working. Nathan also seeks out oral motor input; straws were used to allow Nathan this input. Initially, Nathan's teachers had to slow him down since he couldn't maintain his own calm. This was done by building quiet time on a beanbag with a weighted blanket regularly into his schedule. In addition, so Nathan would not view the time as a punishment, he was given a choice of activities that would help him remain calm.

Rebecca Meredith, special education teacher, said she has discovered that "some kids need more sensory supports than others. They should have what they need, but it is important to fade these needs into natural activities. Some ways that we did this for Nathan included giving him hugs, using earplugs in loud environments, straws for chewing, and keeping the situation as boring as possible to maximize his success. Using sensory supports for Nathan often made a difference between a good or bad day. It helped him to control himself versus someone controlling him and helped to teach him more self-awareness."

#### **Key Points:**

**1. Collaboration:** An occupational therapist may be an important resource for helping to understand the individual's sensory needs and how to incorporate these into the classroom. It is important that communication occurs actively between teachers, therapists, and parents about changes, what is working, and what is not working. I have found it most effective to deliver services using a collaborative model and not make OT the only sensory time.

**2. Scheduling:** It is important to look at times of the day that the individual may need an increase in sensory supports. Embedding these supports throughout the day is referred to as a "sensory diet". It is key to include these activities into the routine or on the visual schedule, when possible, to attempt to avoid behavior issues such as reinforcing negative behaviors. This could easily occur if every time the individual tantrums they get to go to a sensory area with all their favorite things. Therefore, doing interval based or first/ then based implementation helps avoid some of these situations.

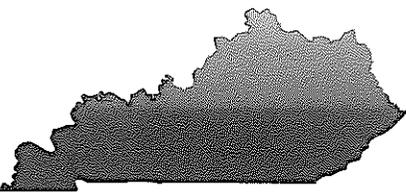
**3. Individualizing/ Access:** Every individual is unique. What may be alerting to some individuals may be overwhelming or cause a meltdown in others. It is important to observe what an individual is seeking in the environment and then what response that sensory input causes. In general, I like to provide the minimum of what is needed and try to incorporate it into the naturally occurring day. For instance, an individual may respond well to occasional hugs without needing a weighted vest while some individuals do need the more intense input. Ease of use in the environment and accessibility are important considerations in planning and maximizing use of sensory supports throughout the day.

**4. Combination of Techniques:** Nathan and Brad both had a variety of intervention techniques that led to improvements. These included social stories, modeling and teaching appropriate behaviors and skills, along with visual supports. Embedding the sensory supports into the other techniques being used is important for success. For instance, Nathan has a social story about his quiet area.

**5. Ongoing monitoring:** Continuous monitoring should occur to be aware of the need for increasing or fading sensory supports. Important times to monitor this are when routines or setting changes occur. Sitting down as a team to discuss the day is crucial in making necessary adaptations.

#### **Conclusion:**

Sensory supports can be one technique to help open a door for



motivation, behavior regulation, and improved focus for learning. These techniques can be minimal but when implemented and embedded into the school routine can make the difference between "a good day and a bad day". Key points in integrating sensory supports into the school day include: collaboration, monitoring, individualizing, and making them easily accessible. By acknowledging an individual with autism's sensory preferences a bridge is being built towards understanding their world and experiences.

### Sensory Quick Reference:



*Nathan sits on the bean bag with a weighted blanket and hat.*

#### • **Sensory Integration:**

is using our senses (hearing, sight, smell, taste, touch, Proprioception, and vestibular) to allow the brain to organize this information and respond appropriately.

• **Sensory Support:** An object, interaction, or environmental change that supports a person's sensory needs.

#### • **Sensory Modulation:**

refers to our brain changing our responses based on our need to get or escape from certain sensory input for various purposes

such as safety, alerting, calming, and meeting activity demands.

• **Tactile:** the sense of touch. For example, the feeling of clothes on your skin.

• **Vestibular:** the sense of movement including balance, gravity, and changes in position. For example, swinging provides a lot of vestibular input.

• **Proprioception:** information from the muscles and joints about quantity and quality of movement and body positions. Such as how hard or soft we move, what direction we move, and how we hold our body in space. Important for precision such as how much pencil pressure to use when writing.

• **Fidgets:** items that student can hold when they are being fidgety or touching things around them. Can be items such as koosh balls, stress balls, fabric, etc.

#### **Books:**

- Anderson and Emmons. **Unlocking the Mysteries of Sensory Dysfunction.** Future Horizons: 2004.
- Myles, Cook, Miller, Rinner, and Robbins. **Asperger Syndrome and Sensory Issues: Practical Solutions for Making Sense of the World.** AAPC: 2000.
- Anderson, Johanna. **Sensory Motor Issues in Autism.** Therapy Skill Builders: 1998.

- Kranowitz, Carol. **The Out of Sync Individual has Fun: Activities for Kids with Sensory integration Dysfunction.** Perigee: 2003.
- Williams and Shellenber. **How Does Your Engine Run?: The Alert Program for Self Regulation.** TherapyWorks: 1992.
- Kranowitz and Szklut. **Answers to Questions Teachers Ask about Sensory Integration.** Sensory Resources: 2000.
- Kashman and Mora. **An OT and SLP Team Approach: Sensory and Communication Strategies that Work.** Sensory Resources: 2002.
- Haldy and Haak. **Making It Easy: Sensorimotor Activities at Home and School.** Therapy Skill Builders: 1995.
- Trott, Laurel, and Windeck. **SenseAbilities: Understanding Sensory Integration.** Therapy Skill Builders: 1993.

#### **Websites:**

- Center for the Study of Autism: large site including several useful articles on sensory integration. [www.autism.org](http://www.autism.org)
- Article on Center for the Study of Autism site which provides an overview of sensory integration: <http://www.autism.org/si.html>
- An article written by Temple Grandin on her sensory experiences as an individual with autism. <http://www.autism.org/temple/visual.html>
- The SPD Network: Information and resources regarding sensory processing disorder. <http://www.sinetwork.org/>
- ComeUnity: Helpful website on individual's disabilities and special needs, with a section on sensory integration. [http://www.comeunity.com/disability/sensory\\_integration/index.html](http://www.comeunity.com/disability/sensory_integration/index.html)
- SIERF: Sensory Integration and Research Foundation. <http://www.sierf.org/default.aspx>
- Sensory Smarts: <http://www.sensorysmarts.com/index.html>

#### **Catalogs:**

- Abilitations: 1-800-850-8602  
<https://www.abilitations.com/index.jsp>
- Integrations: 1-800-622-0638  
<http://www.integrationscatalog.com/index.jsp>
- Pocket Full of Therapy: 1-800-PFOT-124  
<http://www.pfot.com/>
- Sensory Comfort: 1-888-436-2622  
<http://www.sensorycomfort.com/>
- Therapro: 1-800-257-5376  
<http://www.theraproducts.com/>
- Sensory Resources: 1-888-357-5867  
[www.sensoryresources.com](http://www.sensoryresources.com)
- Southpaw Enterprises: 1-800-228-1698  
[www.southpawenterprises.com](http://www.southpawenterprises.com)
- Therapy Shoppe: 1-800-261-5590  
[www.therapyshoppe.com](http://www.therapyshoppe.com)

**Academic Supports  
&  
Graphic Organizers**

ELEMENTS OF GOOD WRITING	MAKE A CHECK (✓) IF PRESENT/ COMPLETE
Topic sentence provided.	
Supporting information provided.	
All sentences relate to topic.	
All sentences make sense.	
Sentences sequenced appropriately.	
Conclusion provided.	
Punctuation checked and is correct.	
Spelling checked and is correct.	

FIGURE 5.9. Sample checklist for writing activities.

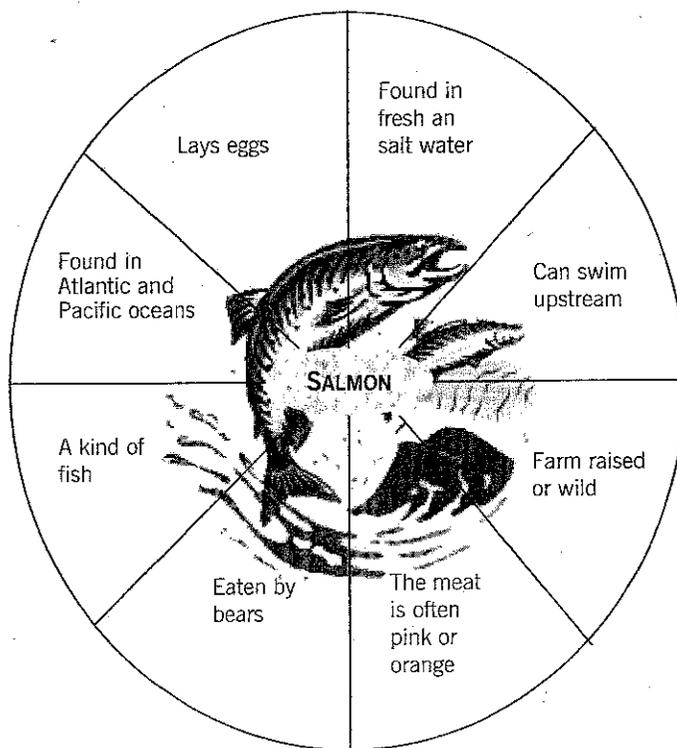


FIGURE 5.2. Sample topic wheel (graphic organizer) used as a prereading strategy.

- Place one number above the other number so that the tens-place digits and ones-place digits line up.
- Add the ones-place digits.
- Carry the tens-place digit to the top of the tens column.
- Add the numbers in the tens-place column (don't forget the carry over).
- Place your answer below the line and to the left of the ones-place column.

FIGURE 6.3. Sample independent seatwork checklist.



## Question Script

The following script explains what each question does. This script should be read with the child before working on WH questions. When the child runs into difficulty with the question, the therapist can say, "Remember, WHO is a person" or "WHERE is a place".

### All About Questions

A thing answers a WHAT question.

A person answers a WHO questions.

A place answers a WHERE question.

Time answers WHEN questions

An action word or verb answers a DID WHAT question.



## Biology Video: "Subtle as a Serpent"

1. The longest recorded snake was \_\_\_\_\_ feet long.
2. Snakes evolved from \_\_\_\_\_, 130 million years ago.
3. What do Monitor Lizards have that snakes don't?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. The \_\_\_\_\_ is an example of the "Burrowing Theory" of evolution.
5. Snakes have up to \_\_\_\_\_ ribs.
6. Powerful \_\_\_\_\_ give snakes their mode of transportation.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ MPH is the speed record for snakes.
8. Snakes are able to swallow meals that are bigger than their \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Are snakes vegetarians? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Snakes use two types of attacking- \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.
11. Fangs can be found in the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of their mouths.
12. Snakes swallow prey \_\_\_\_\_ first.

Excerpts from a  
Grade 4 test  
adapted for...

## Social Studies Test B Virginia's Regions

- For General Education students

2. Ports are important because

- a. they provide a place for trees to grow.
- b. ships take & bring products which create jobs and helps commerce.
- c. the Luray Caverns are located there.
- d. they separate the regions from each other

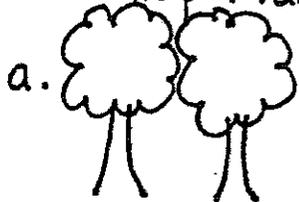
- For students with Learning Disabilities

2. Ports are important because

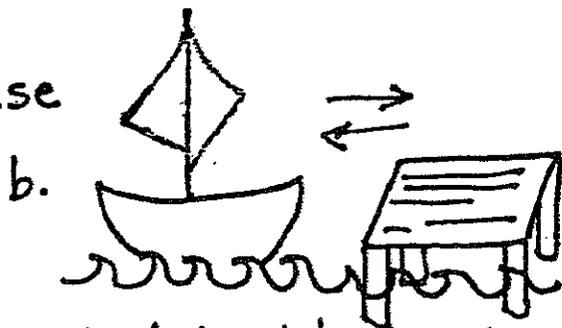
- a. trees grow there
- b. ships load & unload goods there
- c. farming is easier there

- For student with Autism

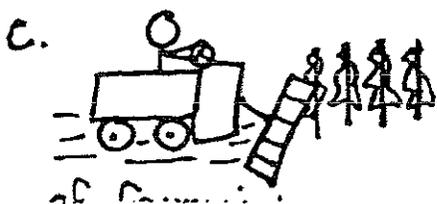
2. Ports are important because



there are lots of trees.



ships load & unload goods there.



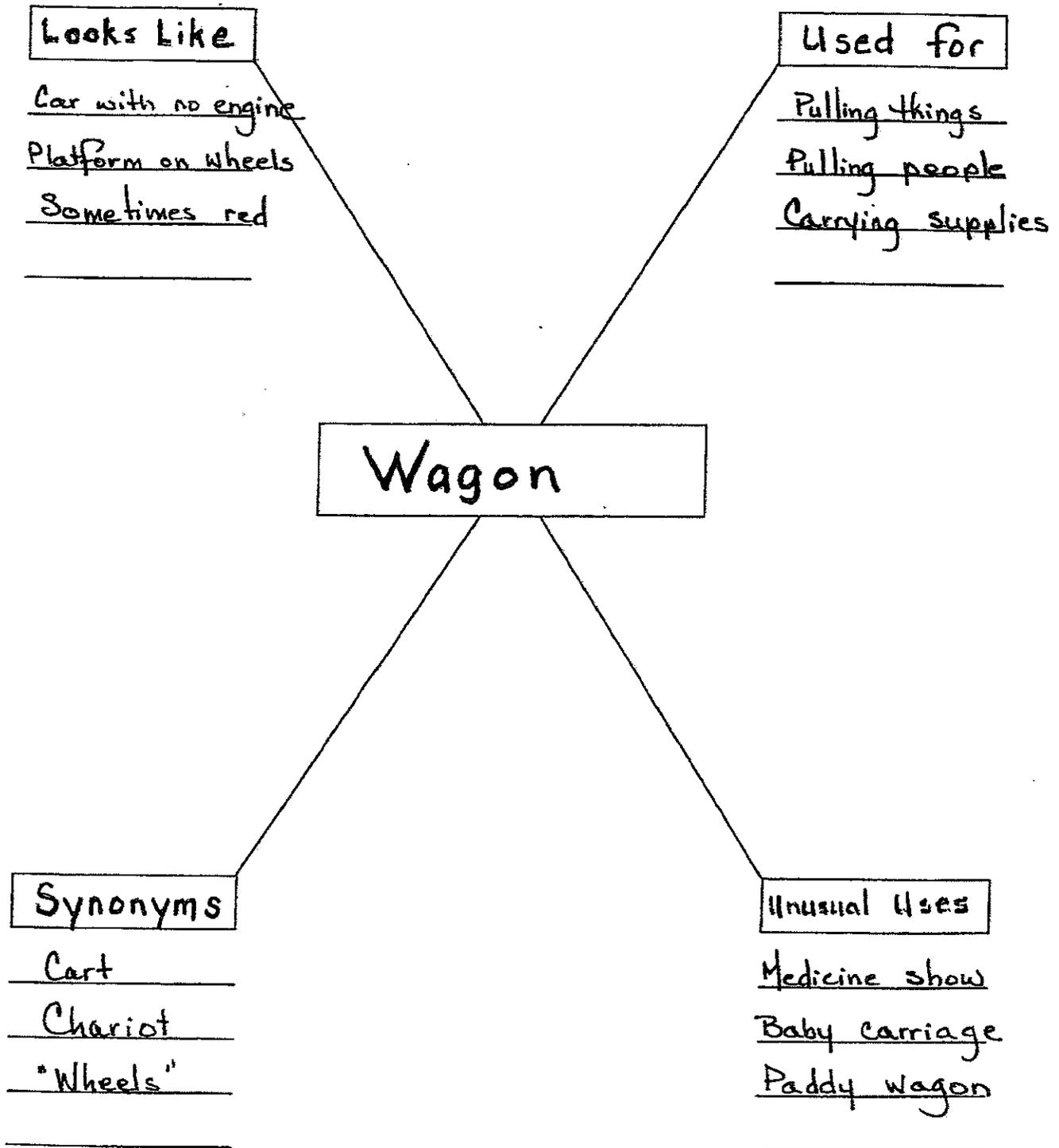
Materials: Paper, pencil, and word list.

Directions: Complete each step below. Put completed paper in the blue vocabulary box.

STEP	ACTION	CHECK MY WORK
1.	Take out a piece of paper.	
2.	Write your name in the upper right-hand corner.	
3.	Number the lines on your paper from 1 to 5, leaving two lines between each number.	
4.	Write each vocabulary word next to each number.	
5.	Write one sentence using the first word.	
6.	Reread sentence silently to yourself. Does it make sense?	
7.	Repeat steps 5 and 6 with remaining words.	
8.	Put completed work in BLUE vocabulary box.	Turn in work. 

FIGURE 5.1. Vocabulary sentences task.

# VOCABULARY ATTRIBUTES CHART



## GET THE GIST

### OBJECTIVE:

*The students will identify the main idea of a paragraph.*

### MATERIALS:

- Paragraphs
- Simple text with multiple paragraphs
- Basal reader, novel, trade book and/or content area textbook

### TEACHING PRACTICE THAT PROMOTES READING:

This lesson may take approximately two to three 30-minute sessions. This strategy works with both narrative and expository text. Assign students partners. Select material that is at independent level for the more advanced partner and at instructional level for the second partner. Give each student a copy of the reading selection. Get the Gist uses a scaffold to help students determine the most important information in a paragraph. The students' job is to try to form a main idea statement in 10 words or less. This is not a formula but rather a scaffold for the struggling reader.

1. A main idea statement is made up of two parts:

- The most important who or what in the paragraph (the main person, place, or thing).
- The most important information about the who or what.

2. The first reader reads and identifies the main idea for each paragraph on a page.

3. After each paragraph, students identify the main idea by identifying who or what the paragraph is mostly about. No matter how many words describe the who or what, the who or what counts as one word.

4. Next, students identify the most important thing about that who or what. Students try to get this information in nine words or less.

5. Finally, these two pieces of information are put together in a statement using 10 words or less. This statement is the main idea. If the main idea statement is more than 10 words, the students try to shrink down the information. If a statement cannot be shrunk down to 10 words or less, the students move on to the next paragraph.

6. The second reader reads the next page, identifying the main idea for each paragraph on the page by following the same steps.

### ADAPTATIONS:

If a paragraph wraps to the next page, the reader finishes the paragraph before trading roles.

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*Comprehension 3TRA: Resources*

The student who is not reading follows along, helping with missed words and with the main idea statement.

Pictures can be used as a scaffold for struggling readers before moving into paragraphs.

For English language learners, the teaching sequence may be as follows:

- Pictures
- Paragraphs
- Simple text with multiple text
- Basal reader, novel, trade book and/or content area book

Adapted from:

- Klingner, J. K., & Vaughn, S. (1998). Using collaborative strategic reading. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 30(6), 32-37;
- Mathes, P. G., Fuchs, D., & Fuchs, L. S. (1995). Accommodating diversity through Peabody Classwide Peer Tutoring. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 31(1), 46-50;
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- Vaughn, S., & Klingner, J. K. (1999). Teaching reading comprehension through collaborative strategic reading. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 34(5), 284-92.

# GET THE GIST

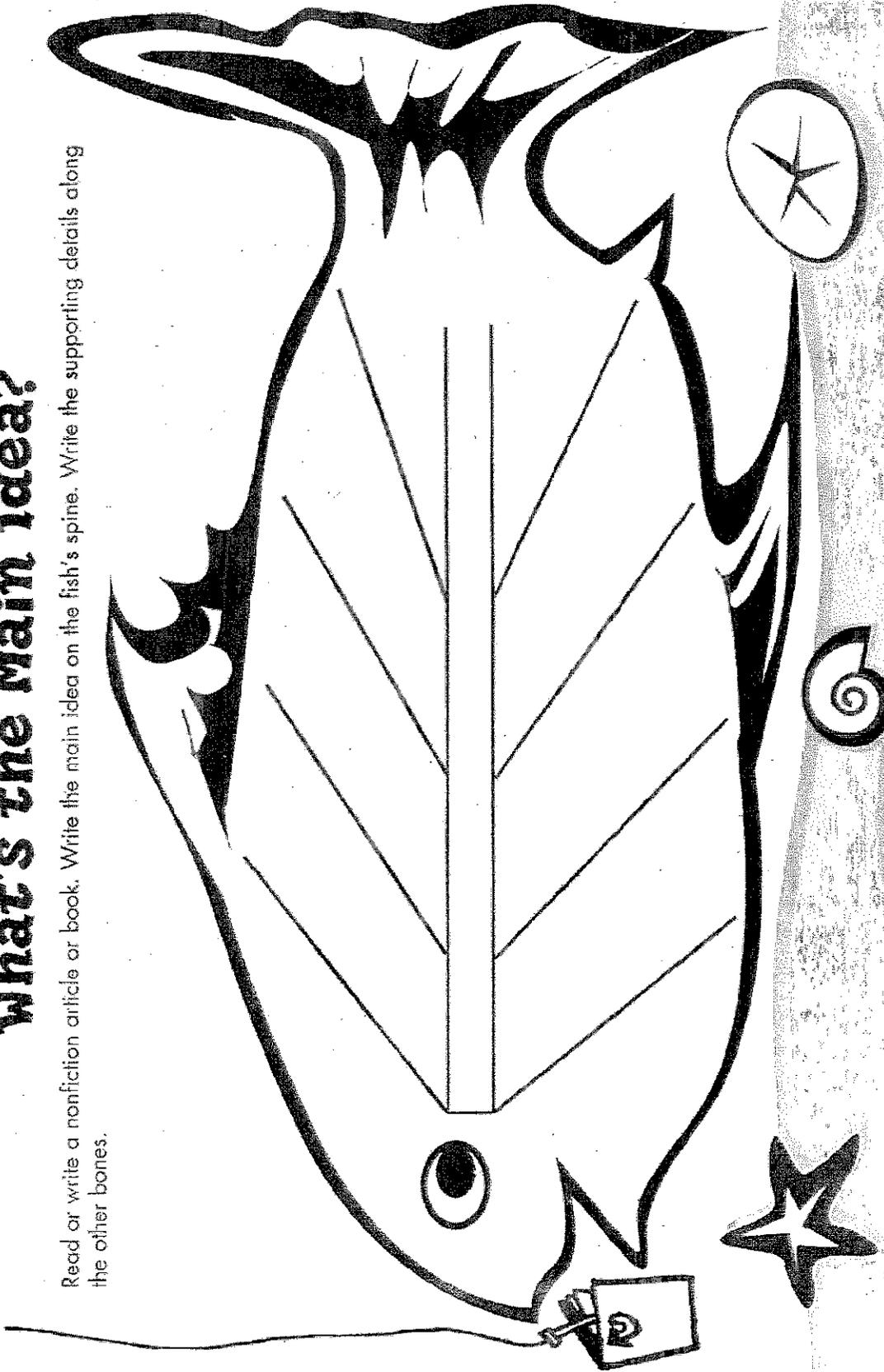
<b>Who or What</b> <i>(the main person, place of thing)</i>	<b>Most Important Thing</b> <i>(about the Who or What)</i>	<b>Main Idea</b> <i>(10 words or less)</i>



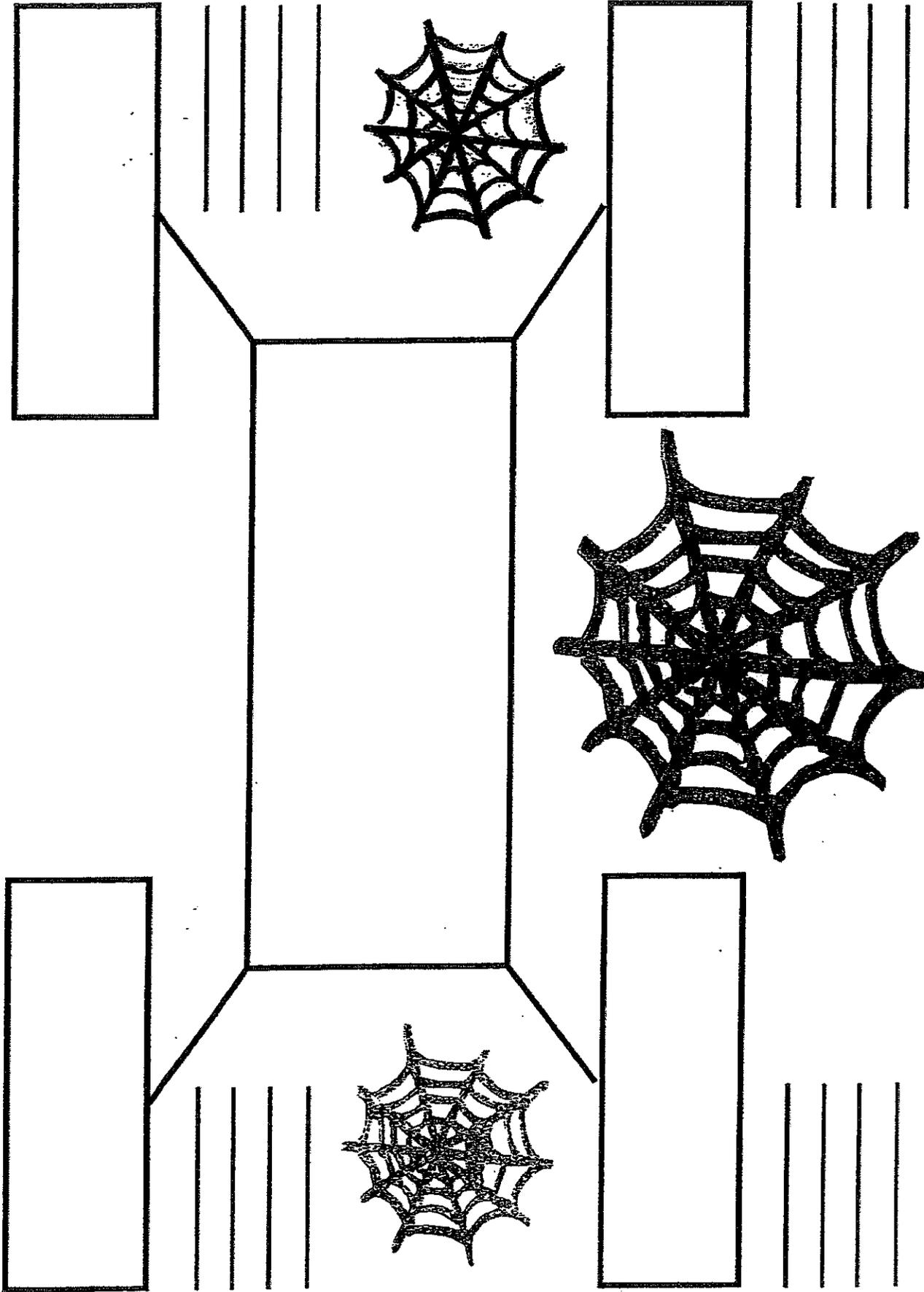
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## What's the Main Idea?

Read or write a nonfiction article or book. Write the main idea on the fish's spine. Write the supporting details along the other bones.



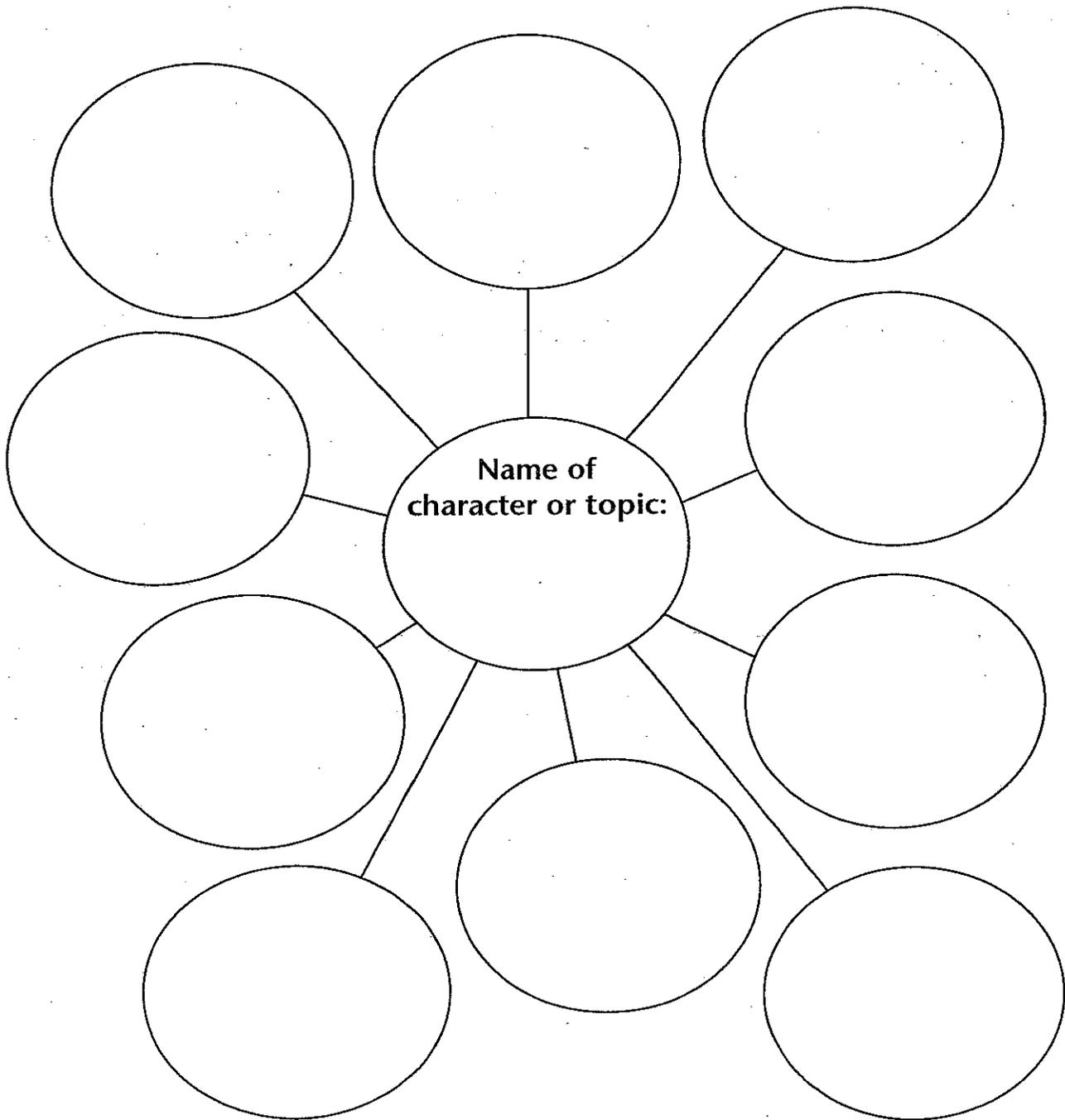
# Planning Web



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## WRITE THINGS DOWN: CREATE A CLUSTER CHART

Fill in the cluster chart below to keep track of character traits or main ideas. In the center circle, write the name of the character or topic. In the circles branching out from the center, write details about the character or topic.





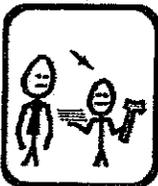
# Story Summary

Who



This story is about \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What



Who did these things:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

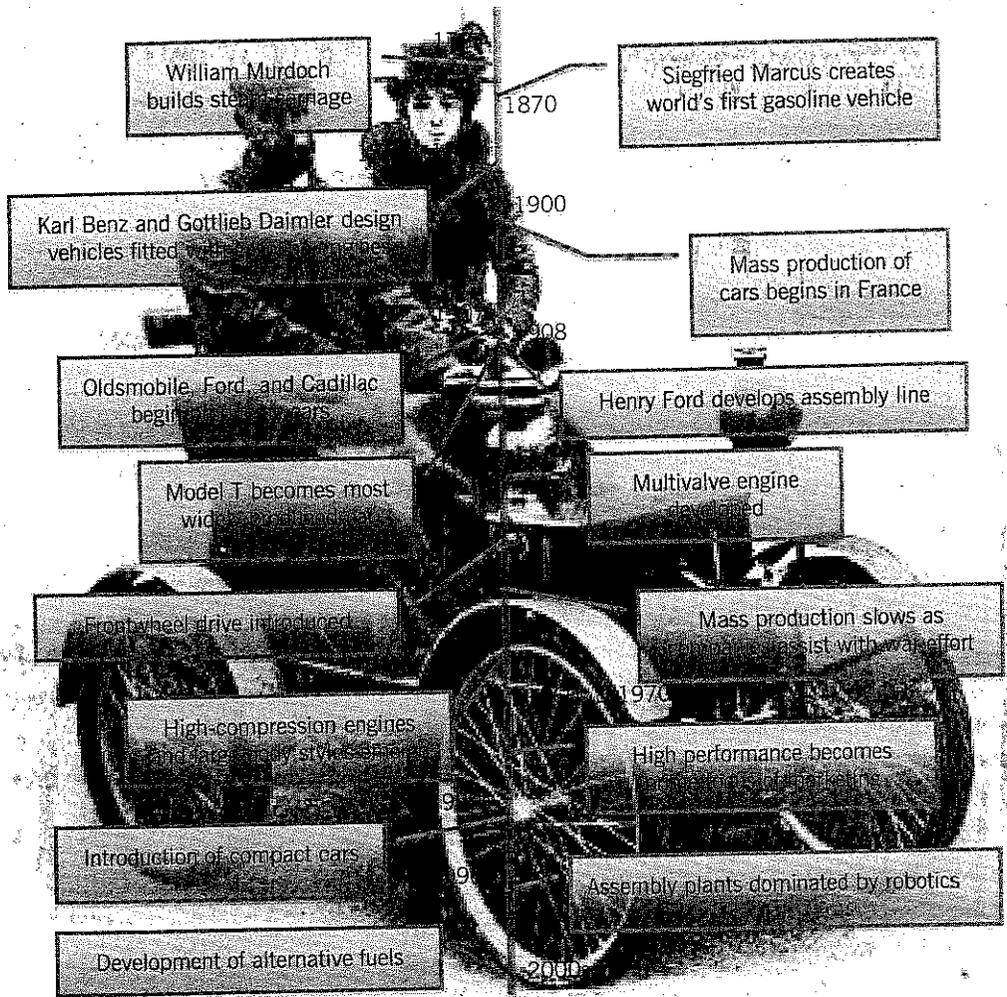
Where



In this place:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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



**FIGURE 5.5.** Semantic map example: History of the automobile.

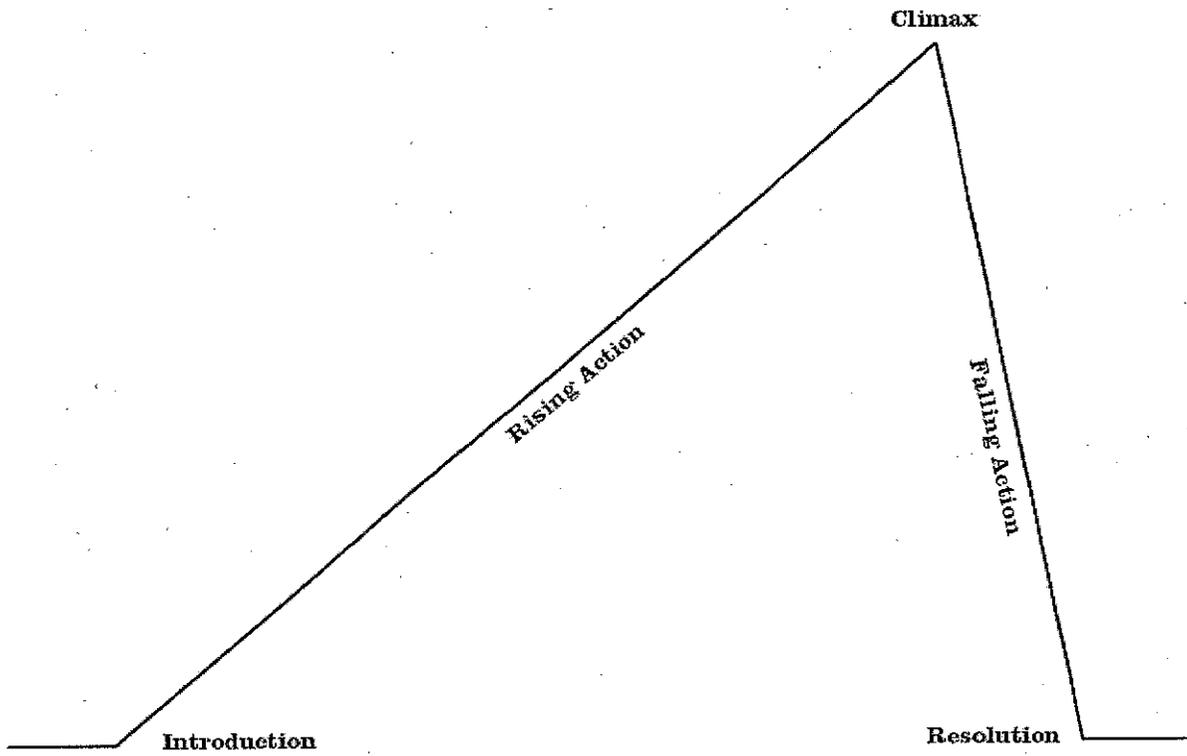
	TRUCK	TRAIN
FEATURE #1	Heavy-duty tires to carry heavy loads	Moves along steel tracks
FEATURE #2	Large bed or trailer to carry loads of goods or materials	Connected series of cars that can carry loads or people
FEATURE #3	Powered by a diesel engine	Powered by a diesel engine or by steam

	BOAT	PLANE
FEATURE #1	Watercraft designed to float on water	Fixed wings that keep it in the sky
FEATURE #2	Open or closed compartment to carry loads or people	Closed compartment that carries loads or people
FEATURE #3	Powered by hand, wind, or engine	Powered by a jet engine

**FIGURE 5.6.** Graphic organizer example: Features of modes of transportation.

# Plot Diagram



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## FIND A PURPOSE FOR READING: KEEP TRACK OF THE AUTHOR'S KEY IDEAS

Show the key ideas in a selection by filling in the chart below as you read. When you finish reading, draw conclusions about the main idea.

Key Idea:  Supporting Points:	Key Idea:  Supporting Points:	Key Idea:  Supporting Points:
Key Idea:  Supporting Points:	Key Idea:  Supporting Points:	Key Idea:  Supporting Points:
Key Idea:  Supporting Points:	Key Idea:  Supporting Points:	Key Idea:  Supporting Points:
The Main Idea:		

---

## VISUALIZE: CREATE A STORY STRIP

Draw pictures that represent key events in a selection. Then write a caption under each box that explains each event. Draw the events in the order in which they occurred.

The diagram shows a story strip template with three rows of three empty boxes each. The boxes are arranged in a grid, and arrows connect them from left to right in each row, and from the end of one row to the start of the next row below it. Each box has a horizontal line underneath it for a caption.

# MAKE PREDICTIONS: PREDICTION CHART

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

## PREDICTION CHART

GUESSES	REASONS	EVIDENCE

---

## MAKE PREDICTIONS: PREDICT OUTCOMES

An active reader uses clues found in a literary work in order to predict the outcome of the piece. As you read any long selection—a short story, a long narrative poem, or an act of a play, for example—make predictions about what will happen in the rest of the selection. Then list two facts or clues that led you to make each prediction. Finally, finish reading the selection and answer the question at the bottom of the page.

1. Before-Reading Prediction:

---

Facts leading to your prediction or inference:

---

---

2. During-Reading Prediction:

---

Facts leading to your prediction or inference:

---

---

3. During-Reading Prediction:

---

Facts leading to your prediction or inference:

---

---

4. After-Reading Analysis:

Were your predictions accurate? Explain in a brief paragraph.

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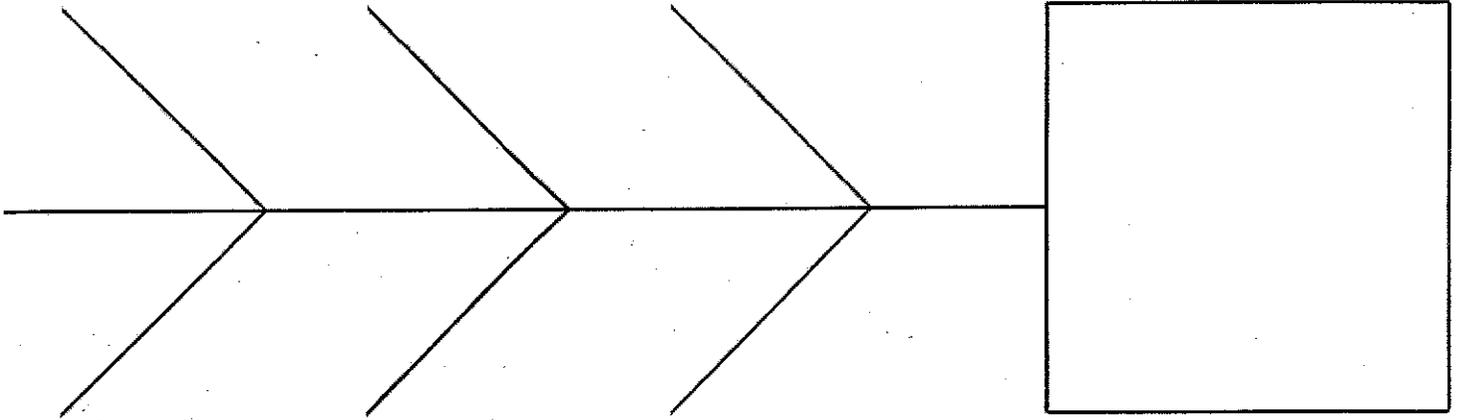
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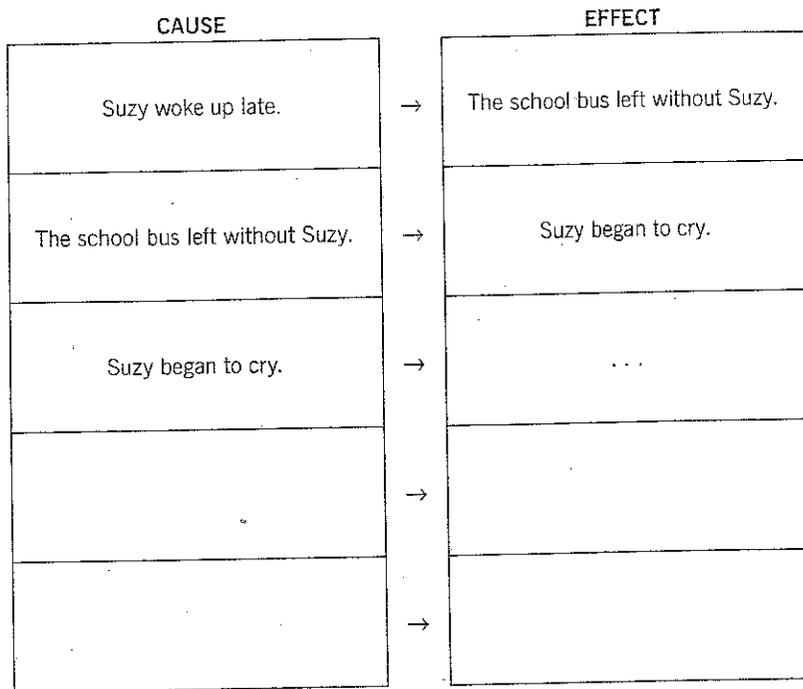
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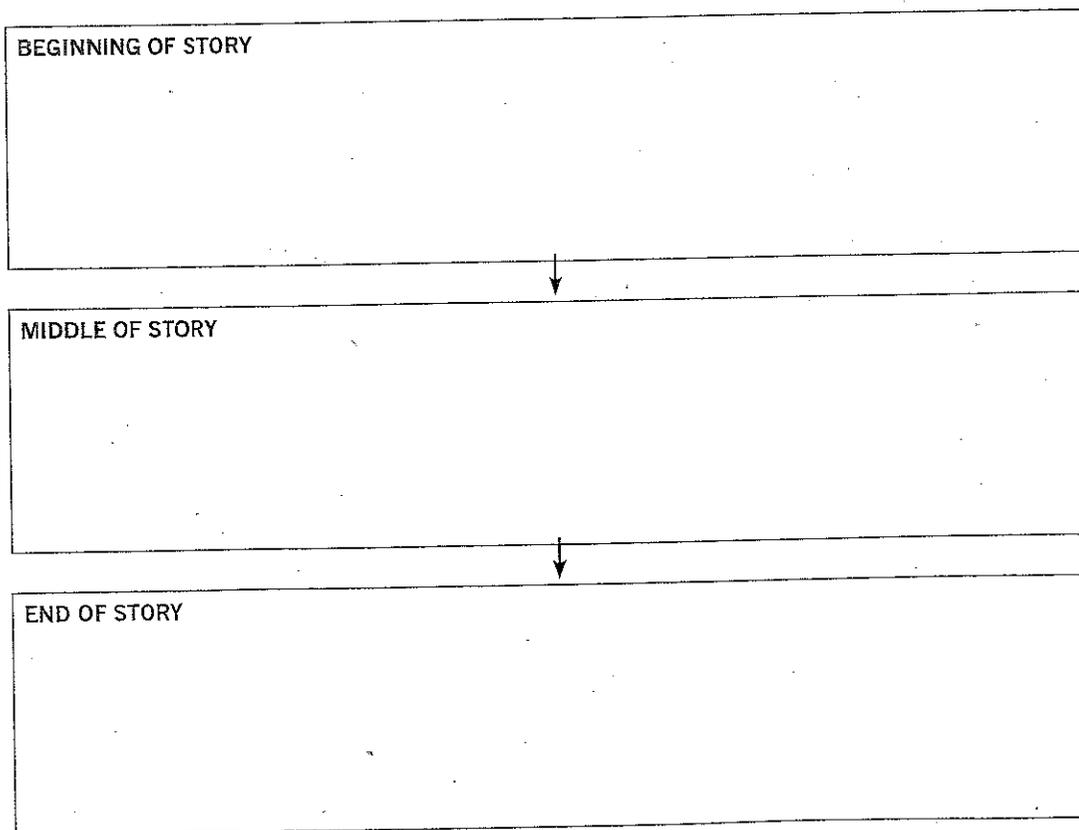
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**Cause - Effect**





**FIGURE 5.7.** Graphic organizer example: Cause and effect.



**FIGURE 5.8.** Graphic organizer example: Basic narrative story structure.

## FIND A PURPOSE FOR READING: CREATE A PRO AND CON CHART

As you read a persuasive or argumentative selection, take notes on both sides of each argument, or reason.

ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR (PRO)	ARGUMENTS AGAINST (CON)
Argument 1:  Support:	Argument 1:  Support:
Argument 2:  Support:	Argument 2:  Support:
Argument 3:  Support:	Argument 3:  Support:
Argument 4:  Support:	Argument 4:  Support:

Evaluate the author's argument.

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

**R**

C - Make it **CONCRETE**

V - Present it **VISUALLY**

S - Give it **STRUCTURE**

*USE AS DIRECTED*

Dispense as Written   X   Refill often  
Voluntary Formulary Permitted   X

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