



Word Boards

Word boards or learning grids are simple visual layouts made up of pictures in boxes. Each box shows a concept, object, action, or step. They help young children understand ideas by *seeing* them rather than relying only on spoken language.

They are especially helpful for:

- building vocabulary
- supporting attention and listening
- helping children make choices
- encouraging independence
- scaffolding early thinking skills

Why they work so well with young children

Young children learn best when information is:

- **visual**
- **predictable**
- **broken into small steps**
- **linked to real objects and experiences**

Word boards do exactly this. They turn abstract ideas into something concrete and manageable.

How to use word boards effectively

1. Introduce the grid slowly

As part of a play activity with the child, simply OFFER the words that go with the play by pointing to the pictures as you speak. This way you are making a visual connection to the words spoken and you are modelling how to use the word board

2. Use real-world photos

Because young children respond strongly to familiar objects, choose pictures that match what they actually see (e.g., *their* cup, *their* coat, the nursery's tidy-up basket).

3. Let the child choose

If you create a word board with a range of play options, offer two or three options at a time. **“What would you like to do? Drawing or cars?”** This builds independence and communication without overwhelming

4. Use word boards for routines

Word boards can show:

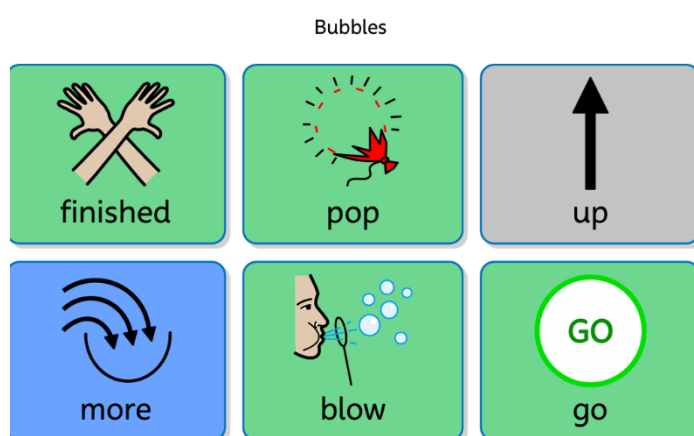
- steps in a task (e.g., wash hands → dry hands → snack)
- parts of a learning activity (e.g., count → match → sort)
- choices during free play
- emotional regulation strategies (e.g., breathe → squeeze toy → talk to adult)

6. Keep language short and consistent

Repeat the same phrases each time: **“Choose one.” “First this.” “All done.”**

7. Celebrate success

Praise the child for using the grid: **“You looked at the pictures and chose drawing — well done.”** This reinforces the purpose of the tool.



Avoid too many pictures — **4–6** is usually enough for preschoolers

For further support contact your speech and language therapist and refer to the guidance on the Child Family Health Devon website here [About Augmentative and Alternative Communication \(AAC\) - Children and Family Health Devon](#)