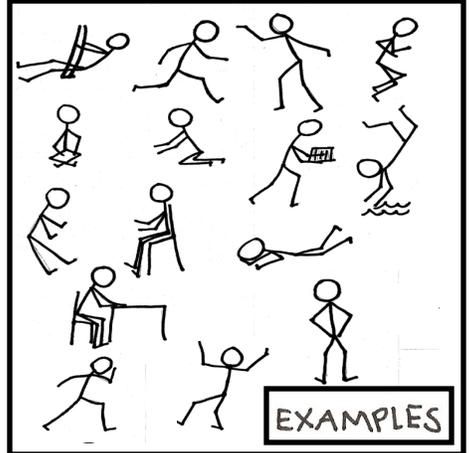


Using Cartoons at Home

PARENT HANDOUT



Cartoons help us to teach social skills, reinforce or teach routines, teach clear behavior expectations, and/or prepare for new experiences. Cartoons give children a **concrete** example of these skills when words aren't enough. As children learn, some children have difficulty processing language and can have dramatic improvements in their behavior when they are provided tools such as visuals. Visuals help them understand and learn what we would like them to do. Pictures also last longer than words. Your child can refer back to a visual better than he can recall what you said. You can use pictures you find online or even pictures you take of your child on your phone. Some parents even make social stories for their children. Cartooning is another great option to incorporate as you teach your child. Children love to see themselves drawn into a cartoon. There are many benefits to drawing your own pictures with your children rather than using photographs or clip-art. Cartooning allows for on-the-go support when you do not have time to prepare another visual. This may be when you are out at a restaurant and need to support your child but do not have a visual. Another example is when you intervene when your child exhibits an undesired behavior. You may also find your child prefers cartoons over other visuals.



WHEN TO USE

- To prepare for an upcoming change such as moving to a new house or starting a new preschool/daycare
- To teach or prepare for a change in your routine (e.g. going to the dentist or taking a trip)
- To provide extra support for your child if they are struggling with a skill (e.g. potty training or bedtime routine)
- To teach a new social skill like asking a friend to play, resolving a disagreement, or making a trade
- To reinforce a skill

Cartooning allows you to sit down with your child and process through the skills together. It is always most beneficial for children to have support preparing them for what is to come. Visuals do not need to be used as a reactive measure. Instead, we can use them to be proactive and prepare our child for what is to come. As your child gets older, you can continue using cartoons but your child will begin to draw the pictures himself and process with you as he draws. Some helpful books are *The New Social Story Book* and *Comic Strip Conversations* by Carol Gray. Also helpful is *Learning with a Visual Brain in an Auditory World* by Ellyn Arwood and Carole Kaulitz.



PROCESSING THROUGH A SKILL WITH YOUR CHILD

In the example below, a child was having difficulty with his bedtime routine. As the mother worked

through this drawing with him, she may have made the following statements as she drew: "First, you take your bath. It is nice to get warm and clean. Next, you put on your pajamas. You get to pick out your pajamas and get dressed all by yourself! After you have your pajamas on, we get to read a story together. After we read a story, mommy gives you a kiss and leaves the room. Then what do you do? Yes, that's right, you fall asleep on your cozy bed." As you draw each picture, have your child tell you what happens during that step. This visual could then be taped up in your child's bedroom until he has mastered his evening routine. You can review it each night, and he can refer to it as you process through each stage of the routine.

