



Self-Regulation Guide to USING CUES & VISUALS

WHAT IS IT?

Cues are quick verbal or non-verbal reminders of an expected behavior.

Visuals are materials used throughout the day to help students remember what they should be doing.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Two students are arguing over who gets to play at the pretend kitchen, so their teacher directs their attention to the visual for “Sharing” on the “Classroom Rules” wall as a reminder to share.

Cory has trouble keeping his hands to himself. When his teacher sees him touching his classmate in the hallway, she taps him and clasps her hands together to cue him to keep his hands to himself.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Classroom rules and expectations are complicated! It is easy for students to become confused about what they can do and when. And, even when they know the rules, students often forget to apply them in-the-moment. Cues and visuals come in handy during these times because they quickly remind students what behaviors are expected of them (without requiring lengthy, time-consuming explanations).

Example Cues and Visuals

Here are a few examples of cues and visuals for common occurrences in the classroom.

To signal that you want students’ attention

- Cue: **Clap 3 times** (and have students clap in response to show they are paying attention).
- Visual: Hold up a **stop sign** to signal students to stop and listen.

To signal students to control their voice

- Cue: **Hold your finger to your mouth** to cue a student to talk quietly.
- Visual: Point to a **sign** that has the word “Quiet” written on it.

To warn of an upcoming transition

- Cue: Play a **“clean-up” song** when it is time to put away materials.
- Visual: Point to the picture of the next activity on your **visual schedule** to remind what is next.

To remind students of expected behavior

- Cue: **Clasp your hands together** to remind a student to keep their hands to themselves.
- Visual: Point to **classroom rule images** that represent each rule (e.g., sharing, turn-taking).



TIPS FOR USING CUES & VISUALS

1. SETTING UP cues and visuals

- Identify the behavior(s) that you expect students to display.
Focus on what you *want* to see (e.g., “walk” instead of “do not run”).
- Choose and create cues and/or visuals.
Get creative! Make your own classroom drawings or photographs, or use existing templates (see *Visuals to Print* or *Examples of Cues and Visuals* handouts).
- Teach students the meaning of cues/visuals *before* using them.
Pointing to your ear, for example, will not let students know that you want them to listen unless you have explained its meaning.

2. USING cues and visuals

- Use *immediately* before you expect the desired behavior.
Instead of waving a “sit” cue card before going to the lunchroom, hold up the sign one you actually *get* to the lunchroom (and then again if an individual student is standing throughout the meal).
- Use consistently to avoid confusion around expectations.
- When using class-wide, follow up with extra cues/visuals for individual students as needed.
- When using with an individual student, try not to draw attention or single them out.
Use a hand signal to tell a student to “sit” rather than interrupting a story to redirect them in front of peers.
- Make sure to reinforce students who use and respond to cues/visuals appropriately.

RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT USING CUES & VISUALS

Visuals to Print: PowerPoint

[Available as PDF](#)

CSEFEL©

Examples of Cues and Visuals

[Available as PDF](#)

LOOK©

Stop Signs

[Available as PDF](#)

TACSEI©