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Autism Agenda



Linn Benton Lincoln ESD-Cascade Regional Autism Program

Visual Supports

Dawna Sigurdson

While there is no one strategy that can be used universally with individuals with **autism spectrum disorders (ASD)**, research has shown that many individuals demonstrate strength in visual learning. Visual supports are any tools presented visually to provide assistance to individuals to help them function throughout the day. Visual supports can be implemented with individuals across the life span from preschoolers to adults. In addition, visual supports can be used in the school, home and community settings. Visuals are more permanent and can be more concrete than speech. They are static or “stay put” cues that are readily available to those who need them. Visual supports can replace or complement verbal instruction.

Visual supports have a variety of purposes including:

- Increasing task engagement
- Teaching routine, time concepts and organization
- Providing the ability to make requests or choices
- Supporting transition from one task or activity to another
- Encouraging social interaction
- Providing structure
- Developing play and leisure skills
- Increasing independence in daily living and work skills
- Reducing frustration, anxiety and aggression
- Supporting academic skills
- Providing boundaries



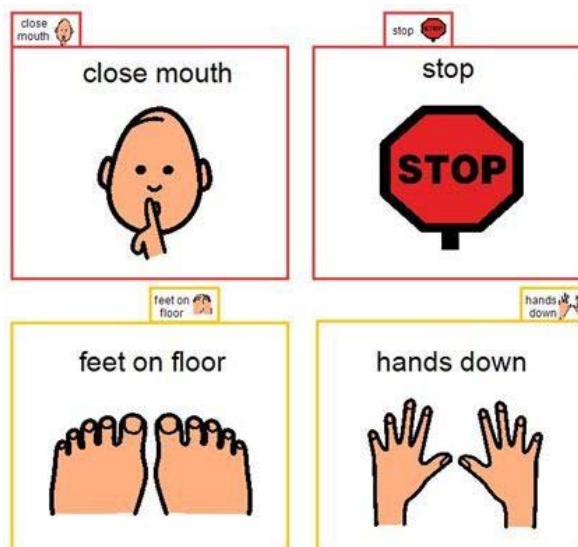
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Please see <https://www.unl.edu/asdnetwork/images/VisualSupports.pdf> for additional information and supports on visuals.

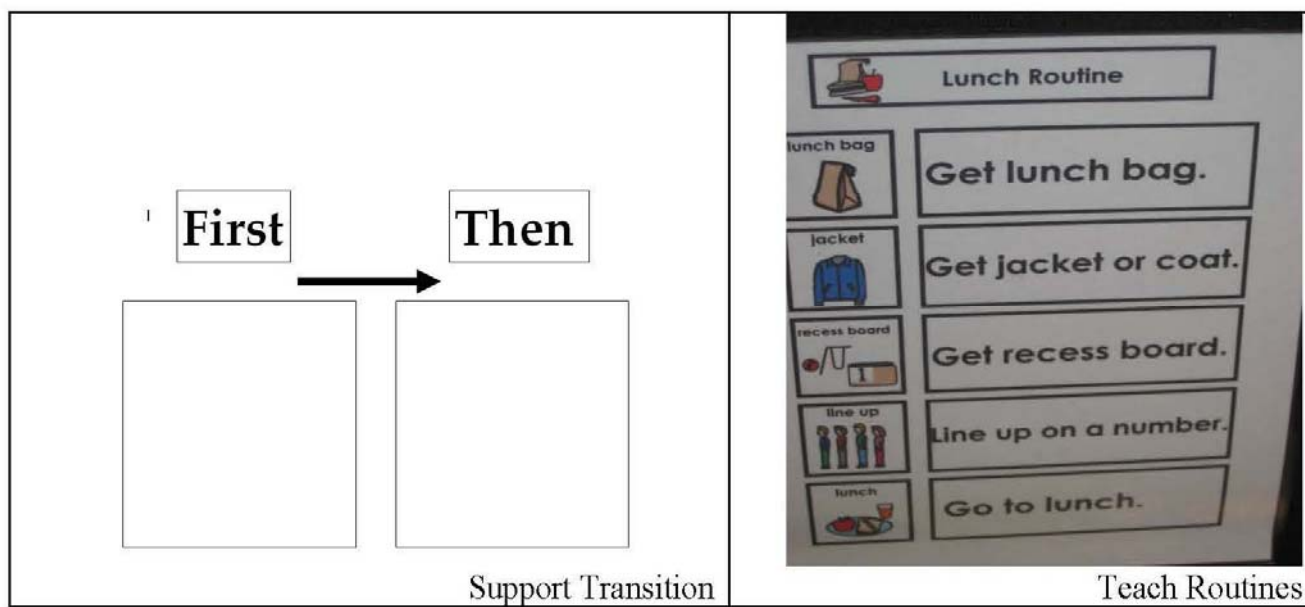
BRIEF EXAMPLE OF HOW TO USE VISUALS

Maria is a first-grade student with autism. Maria's teacher, Ms. Cook, has noticed that Maria has difficulty remaining seated with her feet on the floor whenever the students are required to work in groups. Sometimes she lies across the table, the floor, or on her chair, and sometimes she leaves her seat without permission. In addition, she frequently plays with other children's belongings or materials.

Ms. Cook decided to use the boundary setting strategy to help Maria manage her behaviors. She gave Maria a picture of herself sitting in her chair, her hands in her lap, feet on the floor. The picture was taped to the table to provide Maria with a visual reminder of classroom expectations. Ms. Cook praised Maria whenever she observed her sitting quietly in her chair, with hands in her lap and feet on floor. Soon, Maria began to do a better job of sitting in her seat and showed a greater respect for her classmates' belongings.

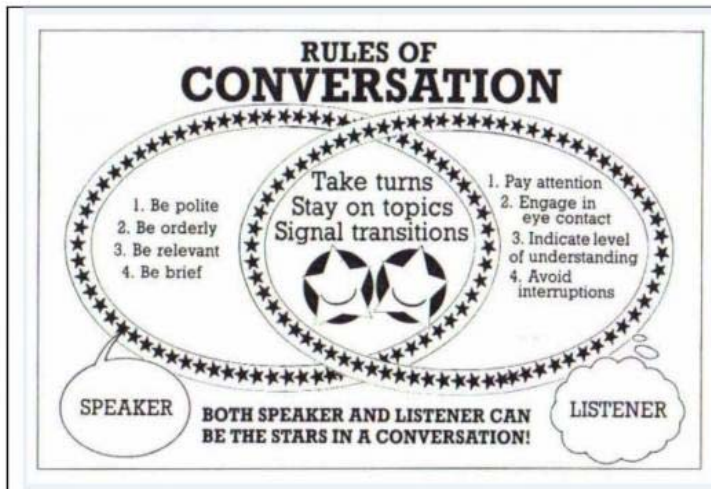


Visual supports examples:

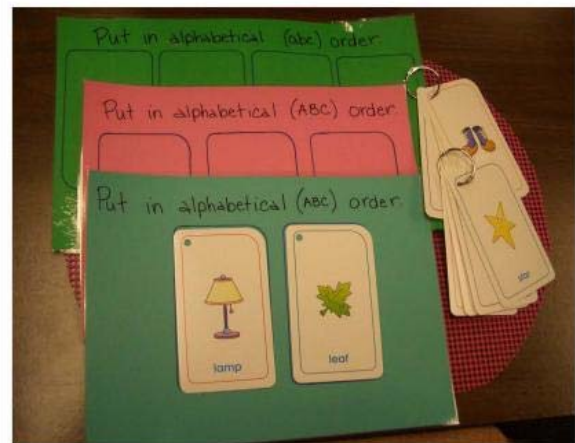


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VISUAL SUPPORTS CONTINUED...



Encourage Social Interaction



Support Academic Skills



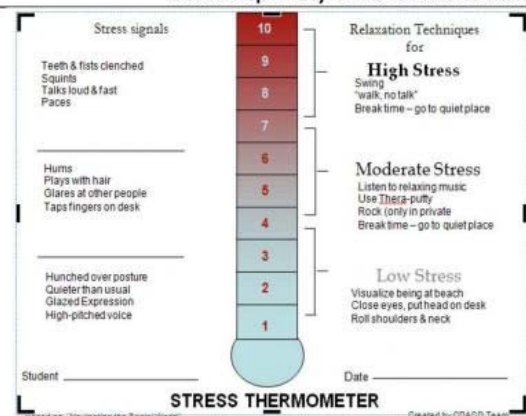
Increase Independence in Daily Living Skills



Develop Play and Leisure Skills



Provide Structure



Reduce Anxiety, Frustration, or Aggression

DO 2 LEARN PRINTABLE PICTURE CARDS

Printable Picture Cards



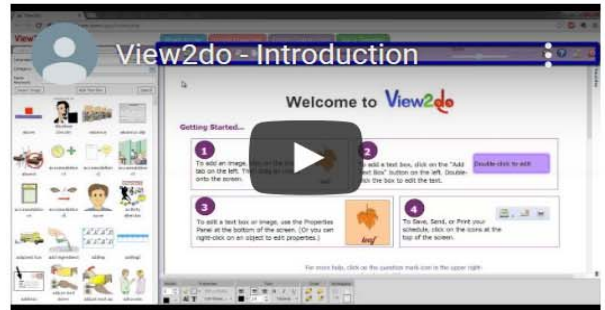
Need more Picture Cards?

View2Do is an online program that lets you create customized teaching aids for visual learners.

[Subscribe today!](#)

View2Do gives schools and families a powerful tool to create, share, network, and teach, all in an engaging visual medium ideal for students with learning and communication differences. Teachers will love how easy it is to make great-looking learning tools and collaborate with their colleagues. Students will love the clear, easy-to-use, and visually engaging learning supports that are customized just for them.

[Learn more about View2do!](#)



FREE Picture Cards

Health Care

- [Getting Blood Drawn](#)
- [Elder Care](#)
- [Hospital](#)

Self Help:

- [Toileting](#)
- [Dressing & Undressing](#)
- [Clothes](#)
- [Body Parts](#)
- [Personal Care](#)

Activities:

- [Everyday](#)
- [Leisure](#)

Home & School:

- [Home](#)
- [School](#)
- [Food](#)

Social:

- [Behavior](#)
- [Emotions](#)

Safety:

- [Fire Safety](#)
- [Safety Signs](#)
- [Street Safety](#)

Calendar:

- [Winter](#)
- [Thanksgiving](#)
- [Days & Weather](#)
- [Holidays](#)
- [Summer](#)

Technology:

- [Technology](#)



[Winter Picture Cards](#)

How they work

Black and white picture cards are provided to help you make your own [schedules](#), [story strips](#) and [talking back](#) cards. They can be printed as full-size coloring pages, in two-inch sizes with or without words, and in one-inch sizes with or without words. Printed and cut out, these can be used singly or grouped together.

Blank image grids in one-inch and two-inch sizes are also included for making your own drawings. A selection of blank schedule forms is provided to help you customize schedules. Picture cards can be cut up and attached to the blank forms. Forms which include words can be used if written schedules are more appropriate. Math grids to help keep numbers in the correct alignment are also included. Please use whatever best suits your needs.

Printing Tips:

For optimal printing, in Internet Explorer on the top menu bar choose **> File > Page Setup >** and set all margins to 0.5 inches. Also, all of our print cards are set to print in Portrait, not Landscape. To print without the words, click the link on the bottom of the selected grid.

Visual supports for autism: a step by step guide

 Blog

[Maureen Bennie](#)

 October 8, 2017

People on the autism spectrum tend to learn best using visual supports rather than through auditory input. Seeing it, rather than saying it, helps the person retain and process information. [Temple Grandin](#), the most famous woman in the world with autism, describes being a visual thinker in her excellent book [Thinking in Pictures](#).

How can visual supports be used?

With visual supports you can:

1. Create daily/weekly schedules with visual blocks of time
2. Show sequential steps in a task such as a bedtime routine or getting dressed
3. Demonstrate units of time
4. Make a “to do” list
5. Aid communication for those who are less or non verbal
6. Offer choices

What exactly is a visual support?

Visuals supports can be pictures, objects, sign language or text. They can come in a variety of forms. Some examples of programs that generate visuals are:

[Boardmaker \(Mayer-Johnson\)](#) – This popular software generates Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) and other graphics. The draws are line drawings and not actual photos. Boardmaker does not work for every child because some children do not understand what the line drawings mean.

[Communicate: SymWriter](#) (formerly Writing with Symbols) – A different approach to writing, reading and literacy development, this program is a talking word processor that matches symbols to words to help students of all ages and abilities increase comprehension and fluency. Writing activities challenge students with a focus on creating summaries, biographies, letters, persuasive papers, reports and reviews. A great tool for students with limited spelling abilities or those who have trouble accessing a keyboard, SymWriter comes equipped with symbol-supported grids for writing, making independent engagement in assignments and projects possible for all students.

[Indiana Resource Center for Autism](#) – Free visuals organized by topic.

[PictureSET](#) – a collection of downloadable visual supports that can be used by students for both receptive and expressive communication in the classroom, at home, and in the community. This searchable database allows you to find a wide range of useful visual supports for different curriculum areas, activities, and events. PictureSET resources are created and updated by dedicated professionals working with students in British Columbia.

[Visual Suite DVD](#) – This is a new product that has thousands of photos in situations often encountered in everyday life, like chores, money, school supplies, what’s different and many more.

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Can I make my own visual supports?

Some of these programs tend to be expensive and not everyone can afford them. An alternative to buying a pre-packaged product is to make your own visuals. You can achieve this in a number of ways:

- By taking photos with a digital camera
- Cutting out pictures from print media such as magazines or old calendars
- Dollar stores can be a great place to find inexpensive visuals.

A note of caution when taking photos – be sure to keep the background at a minimum and make the focal point the subject of the photo. If you take photos from too far away, the background tends to get busy looking and can become the focal point for people with autism.

There are also many Apps that offer visual supports at low costs

Applications for iPad and iTouch are making visual supports more accessible than ever and at a low cost. The Autism Speaks [website](#) has a great list of available apps and what they are used for. If you're looking for a great book that reviews apps, try [Apps for Autism](#). Another excellent website for visuals is www.do2learn.com. A good article to read about visual supports and how to use them is [Learning Through Seeing and Doing](#) by Shaila Rao and Brenda Gagie.

What is the best way to use Visual Supports

There is a hierarchy to using visual supports. Start with matching an object to object, then object to picture, then picture to picture. You begin with using the actual object matching to the same object. Once that is mastered, then match an object to a picture. This helps the child understand that a picture can be a representation of an object. Finally, you can match a picture to a picture. I see people who do not use this progression and can't understand why the child doesn't understand a picture such as the ones generated by Boardmaker.

Here is the hierarchy for the visual supports themselves:

1. Object
2. Color Photos
3. Black and White Photos
4. Color Drawing
5. Black and White Drawing
6. Written Word

I am a fan of using the written word with all visual supports because no one can predict when understanding/comprehension of the written word will begin. Reading is a gradual process that involves years of skill building so it's important to provide as much exposure to the printed word as possible. Some children read before they can speak, which was the case with my daughter. I discovered this quite by chance when Julia typed a Word document on the computer at age 4 with perfect spelling.

Continued on page 7.

When do I stop using visual supports for my child with Autism?

I am often asked the question, “When do I fade the use of visual supports?” The answer is...you don’t. All of us use some sort of visual tool to create schedules and keep ourselves organized. We use iPhones, daytimers, desk calendars, and checklists. Use these tools to create visual schedules for our folks on the spectrum because they create [predictability](#) which lessens anxiety.

Do you stop using your daytimer, calendar or iPhone? Do you shop without a list? The answer is no, so don’t stop using visuals with people on the spectrum. You can change what you use as the child ages because it may no longer be appropriate. A teenager using a Velcro strip visual schedule taped to his desk may make him stand out from his peers, but an iTouch helps him be like everyone else.

One final note – just because a person on the autism spectrum is highly verbal or intelligent doesn’t mean they don’t need visual supports. I know an adult woman on the spectrum who lives successfully on her own, but keeps checklists all over her apartment on how to do laundry, dishes, and when to take out the garbage.

Visual supports help with learning, retaining information, communication, and expression. To quote my good friend Leslie Broun, “*Auditory information is transient – visual information can be fixed and permanent.*”

Recommended Reading for suggested Visual supports:

<https://autismawarenesscentre.com/shop/education-classroom/making-visual-supports-work-in-the-home-and-community-strategies-for-individuals-with-autism-and-asperger-syndrome/>

<https://autismawarenesscentre.com/shop/autism/visual-supports-for-people-with-autism-a-guide-for-parents-and-professionals/>

<https://autismawarenesscentre.com/shop/education-classroom/visual-support-for-children-with-autism-spectrum-disorders/>

Original article can be found at: <https://autismawarenesscentre.com/visual-supports-best-way-use/>

LBLESD CASCADE REGIONAL AUTISM WEBSITE

For additional resources please visit the LBLESD Autism Visual Supports and Social Stories section on our website: <https://www.lblesd.k12.or.us/cascade-regional-program/autism/teacher-parent-resources/>

(The resources listed on our website are only suggestions and not required. For your information some of the resources listed on the LBLESD website are free and some require payment, If you find a resource link listed that does not work or you have a suggestion of a resource we do not have listed please contact us.)

BOOK REVIEWS

The beginning of the school year is the prime time to explain autism and differences to your child's classmates. Here are a few titles that promote understanding and acceptance of people with autism and people who have different minds. For a more comprehensive list of books related to autism for young people, see "Autism Related Literature for Children and Teens" on LBL's autism website, under the Autism Information and Intervention tab: <https://www.lblesd.k12.or.us/cascade-regional-program/autism/teacher-parent-resources/>

We're Amazing 1,2,3! A Story About Friendship and Autism

by Leslie Kimmelman

This is a Big Golden book about Sesame Street's new character with autism, Julia. Elmo introduces Julia to Abby, who's a little confused at first because Julia isn't saying hello. Elmo explains that Julia has autism, so she does things a little differently. But Abby soon learns that she also has a lot of things in common with Julia. All kids want love, friendship, and to have fun!

(Preschool – Grade 1).

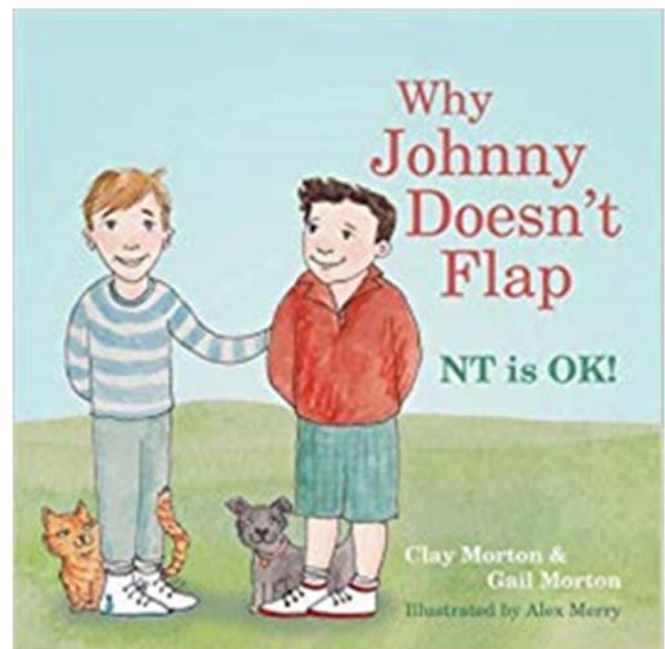


Why Johnny Doesn't Flap: NT is OK!

by Cindy Morton and Gail Morton

Books about disability are often told from the point of view of those without disabilities. By turning this traditional framing and structure on its head, the authors emphasize that differences can be subjective. The narrator, who has autism, matter-of-factly outlines the ways that his friend Johnny, who is neurotypical (NT), seems strange. For instance, Johnny looks right into people's eyes when talking to them and doesn't have meltdowns when faced with a change in schedule. Ultimately, the main character appreciates that being different isn't wrong, which helps him connect with his pal.

(Kindergarten – Grade 3).

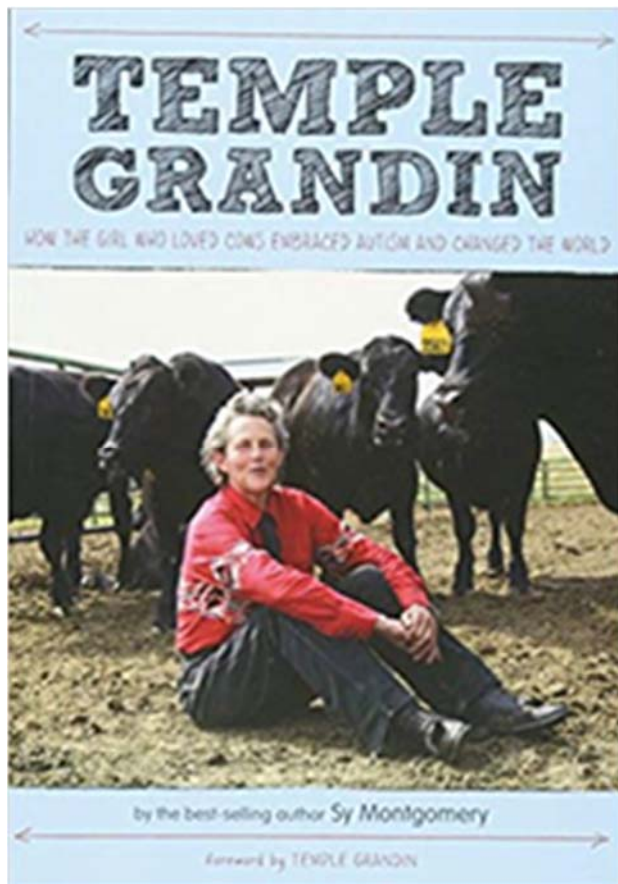
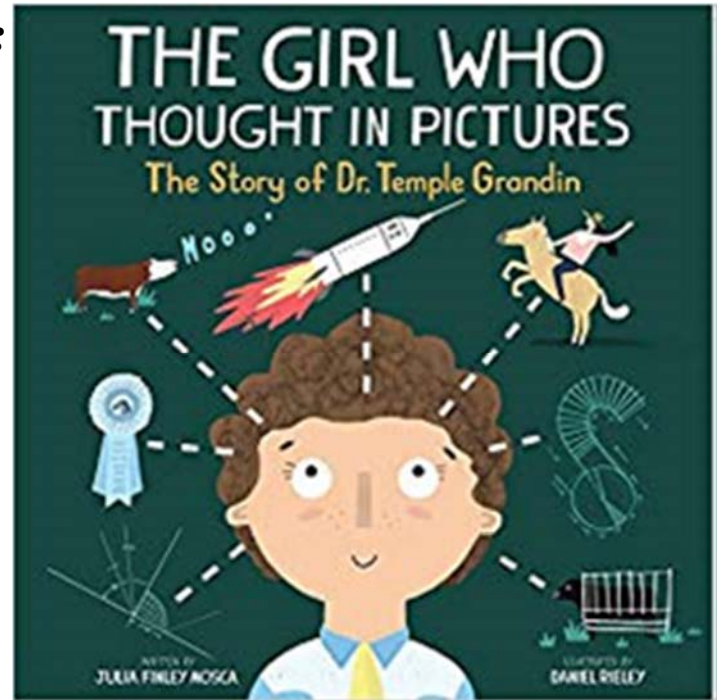


The Girl Who Thought in Pictures: The Story of Dr. Temple Grandin

by Julia Finley Mosca

If you've ever felt different, if you've ever been low, if you don't quite fit in, there's a name you should know... Meet Dr. Temple Grandin—one of the world's quirkiest science heroes! In this illustrated rhyming tale about an inspirational scientist with autism, you'll find a complete biography, fun facts, a colorful timeline of events, and even a note from Temple herself – all of which sends the message, “Each person is special – so **UNIQUE** are our minds. This world needs **YOUR** ideas. It takes **ALL** kinds!”

(Kindergarten – Grade 3).



Temple Grandin: How the Girl Who Loved Cows Embraced Autism and Changed the World by Sy Montgomery

A book about Temple Grandin for older students

(Grade 4-7).

This compelling biography full of personal photos takes us inside her extraordinary mind and opens the door to a broader understanding of autism.



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VISUALS

LET'S PLAY A GAME!

 Will you play with me?	 How do you play?	 It's my turn.	 It's your turn.
 Yes	 No	 You win!	 I win!
 Good game	 Let's play again!	 Yes!	 No, thanks.

First	Then
	

Au Talkz

