

Visuals

The language of visuals is universal. Visuals provide context and access for EAL learners who need to make sense of new information and new language in order to learn. This enables the language demands of an activity to be reduced without reducing the cognitive demand. Visuals are also useful to demonstrate learners' thought processes, and can provide a record which can be revisited and help learners clarify their thinking.

Visuals can also be used to summarise information and support learners in reporting back. Visuals are not only useful at a basic level to introduce new vocabulary; they can support access to a text which may be quite complex and help EAL learners to develop academic language.

Types of activities using visuals

- ◆ Exploiting visuals in textbooks and classroom resources
- ◆ Providing extra supporting visuals
- ◆ Taking photographs
- ◆ Producing and interpreting graphic organisers
- ◆ Sequencing, matching, ranking and grouping activities using images

✓ **Top tip:** Visuals need to be clear and current

? **To consider:** Do they reflect the learners' experience? Some visuals are very culturally specific

Practical ideas for using visuals

Exploiting visuals in textbooks and classroom resources

Consider using pictures, diagrams, charts and graphs as a starting point, as an alternative to the written text, e.g. a learner could describe a picture then complete a differentiated task rather than reading a text and answering comprehension questions. Learners may then be able to record in the form of pictures, diagrams or graphic organisers – see below.

Providing extra supporting visuals

Think about providing extra visuals for EAL learners who may have difficulty understanding spoken explanations or written texts, e.g. pictures to accompany the steps in a set of instructions, images to support understanding of a poem or story. Google and Bing both have image searching facilities. These can be provided as flashcards, word mats, posters or electronically.

Taking photographs

Take photographs of shared experiences to make learning personal and familiar. Use to accompany text, including labels for the classroom, word banks, display and books. For practical work, it is often useful to have a set of images showing, for example, a science practical or the steps of a recipe in food technology. Some of our resources do this, for example [The boiling point of water](#).

Producing and interpreting graphic organisers

There are many different types of [graphic organiser](#). They are useful for all learners, and EAL learners in particular, because they give a structure to complex ideas, and lend themselves to different types of language, e.g. narratives in timelines. Some examples include:

- ♦ Classify information on a **Venn diagram** to show similarities and differences. Each group is represented as a circle. Think of headings for each group. Where the circles overlap, information belonging to more than one group can be recorded. Arrange the information according to which group it belongs to. Try classifying pictures words or statements about a period in history, or about characters from a story.

- ◆ Sort information on a **tree diagram**. Think of questions to separate the information into groups. Repeat this process until all the information has been classified. Alternatively, challenge learners to think of the questions given the information and the structure of the diagram. Works well for classifying scientific information.
- ◆ Use a **matrix** (grid) to transfer information from one form to another. Select images/ key words/ phrases as headings for the horizontal and vertical axes. Learners refer to these to record specific information in the cell where the two sets of criteria meet. Good for information retrieval.

Using sequencing, matching and grouping activities

Images produced as [flashcards](#) can easily be used for these types of activities.

- ◆ pictures only
- ◆ pictures with words in first language
- ◆ pictures with words in English on front of the same card
- ◆ pictures with the English word on the back of the card
- ◆ picture-only cards with separate word-only cards

Learners can work together collaboratively to match images, to sort them into groups or to sequence them. These activities can then be used to support writing.

As well as practising the target vocabulary learners can also practise the language of agreeing and disagreeing, opinion giving, negotiating, etc.

Good for EAL, Good for All: Can I use visuals with the whole class?

Yes: Visuals support everyone. They clarify meaning between teacher and learner, between learner and teacher and between learner and learner.

