

Objects of reference (OOR)



What are 'objects of reference' and why use them?

- OOR are objects that have particular meanings assigned to them. They can **represent anything**: a word, sign or symbol e.g. lunch is represented by a spoon, bath time represented by a sponge, home is represented by a key.
- They are **multi-sensory** e.g. they may be tactile, visual, or have a distinctive smell, sound or movement.
- They can help a child to **develop awareness and understanding of the environment**, e.g. signalling what is about to happen.
- OOR can reduce an individual's level of frustration and confusion about what is happening, as they can provide the child with a clear and consistent routine.

How do you use OOR?

- Present the OOR when you are moving to a new activity, place or event e.g. keys alongside your verbal communication saying 'Home time'.
- Encourage the child to look and explore the OOR with both hands.



- Allow and encourage the individual to hold the OOR whilst moving to the place/ activity.
- As soon as the OOR has been presented ensure that the child is taken to that place/ activity.

Strategies to Ensure Success:

- Use the OOR **regularly and consistently** - think about what activities the child does regularly.
- OOR's **should be individual** to the child. When choosing an OOR it is important to **observe the child** and note down how they interact with the environment and what things are important or meaningful to them.
- **Motivating**- It must be motivating to the child, e.g. if the child becomes animated during a regular game with a parachute then find an object to represent this.
- **Real objects are the most concrete** (easiest) to understand, such as swimming trunks for swimming. Miniatures of real objects, such as a toy bed are much harder to understand developmentally. The hardest of all to understand are words.