

How-To Templates

Topic Boards



Having a conversation and remaining on topic can be difficult for many individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs). A topic board and conversation prompts, however, can help with this difficulty by prompting the individual to focus on the topic and to use appropriate comments and questions.

The format of a topic board is very similar to that of a choice board (please see the information on choice boards provided on the website). Each topic is displayed as a possible choice on the topic board. Once a topic for conversation is chosen (either by the individual with an ASD or by someone else), the topic is removed from the board and placed on the table. This process makes clear to the individual which topic is being discussed.

Sometimes, simply providing the topic prompt is enough of a visual cue to the individual to allow an appropriate conversation to occur. Many times, however, the individual may need additional prompts to understand how to engage in a back and forth interaction. In those cases, the use of the conversational prompts may be helpful.

Conversational prompts are designed to prompt the individual with an ASD to use common phrases and questions that are part of many conversations. These cards may use pictures, words, or a combination of the two to represent these common statements. The adult supporting the individual with an ASD can then use these prompts during the conversation when the individual needs some support on what to say next.

To Make the Board:

1. Begin by considering some topics that might be commonly discussed with the individual. Include some preferred topics as well some less preferred ones.
2. Use the samples provided here (or create your own) to create a list of topics.
3. Affix each topic option to a larger board with Velcro in a non-linear order (e.g., square, circle).

To Make Conversation Prompts:

1. Create a list of commonly used phrases and questions (or use the samples provided here). If you choose to create your own list of phrases/questions, create cards to represent each statement.
2. Keep the prompt cards stored together (with a rubber band, in an envelope, or affixed to a second board with Velcro).



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Also, check out...

How-To Video: Choice Board
How-To Video: First-Then Board

How-To Template: Choice Board
How-To Template: First Then Board

Kid's Corner Series
Life with ASD Series
Academia Series
Strategy in Practice Series

Materials provided are samples only!
They may need to be individualized to meet the particular needs of a person with an ASD!

To Use the Topic Board and Conversation Prompts:

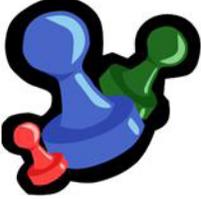
1. During conversations access the visual supports. Initially, it may be helpful to have specific training conversations scheduled when an adult has the time to use the visual supports.
2. If the individual with an ASD selects the topic for the conversation, have him/her remove the appropriate topic from the board and place it on the table. If someone else selects the topic, have that person remove the card. Use a simple phrase, such as "make choice" to indicate that the individual can choose any of the options.
3. Consider providing only 2-3 choices initially, and slowly increasing the number of presented topic choices as the individual is better able to make choices.
4. During the conversation, if the individual begins to change topics, prompt him/her to look at the topic card. If necessary, provide a verbal prompt (e.g., "We're talking about race cars").
5. If the individual pauses for a longer than anticipated period of time, or says something inappropriate during the conversation, the adult should select a conversation prompt card and place it in front of the individual.
6. Over time, it may be possible to place all of the conversation prompt cards in front of the individual and allow him/her to self-select a statement. Eventually, the prompt cards may be able to faded out altogether.

Conversation Prompt Template

  I like _____	  I do not like _____
  Do you like _____	 Have you _____?
  Yes, I _____	  No, I _____
  My favorite _____	 I tried _____
  What's your favorite _____?	

Topic Board Template

Choose a Topic

video game 	cartoons 	family 	TV shows 
games 	toys 	food 	school 
friends 	trips 	pets 	books 