

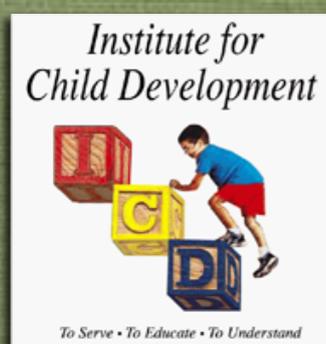


# Autism Initiative Training Series

## Module 3: Chapter 3.3

### Additional Supports for Skill Development

<http://bddso.icd.binghamton.edu>



# Chapter 3.3 Part 1

## Structural and Visual Supports

# Learning Objectives

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- Identify the 4 areas of a supportive environment.
- Identify methods for creating visual boundaries.
- Identify methods of organization.
- Identify methods for minimizing distractions.

# Supportive Environment

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- A supportive environment is a safe and friendly place which also promotes social, academic, physical, and emotional development of an individual.
- Supportive environments that promote skill development have shown to improve learning for individuals with autism. (Earles, Carlson, & Bock, 1998; Educational Approaches, 2006; Heflin & Alberto, 2001; Hurth, Shaw, Izeman, Whaley, & Rogers, 1999 Sasso, Peck, & Garrisson-Harrell, 1998).

# Supportive Environment for Individuals with Autism

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- Visually structured environments have been shown to be more effective than other methods for individuals with autism (Ozonoff & Cathcart, 1998; Panerai, Ferrante, & Zingale, 2002; Schopler, Mesibov, & Hearsey, 1995; Van Bourgondien, Reichle, & Schopler, 2003)
- **Some important components include:**
  - General layout
  - Boundaries
  - Organization
  - Minimizing distractions

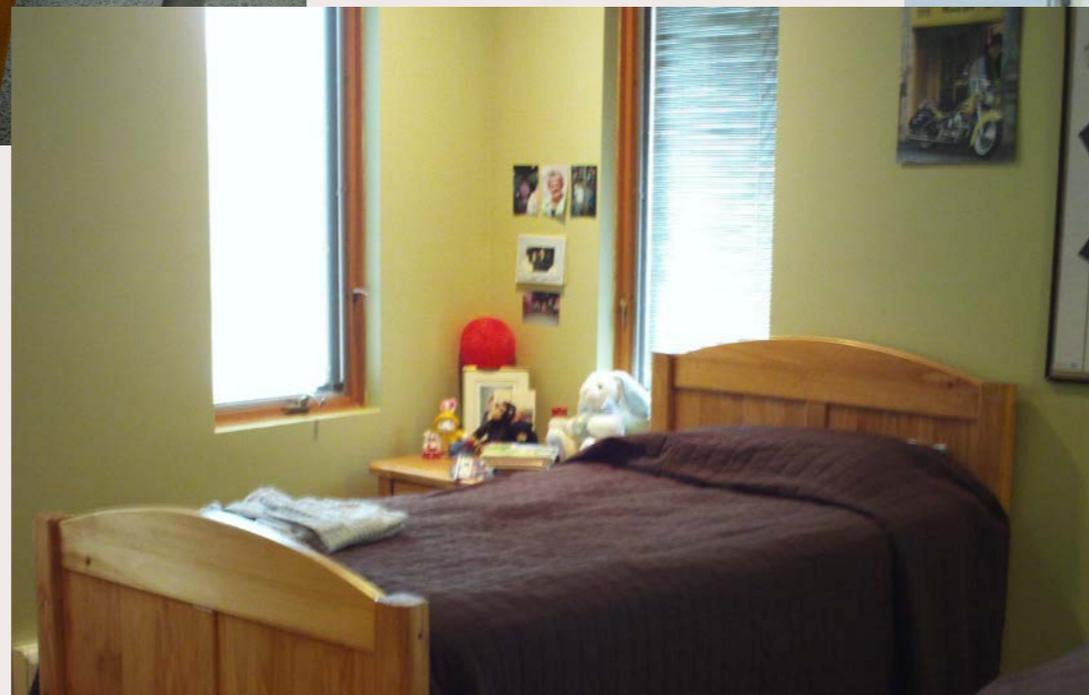
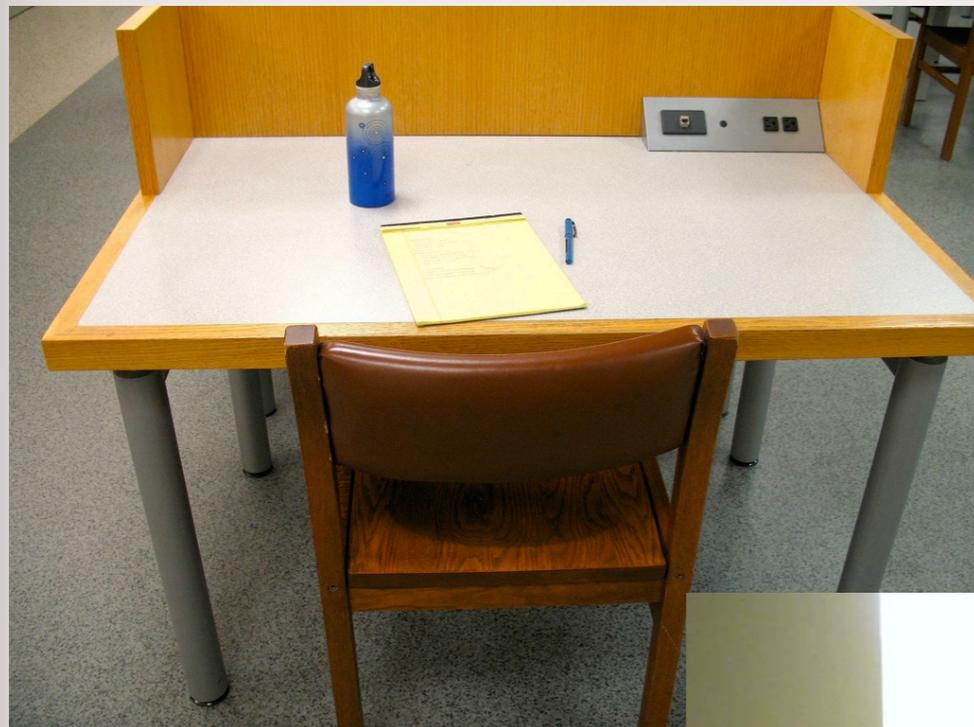
# General Layout

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- Distinct areas should be designated for specific activities (Schopler et al., 1995; Scheuermann & Webber, 2002).
- **Some suggested areas include:** (Educational Approaches, 2006; Ganz, 2007; Schopler et al., 1995; Scheuermann & Webber, 2002).
  - Individual activity areas
  - Group activity areas
  - Leisure activity areas
  - Storage areas

# Individual Activity Areas

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# Group Activity Areas



# Leisure/Recreational Areas



# Storage Areas



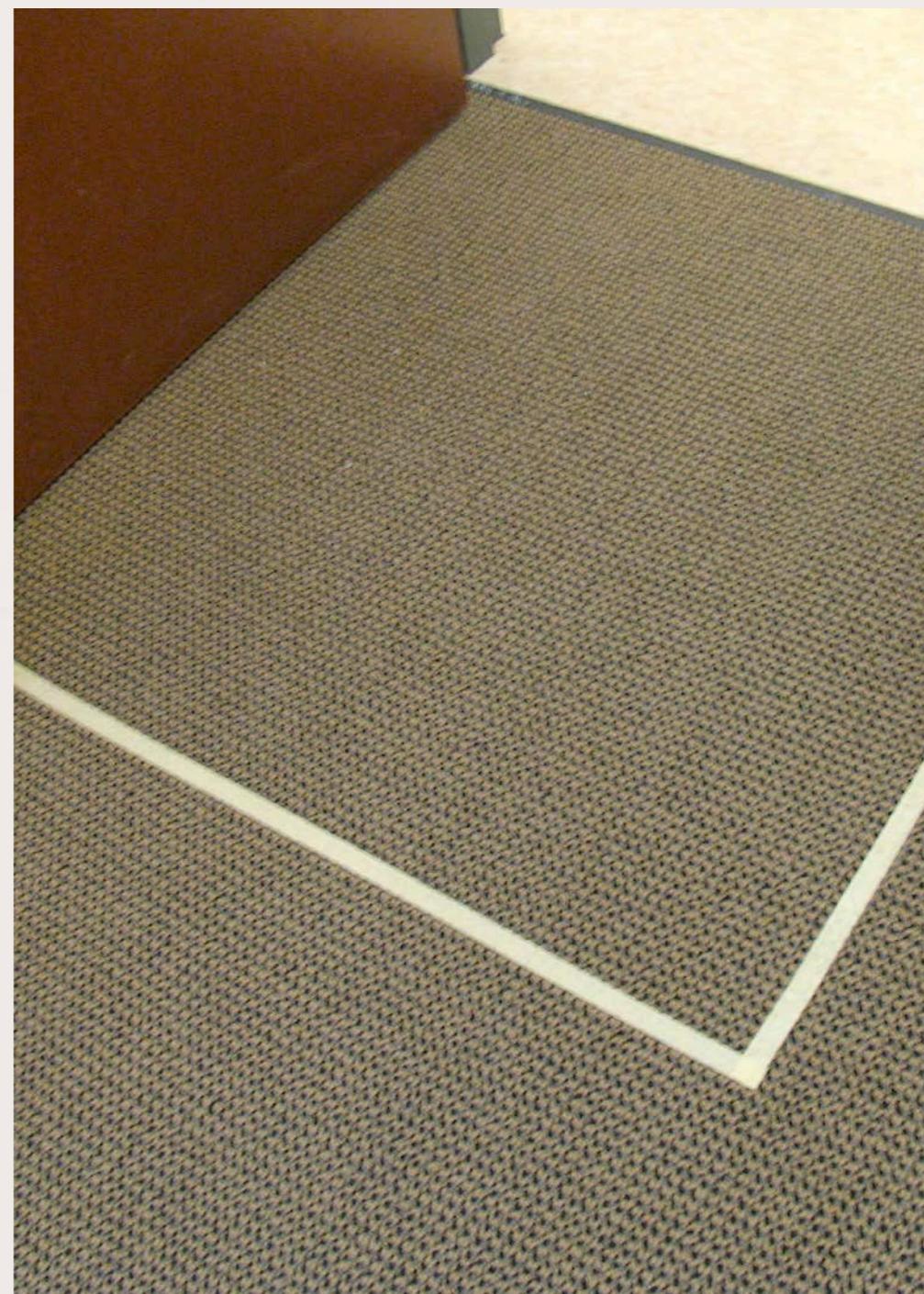
# Visual Boundaries

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- **Clear visual boundaries should exist between all areas** (Anderson, Campbell, & Cannon, 1994; Heflin & Alberto, 2001; Stainback, Stainback, & Foryen, 1987).
- **These boundaries should serve as cues for which activity is permitted in each area** (Anderson et al., 1994; Heflin & Alberto, 2001; Heflin & Alaimo, 2007; Schopler et al., 1995; Stainback et al., 1987).

# Creating Boundaries

- Tape on the floor or wall can help draw out visual boundaries for different areas (Educational Approaches, 2006; Ganz, 2007; Stokes, <http://www.specialed.us/autism/structure/str10.htm>).



# Creating Boundaries

- Rearranging furniture and other objects is also an effective method for creating boundaries (Educational Approaches, 2006; Ganz, 2007; Stokes, <http://www.specialed.us/autism/structure/str10.htm>).



# Organization

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- Organization is another important component of a visually structured environment.
- The environment should be organized to be more easy and efficient for both staff and learners.

# Organization

- Labels can be used to indicate the location of materials or access to specific activities.



# Organization

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- Safety signs and cues



# Organization

- Store unused materials in designated areas  
(Stokes, <http://www.specialed.us/autism/structure/str10.htm>).



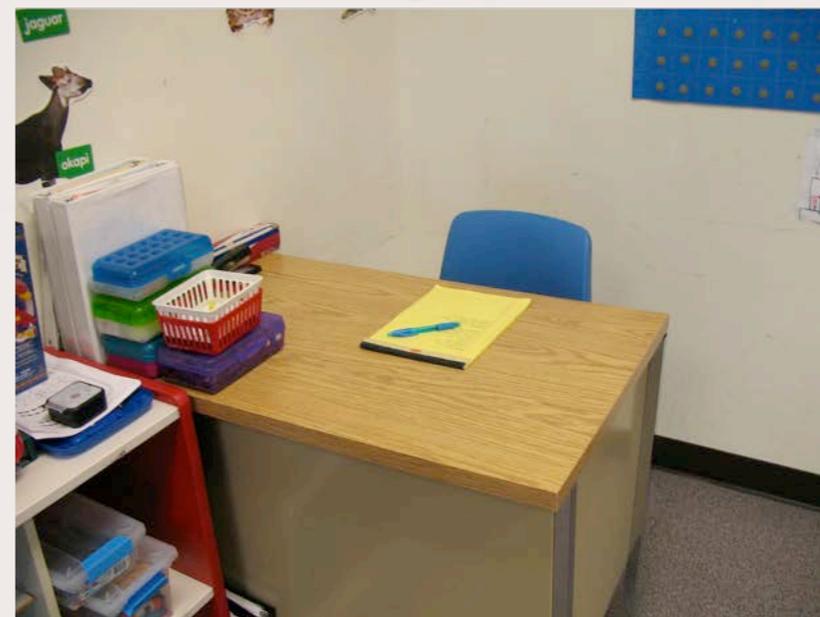
# Organization

- Furniture layout should allow for easy and efficient navigation.



# Organization

- Clear desks and tables of any unnecessary items (Stokes, <http://www.specialed.us/autism/structure/str10.htm>).



# Distractions

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- Many individuals with autism have difficulty processing environmental stimuli and can be **easily distracted** (Fischer, Bullock, Rotenberg, & Raya, 1993; Siegel, 1999; Taylor & Carr, 1993).
- In a supportive environment, both visual or auditory distractions should be reduced (Stokes, <http://www.specialed.us/autism/structure/str10.htm>).

# Minimizing Visual Distractions

- **Minimize visual clutter**  
(Rogers & DiLalla, 1991; Stokes, <http://www.specialed.us/autism/structure/str10.htm>).



# Minimizing Visual Distractions

- Storing unnecessary material out of sight can also aid reducing visual clutter (Stokes, <http://www.specialed.us/autism/structure/str10.htm>).



# Minimizing Visual Distractions

- Blinds or curtains can be used to control the amount of light coming through the windows  
(Stokes, <http://www.specialed.us/autism/structure/str10.htm>).



# Minimizing Visual Distractions

- Study carrels can also be used to create individual work areas that can reduce visual distractions. (Scheuermann & Webber, 2002; Stokes, <http://www.specialed.us/autism/structure/str10.htm>).



# Minimizing Auditory Distractions

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- Lowered ceilings and carpeting can decrease background noise levels.
- Headphones can be used for appropriate activities to limit noise interference.