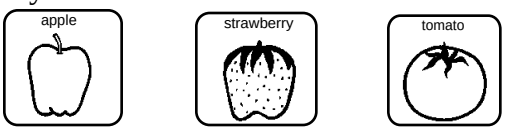
AAC STRATEGIES:
COLOR CODING SYMBOL DISPLAYS

Literature indicates that laying out symbols in a grammatically correct format enhances a child's ability to locate the symbol more quickly and improves their literacy skills. Consequently, setting up a display in a layout similar to a Fitzgerald key is most effective. However, multiple symbols on multiple displays begin to look similar. Leaving the symbols as black and white drawings on a white background makes it difficult for the user to quickly locate a desired symbol. This method is not recommended. One of the ways to make it easier for the user, the facilitator, and the listener to locate desired symbols is to add color to them. In this way, the display can be visually scanned more efficiently in order to locate a particular symbol, in essence reducing the number of items to be visually scanned

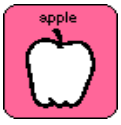


Four major color coding systems appear to be most used in clinical practice.

Color the figure of the symbol realistically, leaving the background white.
This is not recommended when using multiple overlays. It fails to do 2 things. First it fails to reduce the amount of visual scanning. Second, it fails to clearly define most objects. Shirts and apples can be a variety of colors. Red apples, strawberries, and tomatoes are not distinguished color alone. Consequently, this method may only prove useful for an individual who may only one or two overlays.

Color-code the entire symbol. Both the figure and background are the same color, according its grammatical category.
This serves to reduce the number of symbols to be visually scanned. While this may reduce the intensity of coloring the figure only or the background only, it fails to enhance the figure ground differential that assists in locating a symbol within its grammatic category. This not recommend when using multiple overlays.

Color-code the ring of the cell and color the figure realistically.
This also may serve to reduce the number of symbols to be visually scanned. While this may re the labor intensity of coloring the figure only or the background only, it fails to enhance the figu ground differential that assists in locating a symbol within its grammatic category. Nor does it attention to the shape of the object. It is also a less effective method.



Color-code the background of the symbol leaving the figure of the symbol white. The color based on the grammatic category to which the symbol belongs.
The background color groups the symbol into its grammatic category. It also serves to highlight shape of the figure in the symbol, thus distinguishing it from other symbols. This reduces the number of symbols to be visually scanned. It appears to be a preferred and more effective meth color coding.

For individuals with vision impairment, a high color contrast may be needed.

Much of this material has been taken from the following sources:
Engineering Training Environments for Interactive Augmentative Communication by Pamela S Elder and Carol Goossens'
BoardMaker by Mayer-Johnson

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