

PORTFOLIO TO A STAR TEACHER TOOLKIT

VISUAL INSTRUCTION SHEETS

Clear classroom workflows for GCSE and A Level Art & Design

INCLUDES	Teacher guidance, eight ready-to-use visual workflows, one-step cards, a Now-Next-Finished board and editable templates
SUBJECTS	Fine Art, Photography and Graphic Communication
SUPPORTS	Mixed-ability groups, dyslexic learners, EAL learners, working-memory needs and independent working
PRINTING	White A4 pages for colour or greyscale printing; editable in Microsoft Word

CORE PRINCIPLE A useful visual instruction shows one action at a time, makes success visible and reduces the amount of spoken or written information a student must hold in mind.

Independent teacher resource. It is not produced or endorsed by an examination board. Teachers should apply the current requirements of their own specification.

TEACHER GUIDE

Using visual instructions well

These sheets support students who understand a demonstration while watching it but lose parts of the sequence once independent work begins. Display a sheet, place it beside equipment or give one step at a time.

Teach the sheet before expecting independence

- Demonstrate the complete process once, then repeat it while pointing to each numbered step.
- Ask students to say or show what they will do next before they collect materials.
- Keep the sheet visible throughout the task; do not remove it as soon as the demonstration ends.
- Highlight the current step with a clip, sticky note or reusable frame.
- Fade support gradually: full sheet, selected steps, short checklist, then independent recall.

Links to common Art & Design assessment activity

COMMON AO LINK	HOW VISUAL INSTRUCTIONS CAN SUPPORT IT
AO1	Following research and source-analysis routines; recording useful connections rather than copying.
AO2	Trying materials safely, changing one variable at a time and recording informed refinements.
AO3	Using drawing, photography, annotation and contact sheets to record observations and intentions.
AO4	Planning, producing, checking and presenting a coherent personal response.

The exact wording and evidence requirements vary by qualification and examination board. Use the editable Word file to match your current specification.

TEACHER REFERENCE

Turn any demonstration into a visual sheet

Use this six-part method when adapting the blank template at the end of the pack.

1 CHOOSE Identify the essential actions. Remove interesting but non-essential detail. CHECK: <i>Could a student complete the task using only these steps?</i>	2 CHUNK Break the process into four to six short stages with one main verb in each. CHECK: <i>Does every panel contain one clear action?</i>
3 SHOW Add a sample, teacher photograph, diagram or object beside each step when useful. CHECK: <i>Can students see what the action or result looks like?</i>	4 CHECK State one visible success check instead of writing a long explanation. CHECK: <i>Can the student judge whether the step is complete?</i>
5 TEST Ask a student to use the sheet while you observe where they pause or guess. CHECK: <i>Which wording, image or sequence needs changing?</i>	6 FADE Remove prompts gradually when the student can recall or explain the routine. CHECK: <i>Is the scaffold supporting independence rather than dependence?</i>

ACCESSIBLE BY DESIGN Use short sentences, familiar action verbs, a left-to-right sequence, strong contrast and sufficient white space. Do not rely on colour alone to communicate meaning.

PHOTOCOPIABLE VISUAL INSTRUCTION / ALL SUBJECTS

Start, make, check and finish

A reusable routine for practical lessons. Display it near the front of the room or place a copy on each table.

GET READY Read the task. Collect only the named materials. Put bags and unused equipment away.

1 LOOK Find the example, demonstration or finished outcome. Point to the part you are making first. CHECK: <i>I know what I am aiming to produce.</i>	2 PREPARE Collect the materials on the list and protect the table or equipment if required. CHECK: <i>My workspace is safe and uncluttered.</i>
3 START Complete only the first action. Keep the instruction sheet beside you. CHECK: <i>I have begun the correct step.</i>	4 CONTINUE Move to the next numbered step. Ask for help at the exact step where you are stuck. CHECK: <i>I can say which step I am completing.</i>
5 CHECK Compare your work with the success check. Correct one thing before moving on. CHECK: <i>The required evidence is visible.</i>	6 FINISH Photograph or store the work, return equipment and clean the workspace. CHECK: <i>My work is named, safe and ready to continue.</i>

FINISHED WHEN The work is stored or photographed, materials are returned and the table is ready for the next person.

PHOTOCOPIABLE VISUAL INSTRUCTION / FINE ART

Make an observational drawing

Use for natural forms, objects, portraits or architectural studies. The aim is careful looking rather than a perfectly polished drawing.

GET READY Subject or reference, suitable paper, pencil or chosen drawing tool, eraser only if appropriate.

1 FRAME

Choose the viewpoint. Use your hands or a paper window to decide what will be included.

CHECK: *The subject fills an intentional area of the page.*

2 MEASURE

Compare height, width, angles and spaces. Mark light guide points.

CHECK: *The main proportions relate to one another.*

3 PLACE

Draw the largest shapes first. Leave small details until later.

CHECK: *The complete subject fits on the page.*

4 REFINE

Correct outlines by looking back at the subject after every few marks.

CHECK: *Lines follow what I can see, not what I assume.*

5 BUILD

Add tone, texture or directional marks from light to dark.

CHECK: *At least three tonal values or surface qualities are visible.*

6 REVIEW

Step back. Strengthen one focal area and simplify anything distracting.

CHECK: *The drawing shows observation, selection and control.*

FINISHED WHEN The whole composition is placed, proportions have been checked and selected tone or texture describes the subject.

PHOTOCOPIABLE VISUAL INSTRUCTION / FINE ART

Test paint or mixed media

Use this sheet for a purposeful material experiment. Students should change one or two choices and record what the materials actually do.

GET READY Reference image, test surface, chosen media, water or medium if required, brushes or tools, paper towel and apron.

1 PLAN

Choose the colour, surface or mark-making quality you are testing.

CHECK: *I can state the purpose of the experiment.*

2 SAMPLE

Make a small colour, tone or texture test before starting the main study.

CHECK: *I know how the material behaves on this surface.*

3 LAYER

Work from broad areas to smaller marks. Allow wet layers to settle when necessary.

CHECK: *The surface is controlled rather than accidentally muddy.*

4 VARY

Change one factor: tool, pressure, dilution, direction, scale or layering.

CHECK: *The comparison makes the effect of the change visible.*

5 SELECT

Circle or photograph the most successful area and identify why it works.

CHECK: *I can point to specific visual evidence.*

6 RECORD

Label the media, surface, mixture and next action while the test is fresh.

CHECK: *Another person could understand or repeat the process.*

FINISHED WHEN The sheet shows a clear test, a visible variation, a selected result and a short record of what should happen next.

PHOTOCOPIABLE VISUAL INSTRUCTION / PHOTOGRAPHY

Plan and take a photographic shoot

A repeatable sequence for producing a purposeful set of photographs rather than isolated snapshots.

GET READY Camera or device, charged battery, available storage, subject or location, shot list and any permitted lighting equipment.

1 INTEND Write one sentence describing the idea, mood or visual problem you are exploring. CHECK: <i>I know what the photographs are meant to investigate.</i>	2 CHECK Confirm battery, storage, lens, focus mode, exposure and permission to photograph. CHECK: <i>The equipment and location are ready and safe.</i>
3 FRAME Make a clear first composition. Check edges, background, viewpoint and unwanted distractions. CHECK: <i>Everything inside the frame has been noticed.</i>	4 EXPOSE Check focus and brightness. Take a test image and inspect it before continuing. CHECK: <i>The important detail is sharp and usable.</i>
5 VARY Change distance, viewpoint, orientation, crop, light or timing one choice at a time. CHECK: <i>The shoot contains meaningful alternatives.</i>	6 REVIEW Before leaving, check the sequence at full size and retake missing or weak images. CHECK: <i>I have enough variety and technical quality to select from.</i>

FINISHED WHEN The shoot contains focused, correctly exposed variations that clearly connect to the stated intention.

PHOTOCOPIABLE VISUAL INSTRUCTION / PHOTOGRAPHY

Create and evaluate a contact sheet

Use after every shoot so that selection and editing decisions are visible rather than hidden inside a camera roll.

GET READY Imported image folder, clear file names, contact-sheet template or software, and a method for marking selections.

1 IMPORT Copy the complete shoot into a named folder. Keep the original files. CHECK: <i>The date, project and shoot can be identified.</i>	2 DISPLAY Create thumbnails large enough to compare composition, focus and exposure. CHECK: <i>The complete sequence is visible on one or more sheets.</i>
3 REJECT Mark unusable files: accidental frames, missed focus, repeats or serious exposure errors. CHECK: <i>Rejections have a specific reason.</i>	4 SELECT Choose a varied group that best communicates the intention, not simply the sharpest files. CHECK: <i>Selections show both quality and relevance.</i>
5 EXPLAIN Annotate two strong images and one image that needs improvement using visible evidence. CHECK: <i>Comments refer to framing, light, focus, viewpoint or meaning.</i>	6 DEVELOP State the next shoot, edit, crop, sequence or printing test that follows. CHECK: <i>Evaluation leads to a clear practical action.</i>

FINISHED WHEN The contact sheet shows the full shoot, justified selections, identified weaknesses and a specific next step.

PHOTOCOPIABLE VISUAL INSTRUCTION / GRAPHIC COMMUNICATION

Develop a layout from thumbnail to outcome

Use for posters, covers, packaging, identities, information graphics or promotional design.

GET READY Brief, audience and format notes, source material, thumbnail paper, drawing tools and suitable design software or media.

1 READ

Underline the message, audience, required content, format and practical constraints in the brief.

CHECK: *I can explain what the design must communicate.*

2 THUMBNAIL

Draw at least six small layouts. Change hierarchy, position, scale and image-type relationships.

CHECK: *The alternatives are genuinely different.*

3 SELECT

Choose the layout that best suits the purpose and audience. State one reason.

CHECK: *The decision refers to communication, not personal taste alone.*

4 BUILD

Create a structured version using guides, alignment and a clear hierarchy.

CHECK: *The reading order is immediately visible.*

5 TEST

View or print at the intended size. Check spelling, legibility, contrast, margins and image quality.

CHECK: *The design works in its real format.*

6 REFINE

Change one justified feature and compare it with the previous version before exporting.

CHECK: *The final decision is supported by visible development.*

FINISHED WHEN The outcome answers the brief, communicates clearly to the intended audience and is supported by visible alternatives and refinements.

PHOTOCOPIABLE VISUAL INSTRUCTION / ALL DIGITAL WORK

Name, save and export digital artwork

A file-management routine for photographs, digital drawings and Graphic Communication outcomes.

GET READY Project folder, original files, editing software and the teacher's required file type, dimensions and submission location.

1 NAME Create a project folder and use a clear filename containing project, task and version. CHECK: <i>The file can be found without opening it.</i>	2 PRESERVE Keep an untouched original. Work on a duplicate or non-destructive edit where possible. CHECK: <i>I can return to the source file.</i>
3 SAVE Save the editable working file before and during major changes. CHECK: <i>Layers or editable elements remain available.</i>	4 CHECK Confirm dimensions, resolution, colour mode, spelling, crop and visible edges. CHECK: <i>The file matches its intended use.</i>
5 EXPORT Create the required PDF, JPEG or PNG using the teacher's stated settings. CHECK: <i>The exported file opens and looks correct.</i>	6 BACK UP Copy the working and exported files to the required secure location. CHECK: <i>There are two reliable copies in known locations.</i>

FINISHED WHEN The editable source and exported version are clearly named, open correctly and have been saved in the required locations.

PHOTOCOPIABLE VISUAL INSTRUCTION / ALL SUBJECTS

Present and mount finished work

Use when preparing sketchbook inserts, display sheets, mounted prints or portfolio pages.

GET READY Finished work, clean backing paper or board, ruler, pencil, cutting equipment approved by the teacher, adhesive and a clean surface.

1 PROTECT Wash and dry hands. Clear wet media, food, drinks and scraps from the workspace. CHECK: <i>The work and mounting surface are clean.</i>	2 MEASURE Measure the work and available space. Mark small guide points rather than heavy lines. CHECK: <i>Margins are intentional and consistent.</i>
3 TEST Place all parts without adhesive. Check orientation, sequence, spacing and labels. CHECK: <i>The arrangement reads clearly before anything is fixed.</i>	4 TRIM Use only the approved cutting method and follow the teacher's safety instructions. CHECK: <i>Edges are straight and the cutting area remains controlled.</i>
5 FIX Apply a small, even amount of suitable adhesive and press from the centre outwards. CHECK: <i>The work lies flat without visible glue or damage.</i>	6 INSPECT Check edges, spelling, alignment, fingerprints and loose corners in good light. CHECK: <i>The presentation supports rather than distracts from the work.</i>

FINISHED WHEN The work is clean, secure, accurately aligned, correctly labelled and safe to store or display.

ACCESSIBLE VERSION / CUT-OUT CARDS

Give one instruction at a time

Cut along the dashed lines. Give the current card only, or place completed cards face down. Add a teacher photograph or example in the white space when needed.

1 LOOK Find the example and the part you are making now. CHECK: <i>I can point to the intended result.</i>	2 COLLECT Take only the materials needed for this step. CHECK: <i>My workspace is ready.</i>
3 DO Complete this action before moving to the next card. CHECK: <i>I can show what I have done.</i>	4 COMPARE Look at the example and find one similarity or difference. CHECK: <i>I know what needs correcting.</i>
5 IMPROVE Make one useful change, then check it again. CHECK: <i>The improvement is visible.</i>	6 FINISH Store the work, return materials and tidy the space. CHECK: <i>Everything is safe and ready for next time.</i>

ACCESSIBLE VERSION / REUSABLE BOARD**Now - Next - Finished**

Write, draw or attach a photograph in each box. Cover the Next box if seeing two instructions at once creates overload. Laminate for repeated use if appropriate.

NOW What am I doing? 	NEXT What happens after that? 	FINISHED How will I know?
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Help request

Encourage the student to name the exact point of difficulty rather than saying only 'I can't do it'.

I AM ON STEP	
I HAVE ALREADY TRIED	
I NEED HELP WITH	

Teacher prompt

ASK Show me the step you are on. What does the check say you should be able to see?

EDITABLE TEACHER TEMPLATE

Create a six-step visual instruction

Replace the prompts with your own action verbs, instructions and visible success checks. Paste a small photograph, diagram or example into each panel if it adds information.

TASK TITLE: _____

MATERIALS / SET-UP: _____

1 ACTION VERB Write one short instruction or paste a visual example here. CHECK: <i>State what the student should be able to see.</i>	2 ACTION VERB Write one short instruction or paste a visual example here. CHECK: <i>State what the student should be able to see.</i>
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FINISHED WHEN Write the overall completion check here.

RESOURCE NOTES

Adapt for the learner and the task

NEED	USEFUL ADAPTATION
DYSLEXIA	Use the lower-text cards, generous spacing and familiar verbs. Read the sheet aloud before use; do not reduce text size to fit more content.
EAL	Demonstrate each verb, pair words with real tools or examples and allow the student to rehearse the sequence orally.
WORKING MEMORY	Show one or two steps at a time, mark the current step and keep materials arranged in the order of use.
PHYSICAL ACCESS	Adjust reach, grip, tool choice, working height and time. Show the adapted method in the sheet rather than expecting the student to translate it.
ANXIETY / OVERLOAD	Make the start point, help route and finish condition explicit. Remove unnecessary visual information from the workspace.
STRETCH	Ask the student to justify a change, identify a quality check or design an improved instruction sheet for another learner.

Before printing or sharing

- Check that tools, software steps and safety instructions match your department.
- Replace generic examples with photographs of the actual equipment and outcomes students will use.
- Print only the sheets required. Keep white backgrounds for economical photocopying.
- Retain numbered steps and bold labels when making a greyscale version so meaning does not depend on orange alone.

Use alongside Resources 01 and 02

Resource 01 provides simplified annotation prompts. Resource 02 develops advanced critical vocabulary. Resource 03 makes practical processes easier to follow, remember and complete independently.

Classroom-use notice

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