

# Power Cards



## What are Power Cards?

The Power Card Strategy is a visual way of using the interests of the individual to teach and reinforce a range of skills, including academics, behavioral expectations and social skills. Power Cards are particularly useful for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder because many individuals with that diagnosis have particular areas of interest. The use of their interest areas tends to increase motivation. Power Cards are also an inexpensive support, making them easy for families and school staff to use.

## When are Power Cards Useful?

Power Cards can be beneficial in a range of situations, ranging from social interactions to daily routines to behavioral supports. Some examples include:

- To explain the expectations in a specific setting (e.g., lunchroom, playground, assemblies, classroom)
- To clarify the options/choices available to the individual
- To highlight the relationship between certain behaviors and consequences
- To teach perspective taking
- To help the individual with generalizing skills across settings
- To serve as a visual reminder of behavioral expectations

## What are the Parts of a Power Card Strategy?

1. **Script**—When making Power Cards, it can help to first start with a brief script that addresses the interest area and the skill area. It is important to ensure that you are writing the script at the comprehension level of the individual. Additionally, it is often help to include pictures and graphics to support the main ideas. Remember to build in specific times to read the script as the individual learns to use the Power Card.
2. **The Power Card** – The actual power card should be about the size of a trading card (e.g., a baseball card). It should include a picture of the interest as well as list some specific strategies and/or solutions for the situation. The strategies should be broken into simple steps to make it easier for the individual to implement. Three to five steps is usually appropriate.

# Sample Power Card

## Power Card Strategy Script



### Controlling Feelings

Elsa is a magical ice queen. She has to learn how to control her magic. When she doesn't control it, she makes snow and ice every time she touches things or reacts to a feeling. When she doesn't control her magic, it can be dangerous and scary to other people. When she does control her magic, she is able to use it for good and others feel happy.

Elsa knows that part of controlling her magic is controlling how she reacts to things. She wants you to remember what you can do to control how you react:

1. Ask for help – using your words to ask for help can make you feel better
2. Relax your body – taking deep breaths or stretching can help your body calm down

When you control your reactions, you are in charge of your feelings – just like a queen is in charge!

### Power Card

#### Front of Card

#### Back of Card



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## How Can I Learn More?

### Books and Articles

- Gagnon, E. (2001). *Power cards: Using Special Interests to Motivate Children and Youth with Asperger Syndrome and Autism*. Shawnee Mission, KS: Autism Asperger Publishing
- Myles, B. S., Trautman, M. L., & Schelvan, R. L. (2004). *The Hidden Curriculum: Practical Solutions for Understanding Unstated Rules in Social Situations*. Autism Asperger Publishing Company: Shawnee Mission, KS.

Adapted from fact sheets originally published by Illinois Autism Training and Technical Assistance and Illinois State University.



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