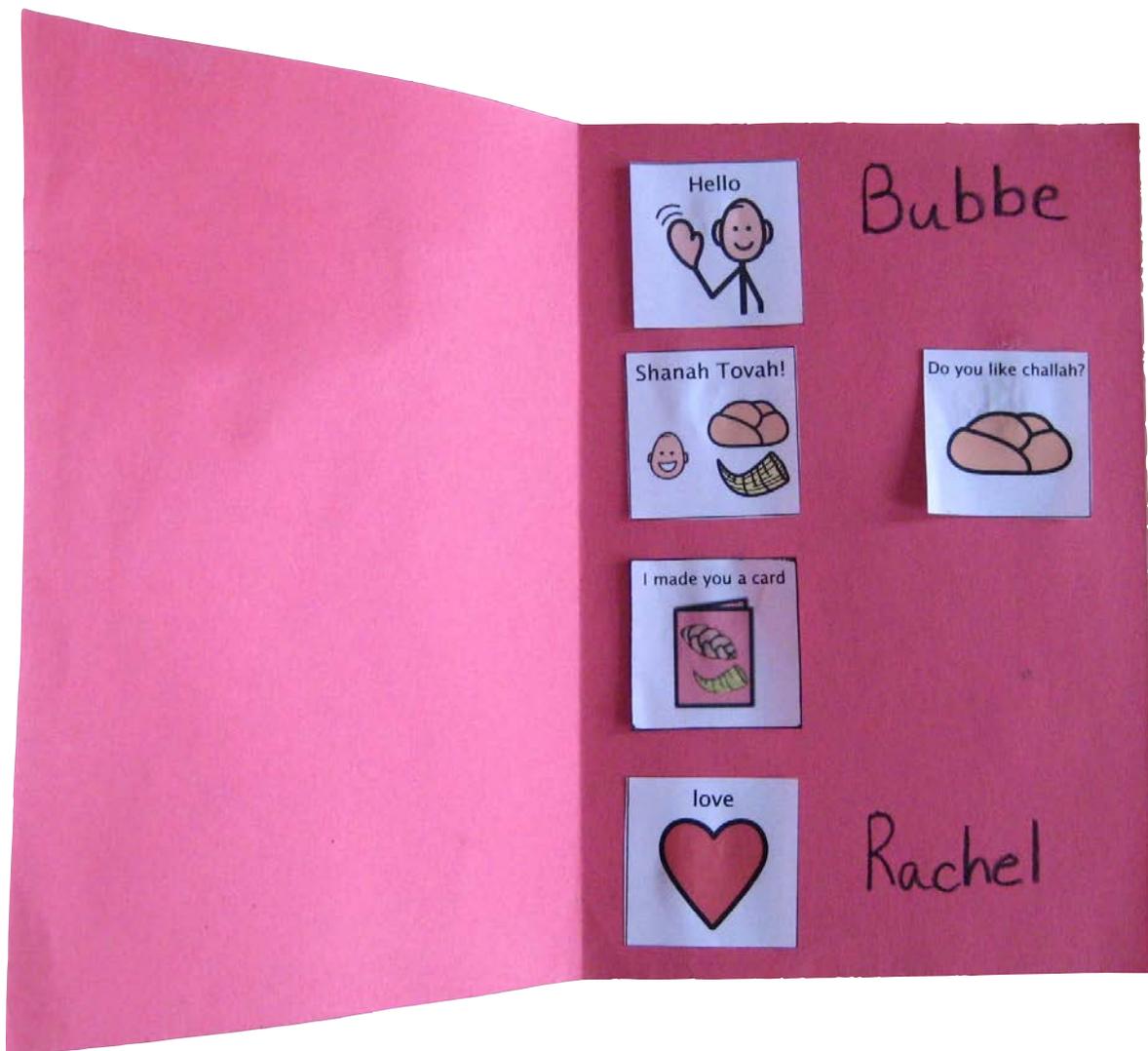


# Writing a Rosh Hashanah Card

Many families send Rosh Hashanah cards to their friends and family to celebrate the new Jewish year. Rosh Hashanah cards can be an excellent opportunity for children with disabilities to correspond with their friends and family. Children with disabilities, for a variety of reasons, may have difficulty communicating with others verbally or through writing. However, some easy adaptations can allow children with disabilities to compose their own Rosh Hashanah messages to the people that they love.



Communication can be a challenge for many students with disabilities. Even so, it is important to create opportunities for them to express themselves. This activity sets children up for success by providing them with a method of communication that is accessible to children with many different disabilities. Children will often feel proud and empowered when they are able to communicate effectively.

This activity uses Mayer-Johnson picture symbols to help children compose a message. Children with disabilities can often interpret these simple symbols even if they may not be able to read the accompanying words. Mayer-Johnson symbols can therefore be an excellent way for children with disabilities to communicate with others. In this activity, a student is given an array of either two or three Mayer Johnson symbols to choose from in order to compose a message. Giving the child a limited number of symbols to select at one time helps to structure the activity and make it feel less overwhelming.

The use of Mayer- Johnson symbols in this activity was designed to make it accessible to children who are non-verbal. Since a child may choose a symbol simply by pointing at it, speaking is not required to complete the activity. Choosing Mayer-Johnson symbols also makes this activity accessible to students with physical disabilities. Children who are not able to point to a symbol may select a symbol using eye gaze or by activating a switch when the adult helping them points to a symbol that they like.

This activity is designed so that the child can create a message based on the elements often contained in friendly letters. The message will include: a greeting, a special Rosh Hashanah greeting, a question for the card's recipient, a comment about the child, and a closing. By selecting one symbol for each element of the message and gluing them onto the card, children with disabilities can write Rosh Hashanah messages to the special people in their lives.

# Materials Needed

## 1. Rosh Hashanah Cards



## 2. Glue Stick



## 3. Mayer-Johnson Symbols

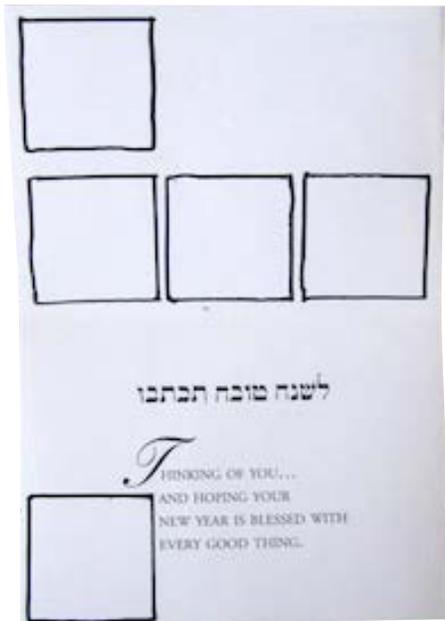


these can be found on pages 9 and 10

## Tips for Adaptations

-Cut out the Mayer Johnson symbols before beginning the activity. Some children may not have the patience to wait for you to cut them out later.

-Place targets on the inside of the card so your child will know where to apply glue and place their symbols. This adaptation may reduce confusion and anxiety for some children. Additionally, it may help the final product look a little neater. These targets can be squares you draw on the card, stickers, dots, or anything else you can think of. See the examples below for ideas:



-Use a slant board to help children who have trouble with fine motor skills. Slant boards encourage a more comfortable wrist position because children need to angle their wrists less than when they work on a flat surface. Additionally, slant boards are particularly helpful for children who wear chest or head straps in wheelchairs because they allow the students to sit up straight while still being able to see their work. Tape the card to your slant board so it will not slide off. If you do not have a slant board, a 3-ring binder that has a spine of 3 inches wide or more can serve as an inexpensive alternative.

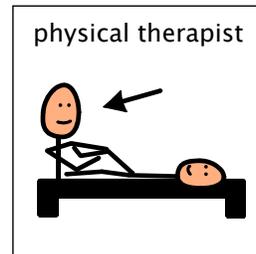
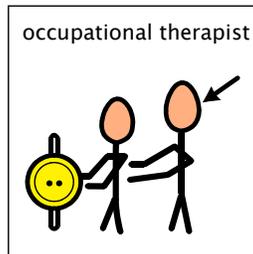
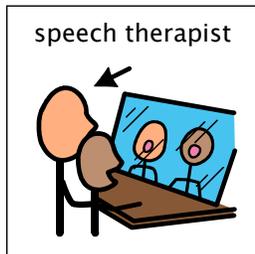
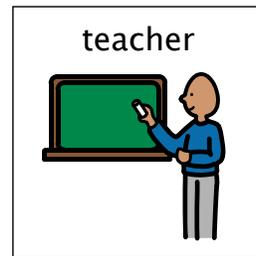
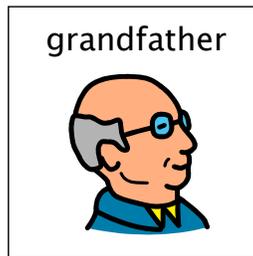
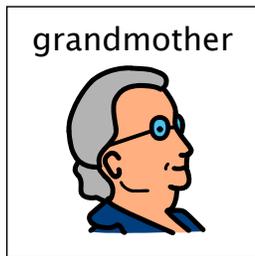
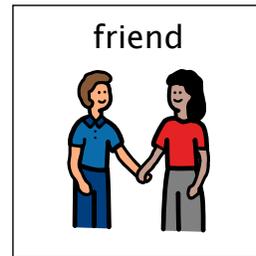
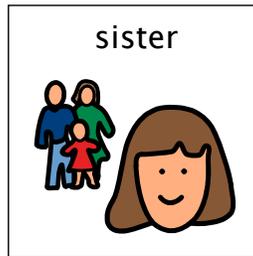
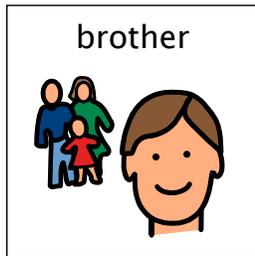
-For some children, particularly children with physical disabilities or children who have trouble maintaining focus, it may be worthwhile to apply glue to the inside of the card before starting. Once the glue is applied, you should tape the card to the surface you are working on so it won't accidentally close and become glued shut! This adaptation allows the child to simply choose a symbol and then stick it onto the card, allowing them to maintain their focus on making choices and composing a message instead of having to switch their focus between the tasks of choosing and gluing.

# Instructions

1. Before starting the activity, assemble all of the materials.

2. Show your child the Rosh Hashanah card and tell them that you are going to send it to somebody special.

3. Ask your child who they would like to send a card to. You may use the symbols below to ask this question, but I encourage you to use pictures of the actual people or your child's own communication system whenever possible.





9. Tell your child: “Good choice! You want to say...” and repeat the phrase written on the symbol.

10. Apply glue to the card or to the back of the symbol

11. Place the symbol onto the card.



12. Repeat steps 5-11 with the symbols for the different elements of the child’s message: the Rosh Hashanah greeting, the question for the card’s recipient, the comment about himself/herself, and the closing.

13. If your child is able to sign his or her name, allow them to do so at the bottom of the card. For children who cannot yet sign their names, there are many creative options: help the child write his/ her name using hand-over-hand assistance, create stickers with the child’s name on it that he/she can stick on the card, place the child’s index finger in an ink pad and press a fingerprint onto the card.

14. When your child is finished, point to each symbol in the card and read the entire message.

15. Praise your child for their good work, and don't forget to give yourself a pat on the back as well! Try to be specific in your praise:

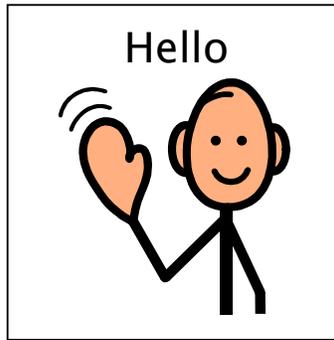
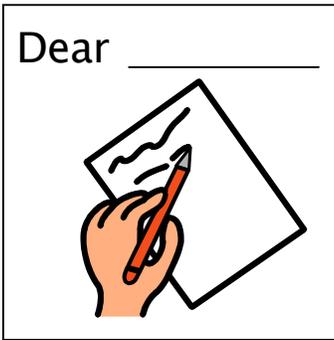
-“Nice pointing!”

-“I like how you used your eyes to let me know which symbol you wanted.”

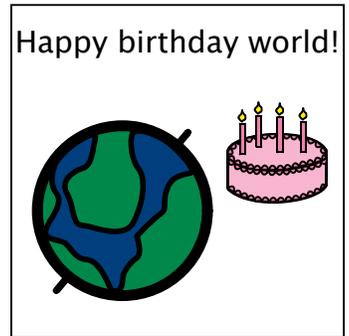
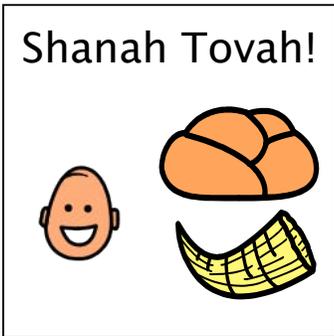
-”Good job sitting down for the whole activity!”

16. When the glue is dry, allow your child to help you place the card in an envelope, stick on a stamp, and put it in the mailbox.

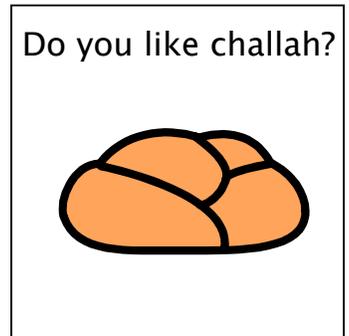
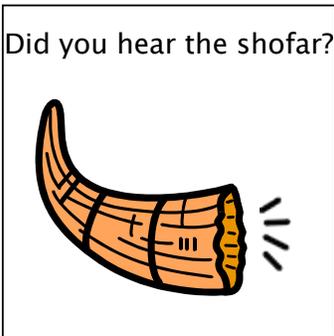
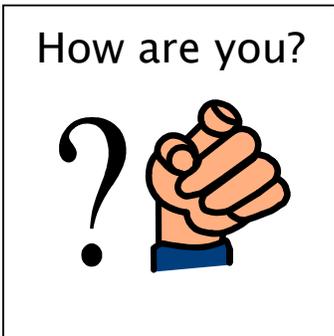
**Greeting:**



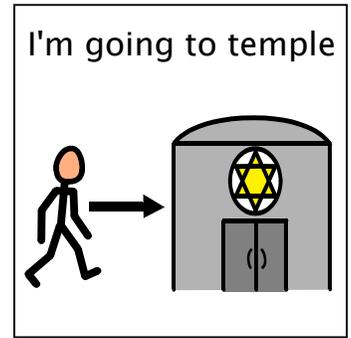
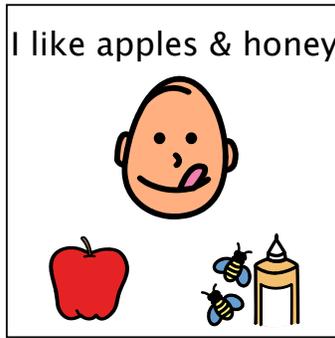
**Special Rosh Hashanah Greeting:**



**Question for Recipient:**



**Comment About Self:**



**Closing:**

