

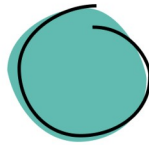
Visual Playbook

Educator Resource for SEL · SPED · ELL

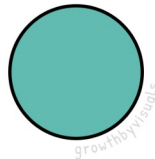
Just Make It Exist First

Visual #001 | Taking Action

JUST MAKE IT EXIST FIRST



YOU CAN MAKE IT GOOD LATER




The Big Idea


This visual makes the simplest possible argument against perfectionism: you cannot improve what does not yet exist.

An imperfect circle is still a circle. A perfect one that was never drawn is nothing at all.

Two circles, stacked. The top one is teal but unfinished, its outline incomplete, its fill offset and rough. Below it: the same circle, now clean, closed, and complete. The message is contained in two lines of text: JUST MAKE IT EXIST FIRST. YOU CAN MAKE IT GOOD LATER. The visual argues that existence is the prerequisite for quality. You cannot refine something that was never created. The imperfect circle at the top is not a failure; it is the required first step toward the circle at the bottom.

 **Student Outcome Focus:** Students distinguish between the paralysis of waiting for perfection and the productive discomfort of starting imperfectly, and apply this distinction to reduce avoidance behaviors in academic and creative tasks.

At a Glance

 **Grade Bands**
3–5 · 6–8 · 9–12 ·
Higher Ed

 **Time**
10–20 min

 **Best For**
SEL · SPED · ELL

 **Setting**
Advisory · Counseling

 **MTSS Tier**
Tier 1 · Tier 2

Framework Alignment

Framework	Competency / Principle	How This Visual Supports It
CASEL SEL	Self-Management	The two-circle sequence gives students a concrete model for managing the internal pressure to wait until conditions are perfect. Students learn to name the feeling of "not ready yet" as a form of avoidance, and practice tolerating the discomfort of beginning with an imperfect draft, sketch, or attempt.
CASEL SEL	Growth Mindset	The imperfect circle at the top is not the end state; it is the starting condition. This reframes early attempts as structurally necessary rather than evidence of inadequacy. Students internalize the idea that quality is a destination you can only reach by passing through imperfection first.
UDL	Multiple Means of Representation	The visual delivers its entire argument through two images and two lines of text. Students who struggle with abstract language access the concept immediately through the visual contrast between the unfinished and finished circle. No prior vocabulary is required.
UDL	Multiple Means of Action and Expression	The two-step circle sequence is a model students can apply to any creative or academic task. Ask students to name their own "imperfect circle" for a current project: what would it look like to make it exist first, in whatever rough form? This transfers the visual into actionable self-direction.
WIDA ELD	Levels 1-5 Scaffolded Access	At Levels 1-2, students point to the circle that represents their current work: the rough one or the finished one. At Levels 3-4, sentence frames guide participation: "My imperfect circle is ____." At Level 5, students discuss the concept with peers and apply it to a real project they are currently working on.
MTSS	Tier 1 Universal / Tier 2 Targeted	As a Tier 1 tool, this visual is appropriate for any classroom or advisory setting where students are beginning a creative or academic task. At Tier 2, counselors and resource room teachers use it with students who show consistent patterns of task avoidance or perfectionism-linked incompletion.

Discussion Questions

Select questions appropriate for your students' grade band and language level.

#	Discussion Question	Grade Band
1	Look at the two circles. What is different between them? Which one took more courage to draw?	Grades 3-5
2	Have you ever not started something because you were worried it would not turn out well? What did that feel like?	Grades 4-6
3	The visual says you can make it good later. What has to be true for that to work? Are there situations where it does not apply?	Grades 6-8
4	What is the difference between "not ready" and "afraid to start"? How do you tell them apart when you are in the middle of it?	Grades 7-9

5	Think about a project or piece of work you are proud of. Was there a version of it that looked more like the top circle? What happened between that version and the finished one?	Grades 9-12
6	In academic and professional contexts, there is often enormous pressure to only show finished work. What does that pressure cost you at the stage when the circle is still rough and the work most needs to exist?	College / Univ.

ELL Adaptation Note

ELL Adaptation Note

WIDA Levels 1-2 (Entering / Emerging): Point to the circle you are at right now. Thumbs up if the rough circle feels okay. Thumbs down if it feels scary. No words needed. The image is the full message.

WIDA Level 3 (Developing): Use sentence frames: *"My imperfect circle is ____." / "I am afraid to start because ____." / "One thing I can make exist today is ____."*

WIDA Levels 4-5 (Expanding / Bridging): Discuss: *"What does it feel like to share unfinished work?" / "When is imperfect better than nothing?"* Students write a short reflection about a time they waited too long to start something, or share with a partner.

Suggested Use by Setting

Setting	Implementation Guidance
Advisory / Homeroom	Display the visual at the start of a new unit or project. Ask students to privately name their imperfect circle: what is one thing they want to make exist this week, even in rough form? No sharing required. The act of naming it is the first step. Return to the visual at the end of the week and ask how many circles got drawn.
School Counseling	Use this visual with students who describe perfectionism, procrastination, or fear of failure. The two circles reframe the problem: the issue is not low quality, it is the belief that the rough circle should not exist. Ask: <i>"What is your imperfect circle right now, and what would it take to let it exist for just one day?"</i>
SPED / Resource Room	For students with IEP goals around task initiation, use the visual as a concrete anchor. Define <i>"making it exist"</i> in the smallest possible terms: opening the document, writing one sentence, sketching one line. Post the visual near the student's workspace as a prompt to return to when they get stuck at the start.
ELL Classroom	This visual is especially powerful for ELL students who hold back from participating because their language feels unfinished. Introduce the top circle as a metaphor for their voice right now: imperfect, but real. Normalize the rough circle as the place all communication starts. <i>"Your words today are your imperfect circle. Let them exist."</i>
Higher Ed / University	Use in writing centers, studio critiques, or first-year seminars with students who struggle to submit first drafts. The two-circle sequence gives advisors and instructors a shared visual language for the most common block in creative and academic work: the belief that the work must be good before it is allowed to exist.

Implementation Tips

- Before a project begins, ask students to draw their own imperfect circle on a sticky note and label it with the name of the task. Physically making the rough circle normalizes the idea that starting messy is part of the process.
- Use the language of the visual throughout a unit: *"Make it exist first"* becomes a class phrase for getting unstuck. When a student says they are not ready, ask: *"What would the imperfect circle version look like?"*
- Pair the visual with a two-stage submission process: a rough draft collected without a grade, followed by a revised version. Students who see the two circles understand why the rough draft is required, not optional.
- For students who are paralyzed by blank pages, define *"making it exist"* as small as possible: one sentence, one label, one sketch. The bar for the imperfect circle is existence, not quality.
- Return to the visual at the end of a unit and ask: *"Which circle did you start with, and which circle did you finish with?"* Students who can trace that journey have internalized the lesson.
- In group projects, use the visual to set norms early: *"We will make imperfect circles together before we make finished ones."* This reduces the social risk of sharing early-stage thinking.

Related Visuals – See Also

Each of these visuals approaches a related idea from a different angle. Use them in any order depending on where your students are.

Visual	Title and Connection
#002	Ugly Action Beats Unfinished Perfection: Two Ladders If students accept the idea that the rough circle needs to exist but still hesitate to act, #002 takes the argument further. It shows what a usable but imperfect attempt looks like in practice versus a perfect one that never gets finished.
#008	Perfectionism vs. Progress: Draft vs. Sent For older students or a second session, #008 shows what happens to the imperfect circle once it exists: does it stay in Drafts or does it get Sent? The two visuals work as a sequence around the same core tension.