

Communication Toolbox



Written and produced by City of York Council Specialist Early Years Teachers (SEND) 2020
seyst@york.gov.uk | www.york.gov.uk | facebook.com/cityofyork | [@CityofYork](https://twitter.com/CityofYork)



What is the Communication Toolbox?

Who
needs it?

Why do we
need it?

What is it
all about?



EYFS - A Unique Child

- Initiating activities
- Maintaining focus on their activity for a period of time
- Showing a belief that more effort or a different approach will pay off
- Making links and noticing patterns in their experience
- Plays co-operatively with an adult e.g. rolling a ball back and forth
- Copies familiar expressions e.g. 'Oh dear', 'All gone'
- Fills in the missing word or phrase in a known rhyme, story or game e.g. 'Humpty Dumpty sat on a'
- Knows things are used in different ways e.g. a ball for rolling or throwing, a toy car for pushing
- Expresses self through physical action and sound



Positive Relationships

- Play games which involve listening for a signal such as '*ready, steady...go!*'
- Join in play sensitively, fitting in with children's ideas
- Give children time to talk and think
- Engage in playful interactions that encourage young children to respond to or mimic adults
- Encourage playfulness, turn-taking and responses, including peek-a-boo and rhymes
- Use a lively voice with ups and downs to help children tune-in
- Use repeated words and phrases so children can begin to recognise particular sounds
- Encourage young children to explore and imitate sound
- Give children 'thinking time'. Wait for them to think about what they want to say and put their thoughts into words without jumping in too soon to say something yourself
- Introduce new words in the context of play and activities



Enabling Environments

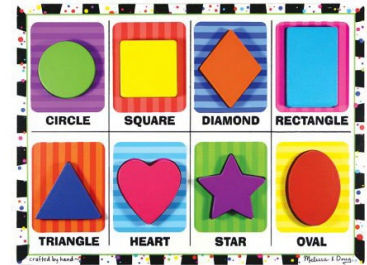
- Make sure resources are relevant to children's interests
- Plan to have 1:1 time to interact with young children when they are in an alert and responsive state and willing to engage
- Devote uninterrupted time to children when you can play with them when they are ready to engage.
- Be attentive and fully focused



Suggested resources for practising strategies

Bubbles
Vehicles
Inset puzzles
Sorting toys
Posting toys
Mark making
Musical instruments
Animals/ small world
Lycra

Sand and Water toys
Train set
Craft activities
Playdoh
Balls
Dolls
Tea set
Construction
Sensory toys



Cause and effect toys, eg pop up toys, push and go, press and pop, Click clack track, pull back and release toys, switch toys, iPad,



Ready, steady, go

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Ready, steady, go!

'There are lots of ways I can ask you to repeat something, even if I can't say "go".'



There are all sorts of repetitive activities that you can use to practise this, such as going down a slide, rolling a ball or operating a cause/effect toy. Engage the child's attention and then say, 'Ready, steady.....', leaving a pause for the 'go'. At first, as soon as they show any signs that they are anticipating the action by making eye-contact, gesturing or vocalising, for example, say, 'Go!' and complete the action immediately, to encourage the child to do this again.

Remember to give the child time to respond.

TOP TIP: At first, until it is fully established, practise this with the same favourite activity and then start to use it in different games.

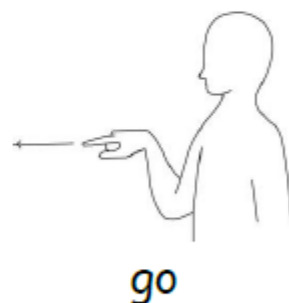


Ready, steady, go!

You may want to use this card in conjunction with the following cards. Consult with the Specialist Early Years Teachers (SEN) or child's Speech and Language Therapist for further advice or clarification of strategies.

- Engagement (9)
- Missing Words (21)
- More/again (22)
- Motivation (24)
- O.W.L. (28)
- Repetition, repetition (33)
- Running commentary (38)
- Say less and emphasise (39)
- Special Interests (43)
- Stop! (47)
- Turn-taking (48)
- Wait (51)

Use the following Makaton signs as appropriate:



Why is this strategy useful?

What skills does it promote?

What other activities could you use to practice this?



Early Communication and Language

The National Strategies

Stage	Listening and Attention	Understanding (Receptive Language)	Talking (Expressive Language)	Social Communication
0-11 months	Turns toward a familiar sound then locates range of sounds with accuracy. Listens to, distinguishes and responds to intonations and sounds of voices. Quietens or alerts to the sound of speech. Fleeting Attention – not under child's control, new stimuli takes whole attention.	Stops and looks when hears own name. (by 12 months <i>ED</i>)	Gradually develops speech sounds (babbling) to communicate with adults; says sounds like 'baba, nana, gaga'. (by 11 months <i>ED</i>)	Gazes at faces and copies facial movements, e.g. sticking out tongue. Concentrates intently on faces and enjoys interaction. Uses voice, gesture, eye contact and facial expression to make contact with people and keep their attention. (by 12 months <i>ED</i>)
8-20 months	Concentrates intently on an object or activity of own choosing for short periods. Pays attention to dominant stimulus – easily distracted by noises or other people talking. Moves whole bodies to sounds they enjoy, such as music or a regular beat. Has a strong exploratory impulse.	Responds to the different things said when in a familiar context with a special person (e.g. 'Where's Mummy?', 'Where's your nose?'). Understanding of single words in context is developing, e.g. 'cup', 'milk', 'daddy'	Uses single words. (by 16 months <i>ED</i>) Frequently imitates words and sounds. Enjoys babbling and increasingly experiments with using sounds and words to communicate for a range of purposes (e.g. teddy, more, no, bye-bye)	Likes being with familiar adult and watching them. Developing the ability to follow an adult's body language, including pointing and gesture. Learns that their voice and actions have effects on others. Uses pointing with eye gaze to make requests, and to share an interest. (by 18 months <i>ED</i>)
16-26 months	Listens to and enjoys rhythmic patterns in rhymes and stories. Enjoys rhymes and demonstrates listening by trying to join in with actions or vocalisations. Rigid attention – may appear not to hear.	Selects familiar objects by name and will go and find objects when asked, or identify objects from a group.	Beginning to put two words together (e.g. 'want ball', 'more juice') (by 24 months <i>ED</i>) Uses different types of everyday words (nouns, verbs and adjectives, e.g. banana, go, sleep, hot) Beginning to ask simple questions.	Gradually able to engage in 'pretend' play with toys (supports child to imagine another's point of view). Looks to others for responses which confirm, contribute to, or challenge their understanding.
22-36 months	Single channelled attention. Can shift to a different task if attention fully obtained – using child's name helps focus. (by 36 months <i>ED</i>) Listens with interest to the noises adults make when they read stories. Recognises and responds to many familiar sounds e.g. turning to a knock on the door, looking at or going to the door.	Identifies action words by pointing to the right picture, e.g., 'Who's jumping?' (by 30 months <i>ED</i>) Understands 'who', 'what', 'where' in simple questions (e.g. 'Who's that? What's that? Where is it?'). Developing understanding of simple concepts (e.g. big/little)	Learns new words very rapidly and is able to use them in communicating. Uses action, sometimes with limited talk, that is largely concerned with the 'here and now' (e.g. reaches toward toy, saying 'I have it'). Uses a variety of questions (e.g. what, where, who). Uses simple sentences (e.g. 'Mummy gonna work'). Beginning to use word endings (e.g. going, cats)	Uses language as a powerful means of widening contacts, sharing feelings, experiences and thoughts. Holds a conversation, jumping from topic to topic. Enjoys being with and talking to adults and other children. Interested in others' play and will join in. Responds to the feelings of others.
30-50 months	Listens to others in one to one or small groups, when conversation interests them. Listens to stories with increasing attention and recall. Joins in with repeated refrains and anticipates key events and phrases in rhymes and stories. Focusing attention – still listen or do, but can shift own attention. Is able to follow directions (if not intently focused on own choice of activity).	Understands use of objects (e.g. 'What do we use to cut things?') Shows understanding of prepositions such as 'under', 'on top', 'behind' by carrying out an action or selecting correct picture. Beginning to understand 'why' and 'how' questions.	Beginning to use more complex sentences to link thoughts (e.g. using and, because). Can retell a simple past event in correct order (e.g. went down slide, hurt finger). Uses talk to connect ideas, explain what is happening and anticipate what might happen next, recall and relive past experiences. Questions why things happen and gives explanations. Asks e.g. who, what, when, how. Uses a range of tenses (e.g. play, playing, will play, played)	Beginning to accept the needs of others, with support. Can initiate conversations. Shows confidence in linking up with others for support and guidance. Talks freely about their home and community. Forms friendships with other children.
40-60+ months	Sustains attentive listening, responding to what they have heard with relevant comments, questions or actions. Maintains attention, concentrates and sits quietly when appropriate. Two-channelled attention – can listen and do for short span. Integrated attention – can listen and do in range of situations with range of people; varies according to the demands of the task.	Understands humour, e.g. nonsense rhymes, jokes. Demonstrates understanding of 'how?' and 'why?' questions by giving explanations. Able to follow a story without pictures or props. Understands instructions containing sequencing words; first...after...last, and more abstract concepts – long, short, tall, hard soft, rough.	Extends vocabulary, especially by grouping and naming, exploring the meaning and sounds of new words. Links statements and sticks to a main theme or intention. Uses language to imagine and recreate roles and experiences in play situations. Uses talk to organise, sequence and clarify thinking, ideas, feelings and events. Introduces a storyline or narrative into their play.	Has confidence to speak to others about their own wants, interests and opinions. Initiates conversation, attends to and takes account of what others say. Explains own knowledge and understanding, and asks appropriate questions of others. Shows awareness of the listener when speaking. Expresses needs / feelings in appropriate ways. Forms good relationships with adults and peers. Works as part of a group or class, taking turns



Ready Steady Go

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Ready, steady, go!

'There are lots of ways I can ask you to repeat something, even if I can't say "go".'

















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Remember to give the child time to respond.

TOP TIP: At first, until it is fully established, practise this with the same favourite activity and then start to use it in different games.



Considerations

Things I'd Like You To Know About Me ~~~~~	
 Things I like...	(Photo)
	
 Things I don't like ...	
 Things I am good at ...	
 Things I need help with ...	
 I learn best when ...	
 I communicate by ...	
 You also need to know	



More/again

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More/again

'I want that to
happen again
because I liked it.'



You can use this in lots of favourite games such as swinging, tickling, rhymes and songs, chasing, blowing bubbles and at snack time. Just stop the action or wait until the child has finished the food/drink. Then ask and sign, 'What do you want? Want..... **more?**' or ask 'Again?' Leave a pause before saying 'more/again' to give him/her a chance to make eye-contact, gesture or sign, or to say the word. As soon as you see or hear their communication, start the action again or give a little bit more food/drink.

TOP TIP:

When teaching this at snack time, just give small amounts of food/drink at a time to create more opportunities to practise.

You need to start by finding out what the child is really interested in or finds highly motivating.



Making Choices

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Making choices

'I can't tell you what I want until you show me what's on offer'



Providing structured choices helps children to use their language in a functional way and models what they need to say to get what they want.

Start by offering a choice of two toys, food items or activities and show the objects or pictures as you say the words. Ask, 'Which one? **Car** or **teddy**? When he/she reaches out or indicates in some way e.g. by eye-pointing, say 'Want **teddy**. Want.....(leaving a gap for him/her to communicate verbally or non-verbally). As soon as an attempt has been made to communicate, hand the object to the child at the same time saying, ' **teddy**'. To offer a choice between activities, either show the actual areas, use an object of reference (e.g. spade for the sand play, cup for the home-play area) or show a photo/symbol.

TOP TIP: To make this easier at first give a choice between something you know the child really likes and something you know they won't choose.



Mirroring

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Mirroring

"You are doing the same as I am!"

"If I do this, will you still copy me? This is fun."



Copying a child's actions can be a really effective way of engaging them socially.

When a child is playing and exploring, get down to their level and do exactly what they are doing: for example, running their hands over a textured surface; splashing in water; or tapping an object on a surface. The child will soon notice that you are copying them and may look towards you or smile. You may also find that they try out some actions just to see if you will copy them again!

TOP TIP: Watch the child's reactions very carefully so that you can follow their lead. If they make any sounds, copy those too.



Running Commentary

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Running commentary

'I like it when you notice what I'm doing and model some useful words for me.'



This is so easy to do and is a really effective way of modelling language. Simply watch what the child is doing and give a commentary e.g. 'Scooping sand... into the bucket...in...in...in, bucket's full....pouring out...hands in the sand....pushing sand...dumper truck coming...brmmm, brmmm ...' or 'Running, running, running, climbing up....at the top...sliding down...wheee'

Children usually love it when you notice and talk about what they're doing and often they'll give more eye-contact or start doing new things within their play to get you to carry on talking.

TOP TIP: Just start by trying this for five-minutes a day...it feels strange at first if you've never tried it but then just becomes second nature!



Ways of using the Communication Toolbox



Ways of Using the Communication Toolbox



Ideas for Early Years Settings

- Make up a pack of all the cards relevant to an individual child's needs and share it with all practitioners so that they know what to target in the different areas of provision.
- Choose one card and work on one particular skill across a range of activities and areas of provision.
- Choose a card and have a 'strategy of the week' where everyone can practise what to do and say. Display in areas of provision to prompt adults working with the child.
- Use individual cards as discussion points as part of staff meetings/training days to look at how you can incorporate the approaches into everyday provision and promote inclusion.
- It may be that the contents of the Toolbox change over time as the child's language and communication progresses



Ideas for Practising the Toolbox at Home



Ways of Using the Communication Toolbox



Ideas for Parents/carers

- Make up a pack of all the cards relevant to your child and use it to help plan and carry out play activities and everyday routines.
- Choose one card and work on it in a whole range of situations until you and your child have mastered the skill.
- Choose a card and have a 'strategy of the week' where everyone in the family can practise what to do and say. Display the card where everyone can see it as a reminder to use it, for example, on the fridge.
- Share the relevant cards with the child's pre-school or childminder so that everyone is using a consistent approach.
- Share the cards with grandparents and extended family to increase their understanding of your child's needs and the strategies you are using.



Ideas for practising the Toolbox card at home

Child's Name: **Jack**

Toolbox Card:

More/again

- At tea time when Jack wants more banana
- On the swings when Jack wants to be pushed again
- In a tickling game when Jack wants to be tickled again
- When Jack wants more milk



How did you get on?

Child's Name: **Jack**

Toolbox Card:

More/again

On Monday I practised with Mummy on the swing. I looked at mummy when she stopped pushing me on the swing and I wanted her to do it again. I did it 3 times.

On Tuesday at tea time I copied a 'more' sign when I wanted another piece of banana. I watched Daddy when he signed and said 'More?'

On Wednesday we practised at tea time again but I was too tired and I just watched Daddy when he was signing.

On Thursday and Friday we didn't have time to practise at all as I had some appointments at the hospital.

On Sunday Granny played a tickling game. When she stopped, I wriggled and smiled at her to tell her I wanted her to do it again.



Stick With It

'If you do the same thing
lots of times, in the same
way, I'll get the hang of it.'



Questions and Follow Up

- seyst@york.gov.uk
- [Survey monkey link](#)



A word cloud featuring the phrase "thank you" in various languages and scripts. The central text "thank you" is rendered in large, bold, red lowercase letters. Surrounding it are numerous other expressions of gratitude in different colors and sizes, including:

- gracias
- arigatô
- ačiū
- dziękuj
- bedank
- blagodaram
- rahmet
- mèsi
- xiexie
- tanemirt
- trugarez
- dan
- moachakkeram
- faafetai lava
- kop khun krap
- dankon
- děkuji
- spas
- gràcie
- kiitos
- grazzi
- shukriya
- ありがとう
- kia ora
- mamnun
- barka
- शुक्रिया
- gràcies
- bayarlalaa
- σας ευχαριστώ
- obrigada
- chnorakaloutioun
- tapadh leat
- sulpay
- teşekkür ederim
- bayarlalaa
- σας ευχαριστώ
- obrigado
- chokrane
- rahmat
- dakujem
- misaoatra
- welalîn
- mercé
- najis tuke
- köszönöm
- ar كثر
- terima kasih
- == 卐 == 卐 ==
- sagolun
- murakoze
- taiku
- mahalo
- didi madloba
- tau
- dankie
- manana
- diolch
- djere dieuf