

Guide to Using the Communication Board

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INCLUSION IRELAND

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Photo Explainer on how to use the Communication Board



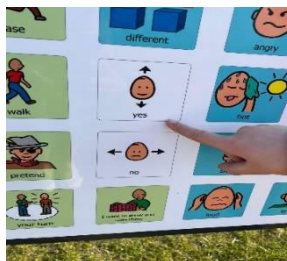
Step 1 Two children using a Communication Board. First child points to a symbol on the board to show the second child.



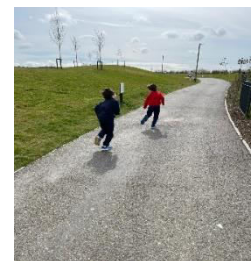
Step 2 Two children using a Communication Board. The second child points to a symbol on the board to respond to the first child.



Step 1 A close up of first child's finger pointing to the symbol on the board for 'chase' to show the second child.



Step 2 A close up of second child's finger pointing to the symbol on the board for 'yes' to respond to the first child.



Step 3 Two children playing 'chase'.



Step 1 A close up of first child's finger pointing to the symbol on the board for 'rest' to show the second child.



Step 2 A close up of second child's finger pointing to the symbol on the board for 'bench' to show the first child.



Step 3 Two children resting on a bench.



What is a Communication Board?

The Communication Board is one example of what is called augmentative and alternative communication, or AAC. It contains pictures or symbols of typical items and activities relevant to a setting, in this case a playground.

When you use facial expressions or gestures instead of talking that is a form of AAC. If you write a note and pass it to a friend, that's AAC.

People with difficulties speaking may need AAC to help them communicate. Other examples of AAC are things like writing words, using gestures, using hand signs (an example is Lámh) or an electronic device. AAC includes all of the ways we share our ideas and thoughts without talking. Most people who rely on AAC to communicate use a combination of different AAC.

An aided system of AAC uses something external to help. There are two types of aided systems, basic and high-tech. A pen and notebook is an example of a basic aided system. Pointing to words or pictures on a Communication Board is also considered a basic aided system. Touching words or pictures on a computer screen that then says the words is an example of a high-tech aided system.

How do I use a Communication Board?

It's important to remember that this is an alternative way of communicating. The best way for a person to learn to use a Communication Board is if someone shows them how:

1. **Model:** Point to the symbol/word you want to communicate. When introducing something new it needs to be modelled. Show the person how to point to the board to select a word. Say the word. And put the word into a context that makes sense. Example point to 'bench', say bench and then add 'let's sit on the bench'.
2. **Practice:** Use the board lots of times during your visit to the playground and over many visits. You can also print out the board at home to use and gain more practice.
3. Give the person **time** to learn and make sure the process is fun! It may take some time to learn how to use the Communication Board. Some people pick it up right away while others may need time.



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4. **Pause** and give the person an opportunity to use the board. They may quickly model what you have done or point to symbols/words they wish to communicate themselves.
5. **Interact** with the person for example if they select a symbol/word themselves. Confirm you understand and put the word into context. For example, if the person selects 'swing' you could respond by saying 'ok let's go to the swing'. If the person points to 'I' + 'like' + 'slide' you could respond by pointing and saying 'I' 'like' 'seesaw'.
6. **Prompt:** For example, point to the word 'play' and ask the person 'what would you like to play?'
7. Use the board for a **variety of interactions:** Help the person understand how the board can be used for lots of different messages (to ask for things, to talk about things (I' + 'like'), to describe ('fast' or 'slow'), to ask questions ('where') etc.). It also shows everyone that the Communication Board offers a means to talk about many things.

General tips

A Communication Board for a person to use at home or school can be customised and expanded based on a person's age, education, occupation, and interests. Communication boards at home for example can be used for routines, making choices, communicating needs and feelings. Communication Boards can also be used to support literacy development and to increase vocabulary.

Get everyone involved! Tell people about AAC and this example of a Communication Board. Show them how it might be useful for your child/young person.

Talk to health professionals and educators in your young person's life about AAC and exciting ways to support shared communication.

