

Speech and Language Therapy

Using a Communication Book

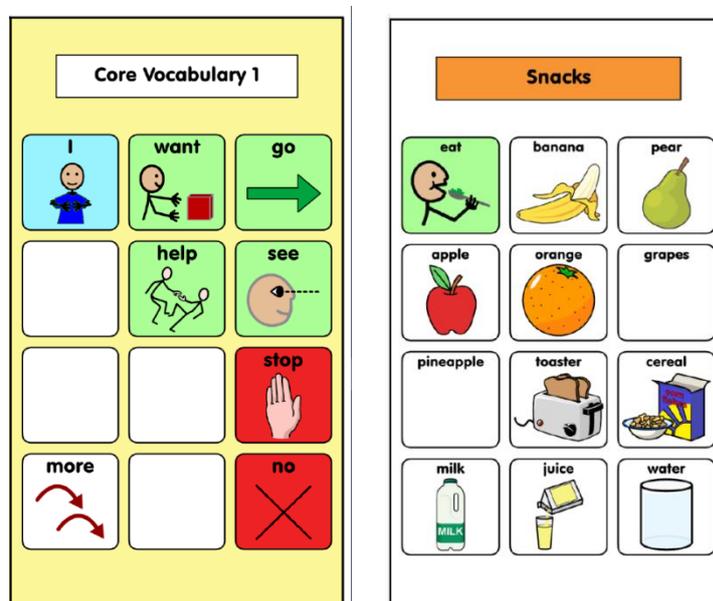
A communication book is a book or folder that helps people to communicate using symbols or pictures. They are used to help people who can understand more than they can say or to support their speech if it is not always clear. They also support children with their language development.

What does a Communication Book look like?

A Communication Book is typically made up of A5 or A4 sized pages in a folder that contains lots of different symbols your child will use to communicate with you.

When you open the communication book, there will be two sets of symbols, one on each page. On the left hand side is the 'Core Vocabulary'. The core vocabulary appears in the same place on every left hand page in the Communication Book, as this is the vocabulary children will always need to use to build sentences.

On the right hand side of each page are symbols of items your child might request. They are split up into different categories to make it easier for both you and your child to find the right symbols, for example "snacks". Each right hand page in the book will have a different category on it.



Top Tips for using a Communication Book:

- Model by pointing to the corresponding symbols in your child's communication book at the same time as talking.
- Remember that the communication book is for chatting and commenting. Avoid using the book to 'test', e.g. "Can you find the symbol for book?"
- If asking questions, try to ask open ended questions ("What can you see?") rather than closed or yes/no questions ("Is that a dog?")
- Do not worry if you are not using the exact grammar.
- As your child's skills develop, encourage them to continue to grow and develop their language. Encourage and model:
 - Sentence building – making longer and more complex sentences, e.g. If your child says, "want ice-cream", you could model "I want chocolate ice-cream".
- Initially, your child will use their Communication Book just to make requests, while they become familiar with using a Communication Book to communicate. Eventually, they will be able to use it for a range of different communication functions such as:
 - requesting ('I want')
 - commenting ('It was fun')
 - informing ("I saw a movie")
 - questioning, ("Who is it?")
 - labelling ("Red shirt")
 - responding to questions and comments
- Provide many opportunities for your child to use their communication book in a variety of situations including games, structured activities, sharing news etc.
- Encourage the individual to use their book for social chat as well. Model the use of continuers and fillers, e.g. "Uh, huh", "Cool!", "Yeah!", "Tell me more".

- The Communication Book should be kept with your child whenever possible, or somewhere that is easily accessible for your child to leave it if necessary.
- Continue to add to your Communication Book, as the individual's vocabulary and understanding grows and develops. Ask your child's class teacher for support with this.

Activities and games ideas for Communication Book Users:

- Routines: Encourage your child to choose clothes, snacks, where to go, what to play with, etc.
- Instruction-giving games: Use the symbols to tell each other what to do with objects in front of you.
- Barrier/Guessing games: Use the book to ask questions and make guesses about objects/pictures you cannot see.
- Play-based games: Ask your child to choose what to buy in a shopping game, what clothes to put in the washing machine, what toy food to have on the plate.
- News: Ask questions about what your child did, with who, and where.
- Categories: Can your child sort items into categories using their communication book pages e.g. sorting toy food into colour pots.