

Communication Decision Chart

To plan intervention, we need to first identify which area or areas of communication are difficult for the child and their level of functioning in each area. In this chart, you will find communication has been divided into three big areas – imitation and use of communication rules; expressive communication and receiving communication. Communication development is divided broadly into three levels: pre lingual, single word expressions and expressions using two words or more. Remember that it is quite common to find that children are at different levels in expression, understanding and use of communication skills and good intervention requires that we begin at the level of the child in each area of communication.

Observe the child to see if they are able to do the things in the first column. If there are some things the child cannot do, try the intervention suggestions from the second column. If the child is able to do everything in the left column, continue with the next higher level.

Remember that children get bored easily, so do the activity for short periods and stop before the child loses attention!

Prelingual child: Imitation and understanding and using the rules of communication

Imitation is a very important foundation skill. As memory, body control and body concepts improve, children are able to attend, retain, reproduce and even expand on actions and sounds. Using naturally occurring situations to model the behaviour and encourage copying is the best way to help the child develop appropriate skills in using conversation rules.

Assessing child capacity	Suggestions for intervention
Child imitates motor actions – stamping, clapping	Imitate actions the child is already able to do when it happens spontaneously and try to get the child to copy you in turn
Child imitates oral motor actions and non-speech sounds – smacking lips together, sneezing	Play with child in front of a mirror exaggerating movements and sounds and exhalations, letting them touch the mouth and nose and throat as needed.
Child imitates vowel sounds and simple combinations – bibibibi, papapapa	Use simple words combined with actions and encourage the child to copy you – call the “cat come come come”; play a movement game saying jump jump jump or up up up and so on
Child imitates 1 syllable words	
Child shows objects to others for comment	
Child gets people’s interest while pointing to others or things	Model the desired behaviour – make eye contact with the child, hold up a toy and get child to look at it.
Child shows clear dislike for specific things	Hand the toy to the child and see if he will copy,

Based on Bailey & Wolery (1989). Assessing infants and pre-schoolers with handicaps, Pg: 353 – 357. Merrill, New York

<p>or people by using gestures and words or sounds</p> <p>Child has jargon like speech and vocalizes with intonation</p>	<p>Reward with lots of attention to the object shown.</p> <p>Model refusal or dislike by pushing away and saying no and encouraging the child to copy. Slowly only use the word.</p> <p>Encourage the child to copy sounds, exaggerating intonation and rhythm</p>
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Pre-lingual child: expression before the first real words

We use many ways to express ourselves – our sounds, words, gestures, body language and expressions. As children develop an interest in the world and understand that people can help them get what they would like, they are motivated to use these together more and more effectively to express themselves. Growing control over their body allows them to use greater variety in gestures and sounds so that they can express more specifically what they want.

Assessing child capacity	Suggestions for intervention
<p>Child tries actively to get the attention of an adult by using voice or gestures</p> <p>Child tries actively get the attention of an adult to meet basic needs like hunger pain or sleep</p> <p>Child responds with voice or gesture to adult’s actions such as reaching for outstretched hands, or asking for an activity to resume or to stop</p> <p>Child uses voice or actions to participate in simple play such as making the sounds of animals in a song (e.g.and the dog says ...) or actions in a rhyme (e.g. hands go up, up, up)</p> <p>Child uses voice, gestures or expressions to reject, ask or get attention</p> <p>Child uses gestures along with voice to express self (e.g. shakes head or finger and says uhuhuh for no)</p>	<p>If the child does not try in any way to get attention, wait until there is a vocalization or gesture from the child and reward immediately and consistently with brief attention, moving away quickly so that the child thinks to vocalize again.</p> <p>Encourage interaction when the child is likely to express a physical need – at meal time, give a very tiny bit of food, hold it close. Encourage the child to move hand to the food or make a sound and reward immediately with the food.</p> <p>Pause during a game that that child is enjoying and model a gesture or sound the child can make. Reward any attempt to copy you by continuing the game.</p> <p>Use an action or sound that the child randomly makes and start a game around it – for example if the child pats his hands together, sing “clap your hands”</p> <p>Use motivating activities – swinging a child up in the air for example, - and assign a simply action and sound/ word. Model and encourage the child to copy and reward with the activity.</p>

Based on Bailey & Wolery (1989). Assessing infants and pre-schoolers with handicaps, Pg: 353 – 357. Merrill, New York

Child uses speech like vocalization	
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Prelingual child: understanding people’s communication

Children need to hear and understand many words before they can begin to use them meaningfully. Use gestures and actions in combination with words and slowly fade away the gestures so that child is following the spoken word. Consistency in vocabulary and routines will help children who are struggling to develop strong and rich receptive vocabulary.

Assessing child capacity	Suggestions for intervention
<p>Child is interested or attentive to voice</p> <p>Child is interested and examines objects and people at which the adult points</p> <p>Child interacts with an object the adult points or looks at</p> <p>Child looks at objects and people the adult names</p> <p>Child looks for person or object that is not present</p> <p>Child anticipates a routine activity from a typical word or expression used – have num num, go bye bye</p> <p>Child follows a command involving an action word without other clues like gestures – e.g. come here, throw the ball</p>	<p>If the child does not respond to voice, first find out what gets the child’s attention and what the child seems to enjoy. Often touch will work – squeezing the hand gently, patting or pressing the feet. Now, before you do this, come close and speak a few words to the child and follow immediately with the touch he likes. Each person can pick a different way to interact, each one talking a few words before and while doing the physical interaction.</p> <p>Shake the object to get the child’s attention. Then move it, point to it and see if the child will attend. Encourage all responses. Name objects the child reaches for or shows interest in spontaneously. Remove it, bring it back, name it and encourage the child to reach or look at it. Hide objects by partially covering it in front of the child. Name the object and ask him to find it.</p> <p>Be consistent in caregiving and play routines and consistently use simple words, repeating them often as the child participates in the activity.</p> <p>Say and do the action – jump jump jump – point to the child and as the child copies, say the words again. Slowly say the words but don’t do the action, and see if the child will remember and jump. Encourage with small gestures or movements until the child can perform by simply listening to the words.</p>

Child using One-word: Imitation and understanding and using the rules of communication

Assessing child capacity	Suggestions for intervention
<p>Child imitates 2 syllable words</p> <p>Child imitates 2 word combinations</p> <p>Child uses word approximations appropriately</p> <p>Child uses words or word approximations to express many ideas - possessions (my cat) questions (where cat?) action (cat jump) and locations (cat there)</p> <p>Child appropriately uses at least 20 to 50 words or word approximations that are consistent (e.g. ight for light) The words include names of things, people, places actions, questions, position, feeling and so on.</p> <p>Child appropriately chains single words with pauses in between the words</p>	<p>First ensure the child can repeat or use a number of one syllable words and sounds. Use two one syllable sounds that the child already knows and combine with a small gap, in a rhythmic way, pointing to the person, or showing the action – e.g. ba- by. Do the same with words that the child already knows making a game using actions and watching to see if the child can say the right word combinations independently – pat cat, pat dog, rub cat, rub dog, pat baby,</p> <p>Model using words in the correct situation – eg. “fan off” as you turn off the fan – and then encourage the child to copy you. Watch for the child to perform an action and label it clearly – baby cry. Use different forms such as questions and comments - fall down?</p> <p>Accept the sounds or words the child uses and help shape the word pronunciation. Write down the words the child already uses and focus on filling the category in which the child doesn’t have many words (e.g. lots of question forms</p> <p>Model the word combinations in the correct situation, using rhythm, intonation, and play to make the pauses shorter and more natural. Encourage the child to copy you and reward all attempts</p>

Child using One-word: expression in communication

Assessing child capacity	Suggestions for intervention
<p>Child uses known words to express self in different communicative situations – asking, commenting, telling...</p> <p>Child uses speech to initiate a topic based on the activity and</p> <p>Child continues to talk about a topic over three turns.</p>	<p>Create situations that require the communicative functions you want to develop. Model the word use and then encourage copying. E.g. take turns while planting in the garden – in your turn, comment, “dig” as you are digging or ask “water please” when you need it, each time giving the child a turn and encouraging the child to copy you. Comment as you play together – mamma dig, big scoop! , water,</p>

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<p>Child initiates familiar play routines using a word</p> <p>Child participates and keeps interest in interactive play or conversation for at least 2 minutes</p> <p>Child takes at least three or four turns during an interaction and seems to know how to wait for turn and give a turn.</p>	<p>please? Ooh, wet!!! And so on. Encourage the child to imitate words and ask questions or make comments to keep the topic going.</p> <p>Establish very clear words and signs for play routines that the child loves. For e.g. hands raised, and fingers moving together with the words tickle, tickle tickle to start a tickle game. Ask the child, what shall we play? And if there is no response, put your hands in this position and prompt with the starting sound “ti..” to see if the child will say the words. Reward any attempt with the game, while modelling the correct word again.</p> <p>Slowly increase interaction time keeping the child’s attention and encouraging turn taking. You may have to take very short turns to capture and keep the child’s interest through several turns. Gradually increase the time of each turn.</p>
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Child using one word: understanding people’s communication

Assessing child capacity	Suggestions for intervention
<p>Child follows two word instruction – throw ball, kiss mama.</p> <p>Child follows a range of meaning in two word sentences – agent –action (baby clap); possessor object (baby’s doll); action object (hug doll)</p> <p>Child shows understanding of both words – for e.g. can respond correctly to hug doll and hug mama; baby’s nose, doll’s nose</p> <p>Child can respond to two, two word instructions. For example, kiss the doll and the bear or hug the doll and kiss the bear.</p> <p>Child can respond to simple question forms – what, where, who,</p>	<p>Play a turn taking game with a doll or any toy. Play a turn taking game e.g: say, kiss doll , then perform the action and before you pass the doll to the child, ask – what will you do.. model “Kiss doll” and then give the doll to the child. Use objects, actions and routines known to the child. Slowly expand the game of “show me” to include a range of two word sentences.</p> <p>Slow down the sentence if you see the child getting confused or only attending to one of the two words.</p> <p>Using the vocabulary the child already has and familiar play routines, increase the instructions first to a single action but two objects – eg. Kiss the doll and mama and then to different actions and objects – e.g. kiss the doll and hug the bear.</p> <p>Use existing vocabulary and known people, objects and situations to practice and model question forms. Including slightly older children in the game can help with modelling appropriate responses.</p>

Child using Two-word: Imitation and understanding and using the rules of communication

Assessing child capacity	Suggestions for intervention
<p>Child can listen and repeat three word sentences</p> <p>Child can listen and copy grammatical markers – car cars; run running</p> <p>Child uses more than 50 words with confidence</p> <p>Child uses some prepositions</p> <p>Child uses some grammatical markers such as plural, possessives, pronouns or tense</p>	<p>Combine actions with three word sentences to help the child focus on the meaning and the words. Use pictures or signs to help children who have trouble keeping attention or remembering sequence. Play games where the child has to notice and match or copy starting and ending sounds.</p> <p>Play a lot of games of finding, pointing, naming and doing based on two to four word questions – who is sleeping? Where is baba? – introducing more and more things, places, people, feelings and actions through games, pictures and real things around you.</p> <p>Conversations can be built around the child’s focus of interest, play and actions. Construct simple, correct sentences: Mamma is writing; that’s baby’s book! ; put it in the basket. “ Take turns for saying and doing – for example, clean up the room, taking turns to pick one item, bring it to the basket and say, in the basket.</p>

Child using two-word: expression in communication

Assessing child capacity	Suggestions for intervention
<p>Child uses words to respond to questions and to request information</p> <p>In play child switches roles – e.g. runs away when chased, but switches roles and chases the other</p> <p>In conversation, the child maintains the topic by contributing some comment, observation or question.</p> <p>The child repeats self if the adult does not understand.</p> <p>Child talks of topics that are not current</p>	<p>Create situations where the child must ask or request to complete a task. Model responses if the child doesn’t respond to questions. Using a peer at a higher communicative level helps in this kind of modelling.</p> <p>Play games such as hide and seek where the roles are easily switched</p> <p>Use picture books to help expand the opportunities for discussion and commenting. Take your turn and then wait for the child. If the child doesn’t take a turn, point to a picture and if needed prompt “that boy is...”</p> <p>After an activity, make a simple experience book, so the child can easily remember and relate a past event.</p>

Child using two word: understanding people’s communication

Assessing child capacity	Suggestions for intervention
<p>Child responds to simple yes or no questions (is this a shoe?)</p> <p>Child understands in, on and under</p> <p>Child understands relations expressed in several word sentences – dog ate the cookie; take the ball out!</p> <p>Child responds to complex questions – what do you do with a toothbrush? How do we brush our teeth?</p> <p>Child follows two part instructions relating to their activity in context– put away the toy and bring me a book.</p> <p>Child follows two part instructions not relating to current activity.</p>	<p>Use toys and pretend games or pictures to model yes no responses to questions and concepts like in, on and under.</p> <p>Use words that the child already knows, label as you act out sentences.</p> <p>Real life situations and picture books can both be used to help a child discuss and respond to more complex questions.</p> <p>Use gestures/ signs / picture clues along with the words to help a child retain the instructions. Use regular routines to make it easier. Slowly reduce the assistance until the child is able to attend to the instruction, understand it and remember it long enough to do it.</p>