



Supporting children to communicate

What is Aided Language Input?

Aided language Input (ALI) is a communication strategy where a communication partner teaches the meaning of symbols.

The adult models communication by pointing to visual symbols for 1 or 2 key words they are saying.

ALI at school

We have been providing ALI to your child through 2 key communication systems.

Staff Symbol use

All staff have symbols for important every day works (Core Words) available on their person. They use these symbols to provide ALI throughout the school day.



Key Word Displays

Every classroom has a visual display board that contains words, signs and symbols for Core words, and words that related to the topics the children are learning (Theme words). All staff working with your child have received training in how to use these visual displays to provide ALI throughout learning activities.

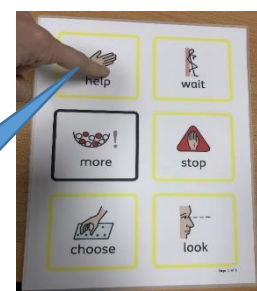


We are also working with your child on using a communication book at school. Each child's communication book has been specifically tailored to their needs and contains Core words, Theme words and any other words that are important to them.

The adults working with your children have had training in how to use ALI through your child's personal communication book.

The adults are constantly modelling communication by pointing to visual symbols for 1 or 2 key words they are saying to your child.

They are showing your child how they can use their communication book to make comments, request what they need, and initiate interaction with others.



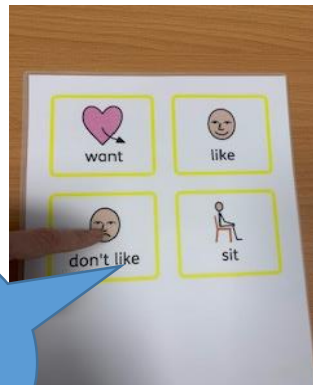
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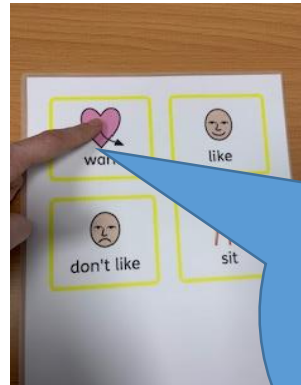
Our goal is to maximize opportunities to teach the use of the symbols and vocabulary so that students have the best chance of learning.

This requires adults taking advantage of every communication opportunity. There are endless opportunities to teach communication at home. For example snack times and lunch/dinner provide natural opportunities to help students learn how to use “want” “help”, and “more” to communicate.

Meal times also provide opportunities to encourage children to communicate that they do NOT like something when you see them turn their head, or that they WANT something you can see they are enjoying.



You don't like
carrots – oh
no!



After offering a choices
e.g. peas/broccoli and the
child has chosen, you
could model 'I want (and
then the choice the child
made)' to show them how
they can use the symbol
want to make a request

Top tips for supporting children to learn to communicate

- *Give plenty of time*

It's ok to allow children to just watch while we use the communication aids ourselves (we 'model'). It is really good if the child is watching while you are modelling - they are learning.

When people learn language, it takes time. We give babies time to babble and don't expect that they will talk within a few weeks. In fact they take up to 18months.

The child cannot spontaneously learn something that is not there within their environments, so we need to provide lots of opportunities for the child to see their communication book being used.

- *Give plenty of words*

The more words we give, the more likely it is that the word they are thinking of will be there.



If the word is there, the child is more likely to use it.

It also makes it easier for us to use the communication book with the child.

- *Interpret facial expressions, gestures and signs, vocalisations, as well as symbols as communication.*
- *Model* (using the communication aid ourselves) to show what we have interpreted.

e.g. if the child is pointing to a biscuit, you could say and use the child's communication book to model 'I want biscuit' and give them the biscuit.

By modelling, children have the opportunity to learn how they could communicate in a way that is easier for everyone to understand.

- *Wait for the child to point to the system themselves instead of using hand over hand.*

This way we know that if the child has pointed, it is the child expressing themselves instead of us guessing what the child is thinking.

Children can become over-reliant on a hand over hand prompt, so we want to teach them to communicate independently from the beginning!

Some tips for using aided language at home:

We have provided you with a copy of the symbols we use at school for Core Words (which can also be found in your child's diary). These are symbols and words that can be used functionally in lots of different situations.

Remember...

- We all take time to learn a new skill, including using a communication system. No one would expect to be fluent in French after one week of lessons.
- Making mistakes is good. Don't worry if it takes time to find the symbol you are looking for or you point to the wrong symbol. Children need to learn what to do if they make a mistake too and can enjoy watching you make mistakes-an opportunity for laughter.
- Look for the pictures instead of the words. Our eyes are quicker at looking for colour/ shape than reading.
- Try using the symbols we have provided for just one thing and repeat until you get confident (for example, using the symbol 'choose' at snack time when you are giving



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your child 2 options to choose from. Then experiment. As your confidence increases, you will begin to use for a range of messages; be creative.

- Can't find a word? Don't be scared to add words. Vocabulary is constantly developing so ask your child's teacher to make new or specific symbols as and when you need them.
- You can be a bit creative if the word you want isn't there e.g. to say 'I want a coffee, you could point to the 'I want' symbol followed by the 'drink', as you speak the sentence 'I want a coffee'.

Use these symbols with your child to support their understanding of your spoken messages and learning... be creative and have fun with it.