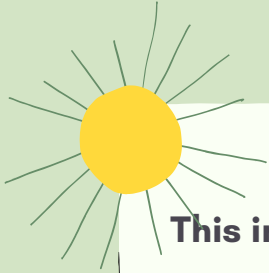


USING A THREE-STEP STRATEGY TO SUPPORT PRESCHOOLERS' COMMUNICATION



This infographic introduces an evidence-based, three-step process that teachers can use to support children with little or no functional communication skills.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY PREFERRED ACTIVITIES

1. Observe the child and take note of the time he or she spends in different activities or on objects.
2. Offer the child choices.
3. Ask the child's family or other teachers about his or her preference.

For guidance on conducting a formal preference assessment, please refer to this website:

<https://ebip.vkcsites.org/preference-assessments/>



STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE VOCABULARY

Vocabulary should be **practical**, help meet children's **language needs**, be **suitable for the child**, and be **enjoyable**.

Vocabulary should include words that

- Are related to the activity e.g., "bark" and "sit" when playing with a toy dog.
- Children can use to say what they need. e.g., "I need" "No, thank you".
- Fit children's background and experience. e.g., if the child has a cat named Lucy, then use the word "Lucy" for a toy cat.
- Make everything more fun.

See Figure 2 in the article for a communication board example that includes vocabulary with pictures.

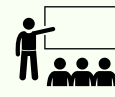


STEP 3: USE INTERACTIVE STRATEGIES

1. Modeling

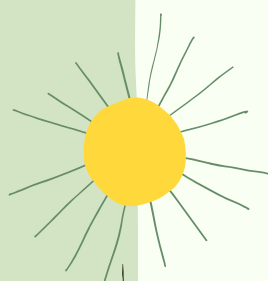
During snack time, Mrs. Thompson holds up a banana and says out loud "I want..." while pointing to the "eat" icon on Sam's device. She then selects the "banana" picture and has the device say "I want banana."

Mrs. Thompson hands Sam the banana and prompts "Your turn. What do you want?" She points to the "drink" category on his device. Sam studies it and selects the "milk" picture, causing his device to say "I want milk." Mrs. Thompson immediately praises "Good job!" and gets Sam's milk carton.



STEP 3: USE INTERACTIVE STRATEGIES

Ask questions



Mrs. Thompson: Okay Anna, it's time to pick out a story to read together. What kind of book would you like? An animal book or a book about cars and trucks?

Anna: (Selects "animal" icon)

Mrs. Thompson: Great choice! An animal book it is. Now let me show you some options. (Holds up 3 animal books) Which one of these animal books do you want to read? This one about dogs, this one about cats, or this one about farm animals?

STEP 3: USE INTERACTIVE STRATEGIES

Wait for the child to communicate



Mrs. Thompson: Good morning Antonio! I see you're wearing your cool fire truck shirt today. (Pauses and looks expectantly at Antonio, counting silently) 1 Mississippi, 2 Mississippi, 3 Mississippi...

Antonio: (finds the "fire truck" icon and selects it)

STEP 3: USE INTERACTIVE STRATEGIES

Provide verbal, visual, or physical prompts



Mrs. Thompson: Okay Mark, it's time to clean up the toys before we go outside. Can you tell me what you want to clean up first? You can use your device to tell me. (Verbal prompt)

Mark: (Glances at toys but doesn't select anything)

Mrs. Thompson: Look at these pictures, which one do you want first? (Points to toy icons on mark's device - visual prompt) The blocks, the cars, or the puzzle?

Mark: (Activates "cars" icon)

STEP 3: USE INTERACTIVE STRATEGIES

Respond



Luke: (Points to the "ball" icon)

Mrs. Thompson: You want the ball? Okay, here's the ball. (Hands child the ball)

Luke: (Smiles and rolls ball on the floor)

Mrs. Thompson: You're playing with the ball. Can you tell me what you want to do with the ball?

Luke: (Looks at device, then points to "roll")

Mrs. Thompson: Good job! You rolled the ball. You rolled the ball. Let's see if we can put it together- "roll ball".

Child: (Watches teacher, then points to "roll" and "ball" himself)

Sun, T., Bowles, R. P., Gerde, H. K., & Douglas, S. (2020). Supporting AAC use for preschoolers with complex communication needs. *Young Exceptional Children, 25*(2), 101-112. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096250620959664>

Douglas, S., & Gerde, H. K. (2019). A strategy to support the communication of students with autism spectrum disorder. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 55*(1), 32-38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1053451219833021>