Child’s Communication Book

Written by: Nadia Mia

What is a Communication Book?

A communication book can mean different things to different people. In some schools, parents and teachers use a communication book to share information about a child on a daily basis. The information in this type of communication book is written and isn’t always meant to be shared with the child. In this guide, you will learn how to create a simple yet powerful book that a child can use to communicate with his classmates, teachers, and family.

Children with special needs sometimes find it hard to be understood when they are in a busy classroom or meeting someone for the first time. Reasons for this may include:

- Unclear speech.
- Limited vocabulary.
- Difficulty making eye contact.
- Forgetting what to say or do when feeling overwhelmed.

However, if a child has difficulty communicating with people in many situations it is important to rule out physical causes such as vision, speech, or hearing impairments.

A child who uses a communication book is more able to express himself in a way that other children and adults will understand. This may decrease the likelihood that he will resort to crying, hitting, kicking, or having tantrums in an attempt to get his needs met.

A communication book can also encourage a child to play with and, talk to other children without needing an adult to ‘speak’ on his behalf. For example, a child can use his communication book to show a friend what game he would like to play at recess. Some children have sections on hobbies such as collecting stickers or baseball cards. Finally, a communication book can promote sharing and conversation around what a child has done at home and school each day. If your child has a speech language pathologist or support person at an agency, she may provide suggestions on what to include in the communication book and how to encourage your child to use it.
Communication Book Contents

We have provided a sample communication book to get you started. The communication book is based upon a series of labeled picture symbols that are easily understood by children and adults.

Here is a brief description of each section and its contents.

**Basic Needs**
Placing pictures of basic needs at the front of the book will make it easier for your child to communicate in a hurry.

**In My Classroom**
Pictures in this section include classroom activities and routines. When your child starts school, his teacher may want to add more pictures.

**Let’s Play**
Your child can use these pictures when he is playing with, or, participating in group activities with other children.

**Reminders**
These pictures encourage positive behaviour. When your child starts school, his teacher might want to add picture symbols of classroom rules to this section.

**Show-and-Tell**
Your child may want to add a photograph or picture to his book every few days to share with his friends at school. This encourages conversation and can help your child develop social connections.

**What I Did at School**
This is a conversation page that can be photocopied and completed by your child and his teacher each day. It can help your child remember what he has done at school so that he can ‘talk’ about it with you when he gets home. If you prefer, the conversation page can be laminated and written on using a dry-erase pen.

**What I Did at Home**
This is a conversation page that can be photocopied and completed by you and your child each day. It can encourage him to share his life with his teacher and classmates. If you prefer, the conversation page can be laminated and written on using a dry-erase pen.
Child’s Communication Book

How to Make

You will need
- A computer and printer
- A Thin Three-Ring Binder
- 10 Three-hole clear page protectors
- 5 Three-hole page dividers
- Markers and pencil crayons
- Stickers, and stick on labels
- Glue or tape

Steps
1) Print the pages for the communication book by clicking on the Adobe Acrobat print icon.
2) Decorate the cover with your child. You may want to glue his picture on the cover.
3) Place each page inside a page protector and add to the binder.
4) Put page dividers between sections.

Your child’s communication book is ready to use!

Personalizing Your Child’s Communication Book

Communication books are designed to grow with the person using them. The key to increasing your child’s communication skills at home and school is to be flexible and creative!

If the picture symbols in our communication book do not suit your needs, feel free to create your own using computer clip art, your own drawings, photographs, or pictures from magazines. Just make sure that pictures are clear and easy for your child to see. Print or type a label in lower case letters beneath each picture you add to the book. It will be easier for your child to learn what each picture represents when everyone uses the same words to describe it.

If you find that a binder is too large for your child to handle or carry around, pictures can be placed in a mini photo album or glued into a paper note book. Sometimes, pictures are glued onto index cards and attached to a colorful plastic key ring. This is useful if your child only requires pictures for guidance in specific situations such as asking another child to play.
Teaching your Child How to Use a Communication Book

Children who are comfortable using Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) or visual schedules will probably find it easy to use a communication book. When introducing the communication book to your child, it is best to review the pictures in each section with him one at a time. This way you can make sure that he understands the meaning of each picture.

Here are some tips on introducing your child to a communication book

Read a Book Together
This will help your child learn that pictures and words can be used to represent people, objects, or actions. It also provides him with opportunities to practice page turning and pointing skills. For example, if you are reading a “Spot” book together you can say, “Billy, show me Spot.” or “Billy, where’s Spot?” Provide your child with hand-over-hand assistance if needed.

Include the Communication Book in Daily Routines
When going through daily routines, open the communication book and point to the related picture(s) in the book. Start by guiding your child’s hand to a picture and labeling it. For example, “It’s snack-time.”

Include the Communication Book to Daily Conversations
If you are having a difficult time understanding your child when he is trying to tell you something, point to the book and say, “Show me” or “Use your pictures”. When friends or family visit, you can encourage your child to show them the pictures that he has put in the “Show-and-Tell” section.

Finally, if your child consistently uses words or gestures to express certain needs and wants, the pictures representing them can be removed from his communication book. Pictures representing words or gestures that are new to your child can be added instead.

Your child is ready to use a communication book independently when he:

1) Knows what the pictures in the book mean.
2) Is able to open the book and turn its pages.
3) Understands when he needs to use the book.
4) Can get someone’s attention and show them the book.

You can show your child how to use a communication book by reading the on-line story “Play Time” with him. You can find it in the “Skills for Success” section of Off to School.
Basic needs

- yes
- no
- sick
- drink
- hungry
- toilet
Basic needs

- more
- eat
- wash hands
- get dressed
- hurt
- quiet
In my classroom

- circle time
- sand table
- snack time
- play
- blocks
- cut and paste
Let's play

- hello
- can I play?
- how do you play?
- I like that one
- what do you want to play?
- Let's play again
Let's play

- more
- my
- no one to play with
- my turn
- your turn
- I'm going to get you
Reminders

- sit
- sit down
- quiet
- loud
- don't hit others
- touch gently
Reminders

- no biting
- talk
- no spitting
- wipe face
- raise your hand
- listen
Show and tell
What I did at school

- storybook
- sand table
- play
- cut and paste
- snack time
- blocks
- circle time
What I did at home

Date: __________

This is what ______________ did at home today:

- watch a video
- storybook
- dough
- music
- bubbles
- puzzle
- colour
- computer