



Communication Rights and Communication Access

Chat Board Tips for Local and State Government Departments

What is a chat board?

A chat board is a simple tool that can help people understand each other better.

A chat board is a grid of different words or phrases that can help in an activity or place like:

- An information desk
- A reception desk
- A counter to order or pay
- A playground
- A waiting room

To help explain the different words or phrases in each cell of the grid there will also be a:

- Picture
- Symbol
- Photo
- Letter or
- Number

Why use a chat board?

Some people find it hard to understand spoken words. Some people find it hard to make themselves understood by talking.

Using a chat board can help us to give and get information in a way that some people can better understand than by only talking aloud. People can get extra information about what you are saying by looking not just listening. We call this using visual supports. Visual supports include:

- Pictures
- Photos
- Symbols
- Gestures
- Actions
- Signs like Key Word Sign or signs from Auslan
- Signed words
- Written words

Adding visual supports when we speak words aloud can help include more people and help more people understand what we are saying better. It can help us understand other people better too.

When we use chat boards as we talk aloud it helps other people to know that:

- We know that there are lots of different ways to chat and to give or get information
- We try to chat in different ways because we care about including everyone
- We have learnt to chat in different ways and we are happy to learn other ways too
- We want everyone to feel OK to bring any tools they need to chat wherever they go
- We want everyone to feel good about using any tools they need to chat with us
- We will try our best to understand other people
- We want all people to feel they belong and feel they can take part

How do I use a chat board?

First get to know the chat board that is there for you to use.

Have a good look at the words or phrases in the grid.

Think about the different things you say a lot in this place or in this activity.

Try to say these things and point to some of the words and pictures on the chat board as you say them.

You don't have point to every word. You can start by just pointing to the word or picture that gets across the most important part of your message.

You will find that not every word you need is on the chat board.

It can help to think about other ways you can get your message across using different words that are on the chat board.

You can also think about using an ABC letter board or QWERTY keyboard to type out any important words that you need for a message that are not on the chat board.

Always have chat boards where they are easy to see and use. People need to be able to reach them and touch them. It is really good if there are copies people can take with them too.

Here are some video examples of people using Chat Boards in different places:

- Mornington Peninsula Playground Chat Board
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXoq6gNDaj0>
- AssistiveWare Proloquo2go Quick Chat Boards
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXxhDOs0s40&t=123s>
- V-Line transport in Victoria using their own communication tools
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_hOwV9E95A

Where do chat boards go?

It is really important that chat boards are put where they are

- Needed
- Easy to see
- Easy to reach and point to all the different words on the board

It is a good idea to have printed copies of the chat board so people can take them to use as they move around the activity space like the gym or pool.

It can help staff to have a chat board on a lanyard so they always have it with them.

It can help to laminate chat boards so they are easy to keep clean and dry. Printing chat boards on monsoon paper can also be a good idea. Monsoon paper:

- Can get wet
- Is hard to tear
- Is very light

It is a good idea to put free to download and print copies of the chat board on your website or social media pages. This means some people can bring their own copy with them.

Make sure that chat boards for children are put at a height they can reach easily.

Sometimes it can be useful to have a big chat board on display like a sign that is easy to see. Chat board signs are:

- Easy to see
- Easy to clean
- Hard to be in exactly the right place that they are needed
- Sometimes hard to use

It can sometimes be hard to reach all the different words on a chat board sign. Sometimes the top of the chat board is too high for children or adults using wheelchairs to reach.

Sometime the chat board is so long that people need to move along the board to reach different words. This is hard for people who find it hard to walk or move their own wheelchair.

It is important to think about who is going to be using a chat board sign. Print it to a size that does not need much movement to reach

- The top row of words
- The bottom row of words
- The left-side column of words
- The right-side column of words

Install the sign at a height that the people who you hope will use it can reach it.

Where can we get Chat Boards for our events, services and facilities?

You can ask experts at making Chat Boards to make the tools that you need. We recommend you contact:

- **Two Way Street**
twos@twowaystreet.com.au
- **Scope Australia's Communication and Inclusion Resource Centre**
circ@scopeaust.org.au

Free Chat Boards

You can also download and print Chat Boards for free from different websites. Some of these Chat Boards may suit your

- Events
- Services
- Facilities

These Chat Boards are for talking about specific activities:

- In the pool
- Playing sport
- At the gym
- Sharing books
- Washing hands <https://twowaystreet.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Handwashing-ALD.pdf>
- Before a vaccination <https://twowaystreet.com.au/product/conversations-after-vaccinations-copy/>
- After a vaccination <https://twowaystreet.com.au/product/conversations-after-vaccinations-copy/>
- COVID testing and being in isolation <https://twowaystreet.com.au/product/free-covid-test-chat-boards/>
- Bedtime <https://twowaystreet.com.au/product/free-bedtime-chat-board/>
- In the playground <https://saltillo.com/blog/post/playground-core-communication-boards-from-prc-saltillo/print>

These Chat Boards are for playing specific games:

- Scavenger Hunt <https://twowaystreet.com.au/product/free-savenger-hunt-pack/>
- Bubbles <https://twowaystreet.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Bubbles-ALD.pdf>
- What's the time Mr. Wolf? <https://twowaystreet.com.au/product/free-whats-the-time-mr-wolf/>
- Simon Says... <https://twowaystreet.com.au/product/free-simon-says-chat-board/>

You can also download free sets of Chat Boards for different activities:

- The Super Core Learning Grids are a set of 26 Chat Boards for different daily routine activities like
 - brushing teeth,
 - dressing and
 - washingas well as for different leisure activities like
 - cooking,
 - shopping,
 - drawing,and different play activities like playing with
 - sand,
 - playdough,
 - trains,
 - bricks,
 - cars,
 - balloons
 - and dress ups<https://thinksmartbox.com/news/low-tech-super-core-resources/>
- The DDWA Early Childhood AAC Resource Pack is a set of 9 Chat Boards for different Early Childhood activities like
 - playing with balls,
 - bubbles,
 - blocks,
 - water,
 - reading,
 - and snack time

These Chat Boards are for talking about specific events:

- Bushfires https://l.facebook.com/l.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fbit.ly%2FTWSBushfiresALD&h=AT3LS8gk_0TEolx65xlo7Jj7StkqzDQQdzMA0gy1nv7eWKtiOS6QkDf0UhkvIzXVgBxBgFem0qXx8ydxBlIHcyswvZctZ0RB8HyDAYUpzsi7zgeGZMY6eDxStTwP1qthg7bxtducevW725EFua5OIMVWKA&_tn=-UK*F
- Fathers' Day <https://twowaystreet.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Fathers-Day-ALD.pdf>
- Mothers' Day <https://twowaystreet.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Mothers-Day-ALD.pdf>
- Back to school <https://twowaystreet.com.au/product/backtoschool/>

General Chat Boards

These Chat Boards are more general. These boards have lots of core words – words that we use in very often in nearly every activity or situation. These boards are useful because the same board with the same words can be used in lots of different situations:

- DDWA Early Childhood general interaction Chat Board
- Assistiveware quick communication boards <https://www.assistiveware.com/learn-aac/quick-communication-boards>
- General Interactive Aided Language Display from Two Way Street: https://twowaystreet.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Handout_General-Interactive-Display.pdf
- Super Core 50 and Super Core 30 core boards <https://thinksmartbox.com/news/low-tech-super-core-resources/>
- Project Core communication boards <http://www.project-core.com/communication-systems/>
- High contrast core board from LAMP Words for Life https://aaclanguagelab.com/materials/LAMP_WFL_VI_full_121019.pdf

Alphabet boards

Alphabet boards can also be helpful in situations when people can spell. You can download and print for free Alphabet boards from different websites:

- DDWA Alphabet Board
- Core First Communication Boards - Alphabet board <https://www.tobiidynavox.com/products/core-first-communication-boards?tab=1>

Free Chat Boards for Health, Medical or Emergency situations

These Chat Boards can be helpful in a health, medical or emergency situation:

- Picture based emergency communication
board: <https://disabilities.temple.edu/sites/disabilities/files/AAC-EprepPictureAid.pdf>
- Letter based emergency communication
board: <https://disabilities.temple.edu/sites/disabilities/files/AAC-EprepLetterWordAid.pdf>

There are tips for health care workers and emergency first responders on interacting with someone who has communication difficulties here: <https://disabilities.temple.edu/assistive-technology/emergency-communication-aac-vocabulary/emergency-communication-tips>

These Chat Boards have been made to help people with communication difficulties to speak up and be safe from abuse. These are important free tools that may be useful in lots of different situations: <https://www.speakupandbesafe.com.au/communication-aids-download>