

DDWA COMMUNICATION PARTNER OBSERVATION AND REFLECTION GUIDE (JONES 2024)



These rubrics are designed to help people improve their skills in supporting emerging, transitional, and context-dependent AAC communicators in their interactions. It can be used by parents, families, teachers, education assistants, speech therapists, support workers, and indeed anyone who wants to develop their communication support skills. This rubric (Part A and Part B) was put together by Laura Jones at Developmental Disability WA to share with the AGOSCI community at the AGOSCI Conference 2022 pre-conference workshop “AAC Tools: Let’s Explore and Engage” and has continued to be revised through reflective practice and collaborative conversations with people who use AAC themselves, and with people who support children and adults to communicate using AAC. Through DDWA’s Communication Disability Access and Inclusion project, these updated rubrics are now available for all. These rubrics were inspired by previous tools Laura developed and refined over several years to help students reflect on their practice as a communication partner whilst teaching the unit “Being an Effective Communication Partner”, part of the Graduate Certificate of Education: Complex Communication Needs at Edith Cowan University.

These rubrics can be used to guide observations, reflections and discussions when reviewing videos of practice as a communication partner. It can guide self-reflection, or be used as tool for collegiate or family support. It is not a checklist of everything that could or should be observed in the practice of effective communication partners, rather these are skills that effective communication partners do demonstrate at appropriate times within their interactions with children and adult who are emerging, transistional or context-dependent AAC users. Not every interaction is an appropriate time to use every skill! Indeed, it would be inappropriate for everything listed here as suggestions of things to look for and reflect upon to be put into practice in any single interaction. This rubric is not an exhaustive list of communication partner skills either – you might add other skills that you think of too.

These rubrics are organised around the idea that supportive communication partners are frequently seeing or creating opportunities for MORSE – Modelling, Observing, Responding, Scaffolding and Expanding. Examples of these areas of skill are layered over different areas of communication competence, all of which effective communication partners need to model for those learning to use AAC: social, linguistic, strategic and operational competence (as originally described by Janice Light 1989, 2014). The rubrics have been coloured to reflect the Aided Language Stimulation Prompt Hierarchy diagram created by Ahern and Nielsen (2016).



Communication Partner Observation and Reflection Guide (Part A): Modelling (Aided Language Stimulation)

Social Skills			Linguistic Skills			Strategic Skills		Operational Skills	
Models initiation of communication / interaction	Models range of pragmatic functions	Models talking to different people across contexts	Models talking about real, varied topics	Models varied vocabulary	Models 1 step above indiv 's expressive output	Provides multimodal models	Models communication breakdown repair solutions	Models access method	Models self-talk to assist in locating vocabulary
Attention getter behaviours	Greetings / final farewell / conversation wraps	Other adults Family members Acquaintances	Things in the moment / narration	Core Vocab	Fluency of modelling	Gestures / facial expression	Use of alphabet to give first letter cue	Clear speech with key word aided language input with relevant access method	Models systematic searching for words
Attention getter language	Expressing Opinions, likes, dislikes	Unfamiliar people	Things that have already happened						
Starter vocab	Indicating a preference / choice	Siblings Same aged peers / friends	Things that are going to happen	Fringe Vocab	Rate / Frequency of modeling	Picture / symbol display	Use of similar sounding words	Clear indication of aided symbols with access method	Verbally references process of finding words
Maintainer vocab	Sharing ideas / thoughts / wonderings.	Models at different times of day		Verbs and changing verb endings	Models scripts / gestalts already used	Comprehensive AAC system	Use of photos / objects, video to add meaning	Direct access	Activates message window when message complete
Transfer vocab	Making suggestions Commenting	Models in different places		Descriptors	Models mix and match of used + new gestalts	Sign	Models problem solving eg. oops made a mistake, that's not what I mean, you've nearly got it	Single deliberate point / press	
Closing phrases	Asking questions			Nouns Making nouns plural		Light-tech		2 switch scanning	Changes volume
Give & take turns in conversation	Making requests	Self-advocacy		Pronouns		High tech	Uses delete / clear for errors	One switch scanning	Clears message window
Putting others at ease, responsivity	Social etiquette	Fantasy / make believe stories (tell or retell)		Interrogatives		Rating scales	Use alphabet to spell words that aren't there	Partner Assisted A / V / A+V scanning	Add new words
	Telling jokes								
	Exclamations								
	Giving information	Small talk / non-obligatory turns		Use of connectives			Calm – including positive self-talk	Eye gaze	Add new phrases (inc used scripts / gestalts)
	Giving instructions / directions							Coded access	
	Recounting a (real) story / anecdote	Indicating a problem Complaining		Pre-stored phrases inc gestalts/scripts			Models making mistakes!		

Communication Partner Observation and Reflection Guide (Part B): Observing, Responding, Scaffolding and Expanding

Observing Skills: Observing Dynamically	Responding Skills: Natural Responses	Scaffolding			
		Natural Cues	Indirect Cues	Direct Cues	Physical Cues
Time delay – creates space for communication to happen	Multimodal responding - responds to all communication modes Responds multimodally	Interaction style - <u>comments and statements</u> used more than questions or directions / instructions.	Indirect verbal cue - focuses child on a reason to communicate	Direct verbal cue	Physical prompts *DO NOT USE*
Expectant, inviting pause – looks interested. Extended pause – continues to pay attention and wait	Reauditorises - immediately repeats exactly what is indicated	Interaction style – Declarative language used (without an agenda!)	Indirect search light cue	Momentary light cue	Co-active movements *CAUTION* Used only with informed consent and body autonomy upheld, used only by those who are trained to teach movements that may aid communication in ways that do not violate either bodily or communicative autonomy
Parallel talk - talks generally about what person is doing	Recaps - repeats all words so far to help keep track of longer message	Interaction style – prioritises connection and relationship over compliance or accuracy of communication	Visual referencing – can help emergent eye gaze access users shift gaze from object / symbol to com partner's eyes.	Fixed light cue	
Verbal referencing - clearly references aloud child's behaviours observed		Interaction style – shows interest, avoids interrupting, follows their lead	Turn-uptake modelled by another adult / peer	Negotiating / co-constructing meaning	
Gets curious – recognises that strings of sounds or words, scripts (delayed echolalia) or 'gestalts' have meaning and actively tries to determine the communicative intent	Rewords - repeats but rewords in standard English	Environmental cue - may indicate sthg to talk about		Partner assisted auditory / visual scanning (partner initiated, used as a scaffold to encourage participation by presenting different ideas, words, options, suggestions if struggling to generate	
	Recasts - repeats in different type of sentence:				
Assign meaning - states communicative meaning attributed to observed behaviours	Recasts by Expanding - repeats in grammatically complete form	Gestural cue - may indicate sthg to talk about		Accomplice suggestion (non-directive model)	
Multimodal OWL (Observe, wait, listen)	Recasts by Extending - repeats and adds information				

Additional reflections: