

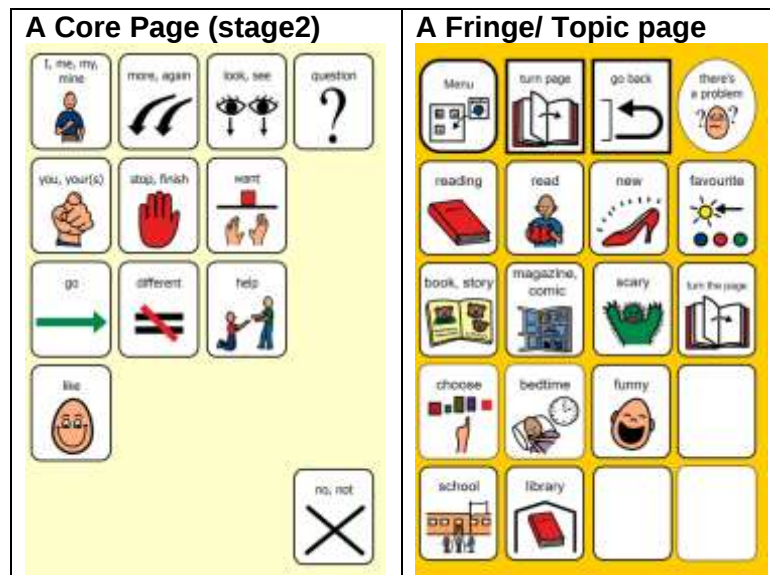
Communication Books

What are communication books?

Communication books are types of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC). AAC can be used for children that are not yet able to use their talking or to support children that need some help with developing their functional communication.

Communication Books are specific to a child and are personalised. They contain key vocabulary that is important to the child and helps them to communicate. Communication books are usually organised into different pages of different categories. There are lots of different types of communication book which can be accessed by pointing or other methods if the child cannot point using their finger.

In Medway, we typically use communication books following the ACE Centre formatting however there are lots of other types including Look2Talk and PODD.



Who uses communication books?

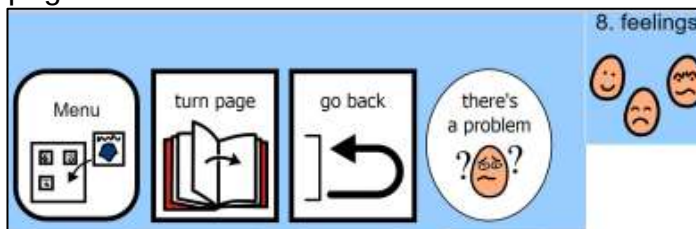
Communication books are usually recommended for children that benefit from the use of picture or symbol support to support their communication and language skills. Some children may already be using words to communicate whereas others may not yet be using any spoken language. Communication books can also be used for children who have unintelligible speech and therefore need some picture or symbol support to help them to be able to communicate their message more effectively.

Using a communication book do not stop a child from developing and using their talking. The communication book is their voice.

If a speech and language therapist has recommended a communication book, they will discuss with school and parents/ carers the vocabulary that is most important and useful for their child. A communication book should contain anything that the child would want to communicate with you about, just as if they were using their talking.

What's in a communication book?

- Communication books will contain a contents or menu page at the start of the book.
- On every **left**-side page will be core vocabulary, this will be the same throughout the book.
- On every **right**-side page will be 'topic' or 'fringe' vocabulary which will be about a specific topic. This will be different on every page throughout the book.
- At the top of each fringe page (right side) will be some symbols that stay the same, for example 'menu', 'turn the page', 'go back' and 'there's a problem'.
- Each separate page will have a tab which sticks out the side of the book, this will help you and the child to find the vocabulary that you need to within the book. This should match up with the contents or menu page.



How to use communication books?

- As communication books are the child's voice, the book should go anywhere that the child does. This includes going out on the playground, out when you go shopping or when they visit a friend or relative's house.
- Adults will need to **model** the use of communication books to support the child to learn the purpose of it. If you were supporting a child to learn to talk, you wouldn't expect them to pick up words without being spoken to. This includes both parents and school or nursery staff.
- As you support a child to use their communication book, it's really helpful to talk them through what you are doing as you do it. For example, if you want to turn the page you might say 'I need to turn the page' whilst pointing to the 'turn the page' symbol.
- Using communication books naturally slows down the adult talking and this is beneficial for the children using the communication book too.
- If a child points to one picture, the adult should say the word and then add one symbol on (this is the same as you would do if a child said a word).
- Don't insist on the child using their talking! If they have pointed to a symbol, they have successfully communicated their message and the adult should respond as if the child has communicated using their talking.
- Remember to model and use symbols on both pages in the book including core (left side page) and fringe/ topic vocabulary (right side page). This helps to model different reasons for communicating (or functions of language)
 - Asking questions you want
 - Giving instructions you stop
 - Requesting I want/ want more
 - Commenting I see
 - Refusing: stop/ no
 - Requesting for help more help/ want help
 - Gaining attention wow look
- Make sure that communication books are used with lots of different people in different places. They should be used at school or nursery as well as at home. They should be used in the house, in the garden and when you go out!



Top Tips

- Make sure the communication book is **always available**. It is the child's voice, so anywhere the child goes, the book should go with them!
- Adults will need to **model** the use of communication boards and books to support the child to learn the purpose of it. If you were supporting a child to learn to talk, you wouldn't expect them to pick up words without being spoken to. This is exactly the same with any form of AAC.
- When you are finding your way through a communication book, talk about what you are doing.
- It's okay to not know where vocabulary is in the communication book or make mistakes with AAC, talking this through with the child is helpful as it shows them you are also still learning where vocabulary is.
- If you are trying to find vocabulary talk about where you think it might be. For example, if you're trying to find the word 'cat' you might say:
 - I'm going to the **menu** page, I think it might be on **animals**, where's **animals** (looking for the tab), it's here, there's **cat**
- If a child has a communication book, it's important that communication boards or topic boards are still used alongside their book.
 - Remember, only vocabulary that is important to the child should be within their communication book. For example, if class is going to be doing a topic about 'sink and float' or 'The Victorians' it would be better to have this on a separate board.
 - If, however, school are going on a trip to the farm and the child goes to the farm regularly with their family or they like to talk about animals, this may need to be in their communication book.

Other Useful Resources

- Who's Afraid of AAC? The UK Guide to Augmentative and Alternative Communication by Alison Battye
- Smartbox <https://thinksmartbox.com/simple-aac/>
- KM CAT Team <https://www.kelsi.org.uk/support-for-children-and-young-people/support-for-schools/kent-and-medway-communication-and-assistive-technology-service>
- Developing and Using a Communication Book 2nd Edition by ACE Centre

You might also like to view advice sheets on '*Total Communication Approach* and '*Using Communication Boards*'.

