The Connecting Me Tool Kit – Part 2

A resource to support people with communication difficulties to fully participate in their planning of individualised services using a co-design approach.

This resource was produced as part of the National Disability Services Community Inclusion Initiative.
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## PART 2

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About Part 2 of this Tool Kit

This Tool Kit was developed by Scope’s Communication & Inclusion Resource Centre as a product of the learnings from the Connecting Me project. This project was one of 11 projects selected in 2015 by National Disability Services as part of the Community Inclusion Initiative, which was funded through the National Disability Insurance Agency’s Sector Development Fund. The purpose of this Initiative was to increase community inclusion for people with a disability and their families, using a co-design model.

Part 2 of this Tool Kit is designed to be a complementary resource to Part 1 of this Tool Kit. The communication aids described can be used to support a person with communication difficulties to communicate choice and exercise participation, control and self-determination, using a co-design planning model. It is intended that the use of the resources and strategies included should be tailored to the skills and abilities of the person using it and used in conjunction with other tools and resources appropriate for the person, their circles of support, and the broader context in which the planning is undertaken.

This Tool Kit contains information and excerpts which have been previously published in © InterAACtion: Strategies for intentional and unintentional communicators (Scope, 2004). It includes information in the form of:

- Fact sheets
- Examples
- Templates

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge and thank:

- the many people with a disability, and their families and support workers, who have assisted with the development of this Tool Kit
- the National Disability Insurance Agency who funded this project through the Sector Development Fund, and National Disability Services which led the Community Inclusion Initiative.
A summary of information for communication partners about a person’s communication skills and abilities.

Why have a Communication profile?

All communication partners need to have ready and easy access to important information about a person’s communication skills.

What is a Communication profile?

When communicating, we are able to let others know when we need information to be said more simply or when we need things put where we can see them. A person who cannot talk or who has difficulties with speech is not able to do this. A Communication profile provides a summary of a person’s communication skills. It contains information on:

- sensory needs, for example, visual or hearing difficulties
- communication skills
- means of communicating choices
- other issues that may affect a person’s communication, for example, medication
- how to help the person understand his or her world.

Who benefits from a Communication profile?

Anybody with communication difficulties who spends time with different communication partners.

When to use a Communication profile

This information should be available to all communication partners, particularly when unfamiliar people spend time with the person.
How to make a Communication profile

One person, for example, a key worker or a family member, needs to take responsibility for the following tasks:

1. Complete the Communication profile template based on input from a range of familiar communication partners.
2. Make an electronic copy of the completed profile and store securely.
3. Decide where the ‘working copy’ of the profile is to be kept, for example, in a Book about me or Chat book.
4. Laminate the profile and put it in an accessible place. Make sure others know where to find the profile.
5. Determine when the Communication profile will be reviewed and make sure it happens.

How to introduce a Communication profile

A reference to this Communication profile should be located in an obvious place so that all communication partners are reminded to refer to it, for example, in the work diary.

Storage

This will vary depending on the circumstances. Most often the Communication profile should be included with the personal effects that the person carries with them.
Date: 3/3/2016  
Review date: 3/3/2017  
My name is: Tom Citizen

The areas I have most difficulty with are:
- movement
- understanding what is happening around me
- changes to my routine

My communication skills (as checked on the Triple C) are:
I have been assessed as using Symbolic communication skills. This means that I
- can understand some speech and language
- can follow one step instructions and some simple two step instructions
- understand that other people can help me meet my needs and wants
- can recognise some pictures and photos and understand that these relate to real objects or concepts

I communicate my needs and wants by:
Using gesture, Key Word Sign, body language and vocalisation. I will also point to what I want if it is near enough, or point to a picture or photo of what I want.

I make choices by:
Pointing to the objects or item that I want or pointing to a picture or photo.

I communicate ‘yes’ and ‘no’ by:
I cannot always respond reliably to direct questions. Sometimes if I do not want to go somewhere I will hold onto the wheels of my wheelchair to indicate that I want to stay. Sometimes I might also sign ‘no’ if I want to be left alone. Sometimes I will gesture with ‘thumbs up’ and smile to indicate ‘yes’.

I understand my world (including routines and instructions) by:
I recognise pictures and photos about people that I know well and things that I do. I understand some signing as well. You can help me by:
- keeping messages short and simple
- pointing and using gestures, Key Word Signs, pictures and photos.

Date: Click here to enter text.

Review date: Click here to enter text.

My name is: Click here to enter text.

The areas I have most difficulty with are:
- hearing
- vision
- movement
- understanding what is happening around me
- changes to my routine

My communication skills:
Click here to enter text.

I communicate my needs and wants by:
Click here to enter text.

I communicate ‘yes’ and ‘no’ by:
Click here to enter text.

I understand my world (including routines and instructions) by:
Click here to enter text.

Other
Click here to enter text.
For people who want to introduce themselves to new people that they meet.

**Why use an Introduction card?**

We use cards every day to access community and leisure activities, for example, using public transport, or discount cards in shops. Introduction cards are designed to assist with more independent participation when meeting new people and to educate the new communication partner on how they can best communicate with the person.

**What is an Introduction card?**

An Introduction card is designed as a tool that people with communication difficulties can use when meeting new people for the first time to introduce themselves. It can include information about how the person communicates expressively (how they get their message across) and receptively (their understanding) and how the communication partner can best support their communication.

The information written on the Introduction card is primarily for the person they come into contact with in the community. The person using the Introduction card does not necessarily need to be able to read or understand exactly what is printed on the card. The use of an Introduction card encourages people in the community (e.g. people in shops, cafés etc.) to speak directly to the person and involve them in the conversation rather than interacting with their support worker.

**Who benefits from Introduction cards?**

The use of an Introduction card encourages independent communication. The card also benefits people in the community. It lets new communication partners learn about different ways of communicating and helps them to remember that it is important to address the person with a disability directly and communicate in a way that is meaningful to them.
When would you use an Introduction card?

- when a person wants to interact with people they meet in their local community
- when a person is unable to effectively communicate with others using speech alone
- when a person has the ability to hand over or co-actively pass a card to another person.

How to make an Introduction card

Decide on the size of the card. Some people may need large cards in order to hold them, or if they have difficulties using their hands they may want to attach it to a flat surface such as a wheelchair tray. Some people may need the card small enough to go in their wallet.

1. Decide what information is most important to include for the person (for example, photo of the person, information about how a communication partner can support their communication).
2. Laminate the card to make it stronger.

How to introduce an Introduction card

Practice using the Introduction card in a real situation.

1. Accompany the person to the counter, desk or wherever an introduction may take place.
2. Model handing over the card and waiting for the item being requested.
3. Co-actively assist the person to hand over the card.
4. Practice the activity, gradually reducing the support needed for a successful exchange.

Where to keep the Introduction card

The person can keep the card in their wallet or may want to attach it somewhere convenient such as onto a wheelchair mounted tray.
How to adapt Introduction cards for different levels of communication

People who are early communicators

- will benefit from the social contact involved in interacting with people in the community
- will need support with handing the card to the communication partner.

People who are informal communicators

- will benefit from co-active assistance and modelling.

People who are symbolic communicators

- may benefit from having a photo that they recognise on the Introduction card
- will benefit initially from co-active assistance and modelling.

Hi, my name is Tom.

I find it difficult to speak and understand spoken and written information.

You can help by:

- Speaking directly to me
- Keeping messages short and simple
- Pointing and using gestures, pictures and photos
- Giving me time to respond.
Photo (optional)

Hi my name is
Click here to enter text.

I find it difficult to
Click here to enter text.

(E.g. speak, understand speech, understand written information)

You can help by
Click here to enter text.

(E.g. speaking directly to me, keeping messages short and simple, giving me time to respond, telling me if you are having difficulty understanding me, showing me pictures and photos).

Also known as a ‘Me’ book, Information folder, Personal communication passport, Communication pro forma, Personal support manual.

For people who need a way of passing on personal information to a range of communication partners.

Why develop a Book about me?

A Book about me can be a quick and effective way for a person with communication difficulties to pass on important information to people in their life.

What is in a Book about me?

A Book about me is a book that contains personal information. It includes some or all of the following sections:

- Instructions for use
- Introduction
- How I communicate
- How I like my day to be
- My social interests
- Things I like/Things I don’t like
- Getting to know me better
- Other considerations
  - Medical
  - Equipment that helps me participate

Who benefits from a Book about me?

Everyone benefits from sharing information about their lives. Communication partners benefit from being able to learn about the person’s background and their specific needs and interests. People with little or no speech benefit from having a more informed communication partner.
When to use a Book about me

This information should be available to all communication partners, particularly when new people spend time with the person. Some information may be private and should not be included in a Book about me. The best time to look through the book is when there is uninterrupted time available. This allows for comments and questions and enjoying some quality time together.

How to make a Book about me

The information in the book is written, but should also include photos or pictures to make it more interesting. Deciding what to include will depend on how relevant each piece of information is to the person’s daily living environment and the person’s own history.

1. **Introduction.** Some people have a section about their background that gives a more detailed family history. The Introduction contains some or all of the following information:
   - person’s name (and nickname, if any)
   - date of birth
   - living situation, for example, where they live, who they live with, who supports them
   - name of parents
   - living situation of parents, and their contact details
   - name and date of birth of siblings (or children)
   - living situation of siblings, and their contact details
   - significant people and their relevant details
   - background to the person’s disability including relevant medical information.
2. **How I communicate.** This section includes anything unique the person does or any special communication aids or equipment the person might need. It may include information such as:
- how best to communicate with the person
- how much speech the person understands
- what languages other than English are understood (if any)
- how the person communicates: yes/no, hunger/thirst, discomfort, boredom, happiness
- what communication aids are used and where to find them
- adaptations to assist with hearing, vision and movement.

3. **How I like my day to be.** This section outlines the order of the day that best suits a person’s needs. It is important for us all to have our daily routines understood by others, but particularly when we need support in order for things to happen the way that we would like. This section is particularly useful where a person’s routine is very important to them or the person gets upset when unexpected things happens.
   It may include information on:
   - how the person likes to sleep
   - what is involved in the person’s morning routine
   - how the person likes to be bathed and helped with personal care
   - how to help dress and undress the person
   - how the person likes to be assisted with meals and drinks
   - any additional attendant care needs.

4. **My social interests.** People have different social needs and interests.
   A section on social interests may include information on:
   - what leisure activities the person enjoys
   - who the person likes to spend time with, for example, parents, friend’s names
   - what type of person they like to spend time with e.g. young people, gentle people
   - how many other people the person prefers to be with
   - what age and gender the person prefers
   - what sort of physical contact the person likes.
5. **Things I like/Things I don't like.** A list of likes and dislikes can be a quick way for unfamiliar communication partners to get to know the person. It may include information on:
   - what activities the person likes/dislikes
   - what food and drink the person likes/dislikes
   - what places the person likes/dislikes
   - what people or animals the person likes/dislikes
   - what situations the person likes/dislikes.

6. **Getting to know me better.** This is a blank page where communication partners can write things that they are learning by spending time with the person, for example, a new idea about their communication, or learning about a new thing the person likes or dislikes and important information to be included in updated versions of the book. It might be useful to divide this section into topic headings, for example, important events, changes in my communication skills, and/or changes in things I like and don’t like.

7. **Other considerations.** A Book about me takes time to establish. It is important to think about:
   - who will write the book
   - involving the person and other friends and family in the process
   - privacy and confidentiality. The information included in A Book about me should not be confidential information, for example, dosages of specific medication; however, it should give insight into possible side effects, for example, ‘I take medicine at lunchtime, that often makes me drowsy…’
   - using person centred language
     - it needs to be written in the first person. ‘I like to…’ ‘I don’t like it when…’
     - it needs to be easy to read
     - the language should take into consideration any cultural preferences or requirements
   - who will maintain and update the book (and how often)
   - how the information will be presented, for example, an A4 folder, a laminated booklet, an adapted photograph album, or other formats such as video
   - where instructions for use will be kept.
How to introduce a Book about me

It is important that new communication partners know that the person has a Book about me. Where the person is unable to communicate the location of his/her book there should be a sticker indicating its location, for example, ‘Want to know more about me - check out my Book about me in my red bag.’ The sticker might be on a wheelchair tray, on the outside of the red bag, or the information can be an item on the person’s communication aid.

The front of the book should have an introduction explaining how to use the book, for example, ‘I am happy for you to read this Book about me. Please sit down and read it out loud with me. Show me the pictures when you get to them. I would like you to share with me some of the important things that have happened to you, too.’

Instructions for use

Simple, clearly written instructions must be included on the front of a Book about me. These should include information written from the person’s perspective on:

- who is allowed to read the book
- how a communication partner can use the book
- the name of the person the book belongs to
- where to return the book if it is lost
- where to keep the book.

Storage

A Book about me should be stored safely when not in use. Where possible it should be kept with the person at all times, for example, on the back of a wheelchair, in a handbag or in a backpack.
How to adapt a Book about me for different levels of communication

People who are early communicators

- cannot tell others about their needs and interests. Despite this, they still need to know what will happen at different times of the day and throughout their daily routines. Communication partners benefit from information about the person’s family background, likes and dislikes and unique communication styles to get an insight into the person’s personality.

People who are informal communicators

- need their communication partners to know what they can do for themselves and the areas where they might need some assistance. They will benefit from a predictable routine and consistent support. A Book about me provides communication partners with topics of conversation and details about who the person is, how he or she likes their day to be and other useful information.

People who are symbolic communicators

- need their book to provide communication partners with information about their activities of daily living and other significant detail about likes, dislikes and daily routines. The use of pictures and photos make it more relevant for the person and more interesting for familiar and unfamiliar communication partners.
- may be interested in being involved in creating the book. People with high support needs may prefer a book about personal care that is separate from a personal history.

About Me

- I am friendly, independent, funny, caring and affectionate.
- My routine is important to me.
- I was born in 1972.
- I lived with my family until I was 38 years old.
- I live in the northern suburbs of Melbourne.
- About once a fortnight I go to Mum and Dad’s house in Box Hill.
- I go home for Greek holidays and Christmas. I go to a Greek Orthodox Church with Mum for services.
- I go to different groups and activities during the week.
- I play Ballon footy on Mondays.
- I go to the gym on Tuesdays.
- I love hanging out with my family and friends.

Family & Friends

I have two older brothers and one younger sister.

Some of my friends are:

Lisa, Allan, Elliot, Julie, Jessica, Harry.

My Communication

I find it difficult to understand speech and written information.

Please note I also have a hearing impairment.

You can help by:

- Always using Key word signs, gestures, pictures and photos, together with your speech to help me understand.
- Approaching me from the front and getting my eye contact before you start communicate. If people come up behind me abruptly this can startle and upset me.
- Speaking directly to me.
- Keeping messages short and simple.
- Always telling me what is happening before you start doing it or giving me warning when something is going to finish. For example.
  - If we need to go somewhere (e.g., swimming), do not just start pushing my wheelchair as this can confuse and upset me. Use speech, sign and pictures (my visual timetable) to show me where we are going and put my bathers and towel on my lap (objects of reference for that activity). Give me time to process this as I like to finish the activity I am doing and not be rushed.
  - Giving me time to respond.

Include some or all of the following sections:

**Introduction**
Click here to enter text.

**How I communicate**
Click here to enter text.

**How I like my day to be**
Click here to enter text.

**My social interests**
Click here to enter text.

**Things I like/don’t like**
Click here to enter text.

**Getting to know me better**
Click here to enter text.

**Other considerations (if appropriate) e.g. medical/equipment that helps me participate**
Click here to enter text.

Also known as a Gesture dictionary

A Personal communication dictionary records and suggests meanings for the unique gestures, body language, facial expressions, and vocalisations of people who appear not to have any formal method of communication.

Why use a Personal communication dictionary?

Although natural gestures (e.g. turning head away for ‘no/don't want’) are thought to be easily understood by everyone, some people develop unique ways of communicating using gestures, facial expressions, signals and sounds. For example, lip smacking may mean ‘I'm thirsty’ for one person and indicate happiness or contentment for someone else. Certainly, people who know a person well will already know this, but it is important that unfamiliar communication partners can also learn to understand a person’s unique way of communicating.

What is a Personal communication dictionary?

A Personal communication dictionary is a document that records a person’s gestures, body language, facial expressions, vocalisations and signs. It also records what these movements or sounds may mean and gives suggestions for how the listener should respond. A Personal communication dictionary provides a way for new or less familiar people to understand the various communication methods used by someone.

Who benefits from a Personal communication dictionary?

People who rely on others to interpret their communication benefit from a Personal communication dictionary. Access to this dictionary enables support people to become more effective communication partners as they have examples of how and what the person is trying to communicate and how they should respond to communication attempts.
How to develop a Personal communication dictionary

Get to know the person by spending time with them and observing them in different situations. Also speak to people who know the person well and who spend time with them in different settings. The information you gather from this process will provide the framework for a Personal communication dictionary.

1. **Identify and describe behaviours** (i.e. what the person does) It is important to consider:
   - which behaviours should be listed
   - when or where the behaviour occurs
   - how the behaviour can be described clearly
   - how most people (and/or primary communication partners) interpret the behaviour
   - what is the best response to the behaviour.

   It is always important to check the accuracy of the information with people who know the person well.

2. **Record and interpret behaviours.** Record what the behaviour might mean. The person may be using the same behaviour to communicate something different in each setting or it may simply be that different people have developed a different understanding and some agreement may need to be reached. Including photos of the person’s behaviour often helps others to clearly understand what the person is communicating. A Personal communication dictionary can be developed at this stage. You may want to use an A4 or A5 folder with plastic sleeves. The dictionary may include behaviours that are only seen in one setting or across different situations. Several meanings might be listed for any one behaviour and this might vary from situation to situation. ‘What to do’ may also vary slightly from setting to setting; however, it should be as consistent as possible.

3. **Always write in the first person.** When writing information in a Personal communication dictionary always write in the first person, for example, ‘When I…it means…’

4. **Divide the dictionary into sections.** It may help to divide dictionary into sections, such as leisure activities, social skills, mealtimes, bathing and personal care, and an additional section on likes and dislikes.
5. **Inform others.** All support people and potential communication partners need to know about the dictionary. A copy should be easily accessible, for example, on the person’s wheelchair or carried with them in some way. A copy should also be available on file in case other copies get damaged or lost.

6. **Update.** The dictionary should be reviewed regularly (e.g. annually) and updated to make sure the information reflects the person’s current communication skills.

**Storage**

The person should be able to take their Personal communication dictionary with them everywhere he or she goes, for example, from home, to day and community setting. It needs to be portable and durable. It may be as simple as a single laminated A4 sheet or form part of a larger and more detailed Information folder.

A master copy may be kept on computer and a hard copy stored with other personal information.

**How to adapt a Personal communication dictionary for different levels of communication**

- a Personal communication dictionary is designed for use by communication partners who may be unfamiliar with the person
- a Personal communication dictionary may include an extra column for when or where the behaviour occurs
- a Personal communication dictionary needs to be easy to locate, attractive and easy to understand.

**Name:** Tom Citizen  
**Date:** March 2016  
**Review date:** March 2017  

**People involved in completing this form:** My mum, support workers from my home and day service.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>What I may do</th>
<th>What it may mean</th>
<th>What you can do</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| I leave a busy room.                 | • I need a break  
• I want to do something else  
• I need a new activity.        | Ask me what I would like to do using Key Word Sign and visual timetable images.                                                                 |
| I reach out towards a person.        | I want help with something.                                                     | Ask me what I would like help with, and if you can help me. If it is not the right time or place, explain in simple words/signs.                  |
| I give you my food/drink.            | I need help to open the food/drink. For example,  
• A drink straw  
• A biscuit wrapper. | Help me with opening up or cutting up the food item for me.                                                                                   |
| I get very quiet.                    | I may want to have some time by myself.                                         | Ask me if I am alright. Ask me if I would like to spend some time by myself. You may want to suggest areas I could go, for example, outside or in a quiet area. |
**Template**

**Personal communication dictionary**

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<tr>
<th>What I may do</th>
<th>What it may mean</th>
<th>What you can do</th>
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Also known as Remnant books or Memento books. 
For people who have difficulty talking to others and need a prompt for conversation.

Why develop a Chat book?

With few exceptions, we all like the chance for social contact. We do not want anything in particular, just the company of another person. People with communication difficulties often find it difficult to get someone’s attention. If they can get someone’s attention, it is much more difficult for them to keep the attention of their communication partner. A Chat book provides a method for a person to remember and communicate about recent activities and events to other people.

What is a Chat book?

A Chat book is a book that gives topics for conversation that are interesting and relevant to the person (and their communication partner). It contains souvenirs, mementos and remnants of activities or events that the person has enjoyed. The mementos or souvenirs are saved and stuck into a captioned photo album or scrapbook, for example, a coaster from the pub, a ticket stub from the movies, a serviette from a coffee shop, a receipt with a distinctive logo (e.g. Target), a piece of hair from a haircut. If the person is able to recognise photos, photos may also be included in the book.

Who benefits from a Chat book?

People who cannot talk or who have limited speech or speech that is difficult to understand benefit from a Chat book. It gives a person something to communicate about and a way of communicating. The Chat book also helps communication partners to feel more comfortable about their role in a conversation and expands the opportunities for social contact. When both people know the topic of conversation, communication breakdowns are less likely to occur.
When would you use a Chat book?

A Chat book is useful in social situations, for example, when meeting new people or when catching up with old friends.

How to make a Chat book

1. Selecting the mementos. There may be a range of remnants or mementos from an activity and it is important to choose the one that seems most meaningful to the person, for example, after lunch out: a sandwich box, serviette, drink container, chip packet etc. may be saved to include in the Chat book. Which item to choose is based on the interest and reactions of the person. Some things that you collect will be bulky and may need to be presented as a segment, for example, half a cup sliced vertically or flattened and glued to stay down on the page.

2. Writing the prompts. Each memento must have written information with it for the communication partner. For example, ‘Guess what I ate for lunch? I had a sandwich and orange juice. What is your favourite food?’ Write statements and questions that are age appropriate and that include a prompt for the other person.

When writing a prompt, it helps to:

- write the information in the first person
- write a statement about the activity or event, for example, ‘I went sailing with my brother-in-law’
- make a comment about how the person felt or a statement about what happened during the activity, for example, ‘It was my first time on a yacht and I loved it’
- ask a direct question that relates to the memento, for example, ‘What do you think about the yacht?’
- ask an open-ended question to give the communication partner a chance to extend the conversation, for example, ‘Have you ever been sailing? What do you do in your spare time; tell me about it?’

Note: It is important to avoid questions that need a ‘yes/no’ answer as they tend to make the conversation one-sided and difficult to keep going.
3. **Maintaining the Chat book.** We get very bored with people who only ever have one topic of conversation. If a Chat book is going to work, it has to be kept up to date on a regular basis. Using photo albums or plastic sleeves makes it easier to take out old items and replace them with more topical material. Of course, some items are special and will always be a popular topic of conversation, for example, the football team page or the house pet. If the item is still interesting to the person, leave it in or transfer it to the person’s Book about me.

**How to introduce a Chat book**

Clear instructions for use need to be written. This includes directions that first lead the communication partner to the Chat book, for example, a statement on a wheelchair tray or carry bag such as ‘I’ve got a Chat book, please look in my bag.’ On the book it might be written ‘This is my Chat book. Put it in a position where we can both see it and we can look through it together.’

**Storage**

The size and shape of a Chat book will depend on how the person is going to carry the book around and how indestructible it needs to be. A person who can walk independently will need a pocket-sized book whereas a person in a wheelchair can transport a bigger book quite easily. Photo albums or A4 or A5 folders with plastic sleeves inserted are often useful. The Chat book should be with the person at all times, for example, on the back of a wheelchair, in a handbag or in a backpack.
How to adapt a Chat book for different levels of communication

People who are early communicators

- may benefit from seeing and/or feeling the mementos or remnants that are collected and stored in the Chat book. Prompts that are written give the communication partner information about what the person has been doing. It also gives them a reason to spend time with the person and a focus for their interaction.

People who are informal communicators

- benefit from seeing and/or feeling the mementos or remnants that are collected and stored in the Chat book. It is a tangible reminder for them. Prompts provide a communication partner with a focus for the interaction.

People who are symbolic communicators

- may benefit from selecting his or her own mementos or souvenirs for their Chat book
- may recognise some photos, logos or pictures
- may choose to use their Chat book with different communication partners
- may have a way to request that items be added to their Chat book.

**Tom’s Chat book**

**Wednesday 6th April 2016**

I went go-karting on Wednesday morning. I love when I get to go really fast. Sometimes I see old friends at the go-karting complex, and it’s nice to catch up over a coffee.
Name’s Chat book

Insert text, for example, what happened, where I was and who I was with

Click here to enter text.

Insert picture or attach remnant
Also known as Picture-based routines, Picture calendars or Activity schedules. For people who recognise photos, pictures or words and need to know what’s happening at different times of the day or week.

Why do we use Timetables?

We all benefit from visual supports – we have diaries and calendars where we write dates and times of meetings and other events. We watch the clock, write shopping lists and keep invitations. Picture-based Timetables give a concrete way of providing this information for people who may not have literacy skills. Pictures, logos and photos can be used to help people recognise and anticipate activities that happen during the course of a day or a week.

What is a Timetable?

A Timetable is a display of the sequence of events within a set time period. For Timetables to be effective they must be used consistently and referred to frequently.

- Timetables provide a person with consistent cues about the daily routine, so that he or she can anticipate what will happen next. This will often reduce anxiety when moving from one activity to the next.
- Timetables teach the person about symbols, for example, pictures, line drawings, photos that can be used to represent the various activities of the day
- Timetables encourage participation in the planning and choice-making process. For example, the person might decide the order in which he or she wants to do some things.

There may be a central Timetable that is used by a group of people and displayed in a prominent place or meeting area. There may also be individualised Timetables that are portable and designed to suit a person’s lifestyle, for example, an A5 folder may work best for a person who carries it in their backpack.
When to use a Timetable

It is good to check the Timetable whenever people are unsure about what is happening next. It is also good to check it periodically for changes as sometimes activities are cancelled, postponed or replaced by another event.

How to make a Timetable

First of all determine whether the Timetable is for a person or for a group of people.

1. Make a list of the activities in the order they occur.

2. Decide on the complexity of the display; will the Timetable represent daily or weekly activities?

3. Decide where or how the Timetable will be displayed, for example, a wall chart for a group of people, an A4 folder for a person.

4. Select pictures/photos/line drawings (symbols) which are meaningful to the person/group and which match their experience of the event or activity.

5. Decide on the size of each item. Items need to be large enough to be clearly seen by anyone who may have visual problems.

6. Work out the number of items that the person/group can cope with.

7. Work out what materials your display will be made of and how each item will be attached to the display, for example, blue tack, self-adhesive Velcro, magnets. Items may need to be laminated to make them last longer.

8. Include a way of letting the person or group know that an activity is finished. This might be by using a card to represent ‘finished’.

Note: Some people might need to remove the symbol for the activity as they complete it and put it in a finished area or in a finished box before they move on to the next activity in the day.
9. Have a way of showing when there are changes to the usual Timetable. This might be by using a card for ‘change’ or a ‘wild card’. Something might be cancelled, for example, going swimming, but nothing has been scheduled to replace the activity. Also, consider a ‘wild card’ symbol to signify important events that may only happen occasionally. This item can stand for a new event where there is no obvious symbol association, for example, a red star may stand for a sudden change in the daily routine, such as a fire drill. The ‘change’ or ‘wild card’ symbol does not specify what is going to happen exactly but prepares the person for something different happening. This can be particularly useful for people who find changes in routine difficult to cope with.

10. Work out where to display the instructions for using the Timetable. Remember that consistent use is important and all regular communication partners need to know how to use and update the Timetable.

**How to introduce a Timetable**

To help people learn how to use the Timetable you need to model its use. Go through the Timetable with the person and go through the day’s activities by reading them out loud. Start with the name of the day and whether it is morning or afternoon. Talk about what is on the Timetable while pointing to the items. Talk about what is happening next and then go to that activity.

People who have a Timetable will benefit from others modelling how their Timetable works. Get out their Timetable folder at the end of each activity and check to see what activity is listed next. Some people need a ‘Finished strategy’ such as the symbol card for the activity that displays a ‘Finished symbol’ on the reverse side.

When the activity is completed the card is turned over. Others might have a ‘finished’ section where the card for the activity is placed when the particular activity is completed.
Storage

The symbol cards for the different events and activities need to be stored near to the Timetable display. They may be kept in a box beside the Timetable area or stuck onto Velcro compatible fabric nearby. Timetable items that are not being used may be stored in a separate section of the Timetable folder.

How to adapt Timetables for different levels of communication

People who are informal communicators

- will need Objects or Object symbols to help them understand about the sequence of events in a day.

People who are symbolic communicators

- may recognise photos, pictures or line drawings of activities that they enjoy or that happen regularly
- may be able to use a multi-item display
- may understand a ‘finished’ and ‘change’ symbol.
Example of final product

### Template

#### Timetable

(Print and cut cards)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fri</td>
<td>Sa</td>
<td>Su</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Customise, print and cut)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enter text</th>
<th>Enter text</th>
<th>Enter text</th>
<th>Enter text</th>
<th>Enter text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A way to help people with communication difficulties express their views.

We all have opinions about what we like and what we do not like and what we want or do not want. Based on our opinions we tend to make choices. The choices that we make may be important, such as which house to buy, or less important, such as which shirt to wear. To make a choice, we balance the available options in our mind and make a decision. Sometimes the choice we make is not clear cut or permanent. We may choose something one day and change our mind about how we feel about this the next day.

People who speak can say what they like, ask for more information or modify their decisions. This is much more difficult for people who cannot speak and who rely on others to select the vocabulary they need for communication.

Why use Talking Mats™?

Talking Mats™ is a picture-based framework for expressing preferences, commenting and letting others know our opinion on various topics. Talking Mats™ also helps people to understand the available options and to communicate about issues relevant to them, for example, making choices about where to live or what to do during the day, expressing views about everyday issues, qualifying emotions.

The format of using Talking Mats™ gives the person time to think about the issues and possible choices. It is a simple, enjoyable and non-threatening way of communicating opinions and feelings.

What is Talking Mats™?

Talking Mats™ is a thinking and organisational tool to express opinions and thoughts about specific topics. Talking Mats™ uses a visual scale that uses placement of pictures to reflect feelings, opinions or choices. The scale represents positive feelings or experiences on the left side across to negative feelings or experiences on the right side. Once a topic is chosen, the person using Talking Mats™ places pictures, representing issues or activities, along the visual scale.
Who benefits from Talking Mats™?

Anyone who can recognise pictures but has concentration or memory problems or speech that is difficult to understand. Talking Mats™ is suitable for someone whose communication is at least at a symbolic level.

When to use Talking Mats™

Talking Mats™ is useful when a person needs to make a decision or offer an opinion on an issue that may affect them. It allows people to think about their lives. It is a useful strategy to offer to people who may find answering direct questions difficult or stressful.

How to make Talking Mats™

The parts for a hard copy version include:

- a car mat (or some surface that Velcro will stick to)
- picture cards or written word cards that depict concepts or thoughts around the topic
- a topic card that identifies the topic to be thought about
- blank cards for the person to add their own thoughts that have not already been identified
- a scale along which to indicate thoughts or feelings about the topic. The scale can be simplified or changed depending on the person who is expressing his or her views and the topic. For example, a simple mat may include just two options such as I like this and I hate this. A complex scale may involve more options such as I really like this, it’s OK, I’m not sure, I do not like this and I hate this.

For more information see www.talkingmats.com
Identify the topic or issue the person would like to talk about. Topic areas may relate to those areas that impact on a person’s life, for example, home, work, health, relationships, leisure, money, education and training, self-care, household tasks, mobility and communication. If there are specific concerns or issues which emerge from the first mat you might need to continue with a further mat (a sub-mat) to explore the issue in more detail.

1. Buy a nylon-based car mat and self-adhesive Velcro or Blu Tack.

2. Get permission to use Talking Mats™ with the person.

3. Prepare a topic area to use for demonstration, for example, food (this is to familiarise the person with the process).

4. Write down words that relate to this topic; ensure there are examples of different items to encompass a range of preferences, for example, chocolate, spinach, ice cream, worms, liver.

5. Write down all the words and concepts that relate to the topic area that was originally identified.

6. Decide how best to represent the visual scale and how many items to include.

7. Make up the set of pictures for the demonstration topic and the key topic.

8. Cut up the pictures and stick on the Velcro.

**How to introduce Talking Mats™**

1. Describe the emotions that are represented by the visual scale, for example, I really like this, it’s OK, I’m not sure, I do not like this, I hate this.

2. Keep your language clear and simple.

3. Practice with the demonstration topic (food) to check the person understands the process. You may need to demonstrate your own food likes and dislikes first.

4. Explain the identified topic you are going to talk about.
5. Give time for a response and do not rush the person.

6. Some items may not be relevant and can be omitted and other items may have been missed and need to be included. These items may need to be hand drawn for immediate use.

7. Once the mat is completed, confirm that the person is happy with the placement of the relevant pictures along the visual scale.

8. If needed, allow any adjustments to be made.

9. Take a digital photo or photocopy the completed mat as a record of the conversation.

Note: It is recommended that a video recording is made of the discussion using Talking Mats™. This provides a record of the interaction.

Storage

Purchase an A3 display folder. Use Velcro-compatible material to form the pages of the folder, for example, nylon-based carpet squares. Store the pictures relating to a particular training topic or key topic as separate pages in the display folder.

How to adapt Talking Mats™ for people with different levels of communication

People who are symbolic communicators

- will benefit from the use of Talking Mats™ for simple decisions relating to daily events and activities, for example, preference of day-time activities, food likes and dislikes, feelings related to different people and events.

Example

Talking Mats™

I'm not sure  yes  no

- sewing
- exercise
- craft
- woodwork
- music

- pottery
- gardening
- women's discussion
- story time
- BBQ

- jobs and quizzes
- scrap booking
- cooking
- swimming
- outdoor time
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>market</th>
<th>wheelchair soccer</th>
<th>wheelchair basketball</th>
<th>sailing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>go karting</td>
<td>McDonald's</td>
<td>talking books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>plane watching</td>
<td>sensory garden</td>
<td>cars / mechanic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pets / animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farm</td>
<td>first aid</td>
<td>community garden / nursery</td>
<td>choir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>festivals</td>
<td>band</td>
<td>band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>clubs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example of final product

Factsheet

Community request cards

For people who want to request items and services in the community.

Why use a Community request card?

We use cards every day to access community and leisure activities, for example, using public transport, or discount cards in shops. The use of cards for people with limited literacy and numeracy skills can help them be more independent in community activities. Community request cards have been developed to address some of these issues. They are designed to assist with more independent participation in community activities.

What is a Community request card?

A Community request card is a card designed to help a person with limited or no speech to access services in the community. Ideally it should be able to fit in the person’s wallet.

The information written on a Community request card is primarily for the person they come into contact with in the community. The person using the Community request card does not necessarily need to be able to read or understand exactly what is printed on the card. The use of Community request cards encourages people in the community (e.g. people in shops, cafés etc.) to speak directly to the person and involve them in the conversation rather than always interacting with their support worker.

Who benefits from Community request cards?

The use of a Community request card encourages independent communication. Some people may only be able to manage one card at a time while other people will carry a number of cards for a range of different situations.

The card also benefits people in the community. It helps the person who receives the card to know exactly what is wanted and how they need to respond to the request. It lets new communication partners learn about different ways of communicating and helps them to remember that it’s important to address the person with the disability rather than the support worker all the time.
When would you use a Community request card?

- when a person wants to interact and participate with people in their local community
- when a person is unable to effectively communicate with others using speech alone
- when the person has the ability to hand over or co-actively pass a card to another person.

How to make a Community request card

1. First of all, decide what activity to start with. Choose something that the person does regularly and enjoys.

2. Decide on the size of the card. Some people may need large cards in order to hold them. Some people may need the card small enough to go in their wallet.

3. Decide on the message/request to be made.

4. Clearly write or print the request onto a card. Make sure the print is large enough to be easily read.

5. Decide on how to best represent the request so that it is meaningful for the person, for example, object symbols, photos, line drawings.

6. Laminate the card to make it stronger or put it in a small plastic pouch.
How to introduce a Community request card

1. Start with an activity that has a quick and tangible result, for example, buying a cup of coffee or ordering a donut.

2. Practice the activity in the real situation.

3. Accompany the person to the counter, desk or wherever the request usually takes place.

4. Model handing over the card and waiting for the item being requested.

5. Co-actively assist the person to hand over the card.

6. Practice the activity, gradually reducing the support needed for a successful exchange.

Where to keep the Community request cards

The person can keep single cards in their wallet. If there are a number of them it is best to laminate them and put them on a key ring or in a small business card holder.
How to adapt Community request cards for different levels of communication

People who are early communicators

- will benefit from the social contact involved in interacting with people in the community
- will need the support person to assist with handing the card to the communication partner.

People who are informal communicators

- may benefit from an object or object symbol firmly attached to the card. The printed message is still needed for the communication partner
- will benefit from co-active assistance and modelling.

People who are symbolic communicators

- may use multiple Community request cards with photos, logos or line drawings for a range of community based activities
- may need some support initially in learning to use the Community request cards.

Example of final product

Object symbols can be used with people who can recognise objects and understand better when objects and Object symbols are used during communication.

Why do we use Object symbols?

We all use objects for communicating to another person. We might hold up a mug to someone and ask, ‘Do you want a cuppa?’ or rattle our car keys across a crowded room to say, ‘I’m going now.’ Used in this way an object becomes one of the many communication strategies we use in everyday life.

When we use objects, we use them as a way of augmenting our communication. The object reinforces our message because it is so closely related to what we want to communicate. There is often a correspondence between objects and activities based on their function: cups and drinking, keys and driving, towels and bathing, hairbrush and grooming. This is a concrete and tangible association. In fact, making a choice by choosing between objects is the simplest way we can communicate.

The use of Object symbols is a more formal way of using objects to support communication. Object symbols are whole or parts of real objects that are used to represent activities or events. The objects selected look like, feel like or have something to do with the thing or activity they represent. Using a real or partial object is the simplest and most concrete way of representing events and activities and therefore a good starting point for people with learning disabilities. The closer an Object symbol is to the real object, word or activity, the easier it is for the person to understand.

Using Object symbols rather than whole objects can make the system more portable and functional.
What is the purpose of objects and Object symbols?

Choosing between real objects is a practical informal means of communication. For example, holding up the jars to offer a choice between vegemite and peanut butter is a simple communication strategy. Objects can also be used more formally. They can be used to set up and reinforce routines and to expand a person’s range of choices.

We use objects or Objects symbols:
- to help the person understand what is happening or what is going to happen (e.g. Object based timetables)
- as a way to offer and make choices (e.g. Object choice boards).

Who benefits from using Object symbols?

People who understand better and can communicate their choices better when objects are used as well as words.

When to use Object symbols

They should be used whenever a person wants to make a choice or is asked to make a choice. They can also be useful in helping people to understand what is going to happen next.

How to select your Object symbols

There are several things to consider when choosing which objects to use for Object symbols. As we have seen, some activities or events are easier to represent than others when we consider the objects associated with them. It is not always easy to predict what will be useful.

Factors to consider:
- environment
- motivation
- sensory information
- physical properties
- where to next.
**Environment.** It is important to get to know the person and learn what they do during the day. What objects are associated with different daily events? What is the person's experience of a particular activity? What opportunities are there for the person to make choices? How does the person know what is happening and what is going to happen?

**Motivation.** When choosing objects or Object symbols, it is important to select items that are meaningful and of interest to the person.

**Sensory information.** We need to know how the person makes sense of the world. Many people with complex communication needs also have sensory difficulties. For example, a person with poor visual skills may need to rely on other senses to get information or to make choices. Object symbols need to be personalised to match the skills and interests of the person.

**Physical properties.** It is important to consider shape, size and portability. The person needs to be able to clearly indicate the item he or she wants. You need to plan ahead to work out how to present, transport and store Object symbols. Sometimes you have to be creative to work out how to make an Object symbol for something you know the person likes or wants, for example, a hamburger or a caramel sundae. Self-adhesive Velcro is often attached to an Object symbol and used to secure it to Velcro compatible material.

**Where to next.** Attaching a photo or a picture to the Object symbol (or to the front of a calendar box) is a way of introducing the person to a two-dimensional representation. It is also useful when working with people who are at differing communication levels. The picture needs to have the word 'label', and/or how to use the Object symbol displayed for people who don't know the person well.

When choosing an Object symbol remember it is a symbol and not the object itself. Symbols that have a very close relationship to the real item, such as partial or associated objects, need to be distinguished from the real object, for example, if you use a cup to represent morning tea, do not use the cup that will be drunk from. The important thing for the person to learn is that objects can represent events and activities.

**Storage**

Create a storage area/box for those items which may not be used frequently or which are yet to be used. Store these in an accessible or visible place.
How to adapt objects and Object symbols for different levels of communication

People who are early communicators

- will choose between some real objects to show preference
- may push away unwanted objects.

People who are intentional communicators

- will choose between real objects to show which one they want
- may choose between Object symbols to show what they want
- may use abstract Object symbols to communicate ‘finish’ or ‘more’
- may push away unwanted objects/Object symbols.

People who are symbolic communicators

- will choose between real objects and Object symbols to show what they want
- may understand the use of some miniatures
- will use abstract Object symbols to communicate ‘finish’ or ‘more’

Note: People with visual difficulties whose communication is at a symbolic (established) level benefit from the use of objects and Object symbols.
Final product

Example
Object symbols
1.1 What is Easy English?

Easy English is a style of writing that has been developed to provide understandable, concise information for people with low English literacy. People with low English literacy can be described as people with a limited ability to read and write words.

A person with low English literacy may have difficulty with spoken or written language skills for:

• working out meaning and
• conveying meaning.

Literacy also requires the ability and flexibility to take knowledge and apply it.

The definition of literacy has evolved. It has now been expanded to include literacy in information and communication technologies.

Easy English may also be called Easy Read, Easy to Read, Plain Language and Aphasia Friendly.

For more information see the ‘What is Easy English?’ fact sheet.

1.2 Who is Easy English for?

Many people find it hard to read and understand everyday written information and documents. The reasons for such difficulties are as diverse as the people themselves.

A person may have low English literacy due to:

• an intellectual or cognitive disability
• a learning disability
• an acquired disability, such as stroke, brain injury or degenerative condition
• poor educational outcomes
• reduced exposure to literacy in adult life
• ageing.

People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may also experience low English literacy.

For more information see the ‘Who is Easy English for?’ fact sheet.
1 About Easy English

1.3 Key principles of Easy English

Easy English focuses on presenting key information rather than all the detail. Words are combined with images to enhance the message for the reader.

Ideally, reading an Easy English document is a shared activity between the reader and another person, such as a friend, a family member or support person. Through discussion, the meaning of the document can be clarified, understood and further details can be provided. Once the document has been explained it can be a useful reminder for the person later.

1.4 Key features of Easy English

The key features of Easy English include
- simplified language and grammar
- minimal punctuation
- simplified font, layout and design and
- images that illustrate headings and key messages.

1.5 Where to find examples of Easy English

Scope's Accessible Information Service keeps records of a large number of examples from Australia and overseas.

For more information, please contact us (page 21).
2 Easy English Recommendations

In Easy English documents, information should be presented in sequence and written so that the reader understands the content and knows what actions to complete.

2.1 Document Design

Inclusive communications
Who is your audience? Remember that readers will have different life situations, experiences and cultures. Some readers may have a vision impairment. Some readers may have limited fine motor skills, making turning pages difficult.

Paper
Choose paper that is not see-through (at least 100gsm). Use matt paper. Shiny paper can make a document more difficult to read.

Tabs
Consider using tabs to make turning pages easier.

Always include:
- **A title**
  Always use a short, simple title. The title should make the content clear.
- **Headings**
  Use headings and sub-headings to break up the information.
- **Contact Information**
  When providing contact information, provide: the name of your organisation, date of publication, phone, fax and National Relay Service numbers, email, website and social media addresses.

  For websites, type the website address followed by step-by-step instructions for how to get to the exact webpage (see example on page 13).
- **Page numbers**
  Always use page numbers. They should be the same font size as your main text.

PLEASE NOTE:
The examples in this guide, as shown in boxes and in diagrams, are not to scale. As a result, the font size may appear smaller and lines may not be double-spaced.
2 Easy English Recommendations

Consider including:

- **Contents**
  Booklets and books should have a contents section. Use the heading ‘In this book’.

- **Introduction/Getting help with using this book**
  This might include where to find other available versions of the text or guidance for working through the resource. List information for the support person at the back of the book. When this information appears at the front of the book, it confuses the reader.

- **Glossary**
  Include a glossary for difficult words or frequently used pictures. You can use the heading ‘Words in this book’ or ‘Hard words’.

Use of Colour

**Do**

- use high contrast colours, so your text stands out
- use some colours as a background, but not as a typeface, e.g. yellow
- make white writing big and bold. Use a solid dark background

**Do not**

- overuse bright colours
- use a lot of different colours in the one document

For more information about appropriate colour contrast
contact Vision Australia. Phone 1300 84 74 66 or www.visionaustralia.org

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# 2 Easy English Recommendations

## Table 1. Document design - printed documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document type</th>
<th>Format and size</th>
<th>Design tips</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Card</td>
<td>A6 or A7. Single or double sided.</td>
<td>• Single message&lt;br&gt;• Contact information for further details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Poster</td>
<td>Large format for display (A3, A2 or A1).</td>
<td>• No more than 4 points&lt;br&gt;• Call to action&lt;br&gt;• Contact information for further details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Information sheet or flyer</td>
<td>A5 or A4. Printed one side only.</td>
<td>• Limited number of points&lt;br&gt;• Sections with headings&lt;br&gt;• Contact information for further details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Brochure</td>
<td>A4 paper. Vertical bi-folded into A5 size, i.e. 4 pages. Avoid trifold.</td>
<td>• Image on cover&lt;br&gt;• Brief information on cover&lt;br&gt;• Sections with headings&lt;br&gt;• Contact information for further details on back page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Booklet</td>
<td>A4 or A5 stapled.</td>
<td>• Image on cover&lt;br&gt;• Brief information on cover&lt;br&gt;• In this book (Contents)&lt;br&gt;• Sections with headings&lt;br&gt;• Words in this book (Glossary)&lt;br&gt;• Contact information for further details&lt;br&gt;• Information for support person inside back cover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Book or series of books</td>
<td>Larger than booklet. Bound, stapled or in ring bound folder. Number the booklets.</td>
<td>• Title and image on cover&lt;br&gt;• In this Book (Contents)&lt;br&gt;• Sections with headings&lt;br&gt;• Words in this book (Glossary)&lt;br&gt;• Contact information for further details&lt;br&gt;• Information for support person inside back cover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Forms</td>
<td>A4. Stapled side or top to make booklet.</td>
<td>• Include an example of how to complete the form&lt;br&gt;• Allow plenty of space for large handwriting&lt;br&gt;• Include an image for each new line (e.g. name, address)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Surveys</td>
<td>A4 portrait or landscape. Stapled side or top to make booklet.</td>
<td>• Include an example of how to complete the survey&lt;br&gt;• Allow plenty of space for large handwriting&lt;br&gt;• Landscape allows more space for responses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 2 Easy English Recommendations

### Table 2. Document design - Electronic resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document type</th>
<th>Design tips</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Websites</td>
<td>• Use the same principles from this style guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Use headings and subheadings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Present key points only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use simple navigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Use images for navigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Hide hyperlinks under the words “click here”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Alert reader if they are leaving the website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Refer to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Documents for websites</td>
<td>• Make sure the document is set up correctly for a screen reader program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Check headings and include alternative text for images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Supply a text only version for people who do not have access to a screen reader program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. PowerPoint presentations</td>
<td>• Use the same principles from this style guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use at least font size 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use at least 1.5 line spacing between lines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use about 20 words per slide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Paper sizes

[Diagram showing paper sizes A6, A7, A5, A4, A3, A2, and A1 with dimensions]
2 Easy English Recommendations

2.2 Language – Choosing your words

Inclusive communications
- Remember that your readers will have different life situations, experiences and cultures
- Choose language that is widely understood
- Give examples that will be familiar to the reader
- Name the person first, e.g. ‘a person with a disability’, not ‘a disabled person’

Be clear
- Focus on facts
- Give clear instructions
- Write only the key points
- Present information in a sequence of clear steps
- Use one idea per sentence
- Use clear examples that highlight the point you are making

Be direct
- Address readers as ‘you’
- Use ‘we’ for the writer of the material

Be specific
Be specific with
- dates
- time
- size
- amount

Be consistent
Use the same word to talk about the same thing.

This form is about how we can use your
- photo
- video
- information.
Write your name.
Sign your name.
Write the date.

Our organisation can help people with a disability.

We can help you.

You must tell us soon.

You must tell us before 26 August 2013.

This money is for your house. You must tell us who lives in your home.

This money is for your house. You must tell us who lives in your house.

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2 Easy English Recommendations

Use nouns instead of pronouns where possible

We will give it to them.
✔️ We will give the report to the government.

Use lists
Use bullet points or numbers.

The best tram stop is on Smith Street.
• Take route number 6
• Get off at stop number 22

Keep language simple

• Choose shorter words

× support  ✔️ help  ❌ specialist  ✔️ doctor

• If you need to use a difficult word, write the meaning in the glossary (‘Words in this book’)

Use a word instead of a phrase

× make a choice  ✔️ choose

Use short, simple sentences

× After attending the function, everyone will reconvene at the hotel.
✔️ You will meet the group. You will have dinner. You will go back to the hotel.

Use active sentences, not passive

× You will be told (passive).
✔️ We will tell you (active).
2 Easy English Recommendations

Use numerals for numbers, not words
Use two spaces on either side of the number

- There were thirteen people at the meeting.
- There were 13 people at the meeting.

When writing a phone number, it is acceptable to group the numbers in a way that is recognised as a phone number.

- 0 3 9 8 4 3 2 0 0 0
- 03 9843 2000

Keep language familiar
Choose words based on ‘everyday’ spoken language

- You should not eat poultry.
- You should not eat chicken or turkey.

Use standard Australian spelling

- color
- colour

Limit punctuation
Do not use
- brackets (brackets)
- hyphens ---
- ampersand &
- slashes \ / (except in web links)
- excessive detail
- slang or jargon
- catchy marketing phrases
- contractions of words (e.g. Write ‘it is’; not ‘it’s’)
- abbreviations (e.g. Write ‘For example’ not ‘e.g.’)
- acronyms unless the acronym is more common than the full version (e.g. ATM versus ‘automatic teller machine’ or NSW versus New South Wales). Do not punctuate acronyms (e.g. Write NSW, not N.S.W.). Explain any acronym you use at the start of the document and/or in the glossary (‘Words in this book’).
2 Easy English Recommendations

2.3 Document Layout

Margins
- Use wide margins, at least 2.5 cm wide
- If using images use a 6.5 - 7.5 cm left margin. This leaves white space on the left to insert images.

Spacing
- Use double line spacing between paragraph lines. White space is thinking space
- Insert extra spaces between lines of text with images
- Increase space between numbers and any symbols used, e.g. 6 and 8

Style of writing
- Choose a sans serif font (i.e. without serifs, the small projecting lines). Suitable fonts include Arial, Helvetica, Tahoma, Trebuchet or Verdana
- Use upper and lower case. Do not use upper case, e.g. What not WHAT.

Size of writing
- Use font size 14 for body text
- Use font size 16 or larger for headings
- Use larger text for flyers
- Use even larger text for posters

Alignment
- Left align all text, including headings
- Do not centre text
- Do not justify text
- Do not use multiple columns of text

Text density
- If using images, use no more than 25 - 30 characters per line
- If not using images, use no more than 50 - 60 characters per line
2 Easy English Recommendations

Completeness
- Complete a word on the line it starts
- Complete a sentence on the page it starts

Emphasis
- Use bold for important words or phrases
- Use a text box to highlight information

Do not
- You can choose to answer the questions, or You can choose not to answer the questions.
- Do not centre text
- Do not use italics
- To do this survey, you must be 18 years old.

- You can choose to answer the questions.
- Do not justify text
- Do not underline text
- To do this survey, you must be 18 years old.

- YOUR INFORMATION WILL BE PRIVATE
- Do not use upper case text - except for selected acronyms (see pg 9)
- Do not use font effects such as strike through, super, or subscript

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2 Easy English Recommendations

**What to do with this form**

- Read all the information on page 13
- Fill in the blue form
- Put the form in the envelope
- Send the envelope to me before Friday 20 August 2013

- Use font size 16 or larger for headings
- Use at least double line spacing between paragraph lines
- Choose a sans serif font
- Use bold for important words or phrases
- If using images use a 6.5 - 7.5 cm left margin
- Use wide margins, at least 2.5 cms wide

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2 Easy English Recommendations

How to include website information
If you can, include detailed instructions for the people who print the document.

You can get this book

Email   crc@scopevic.org.au

Website   [Click here]  

or

offer/communicationresourcecentre/resources

or

Go to   www.scopevic.org.au

Click on   What we offer

Look at the list on the left

Click on   Communication Resource Centre

Look at the list on the left

Click on   + Resources

A text box may help to highlight important information

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2 Easy English Recommendations

2.4 Images

Inclusive communications

- Consider readers who have different life situations, experiences and cultures
- Choose images that are familiar to your audience's everyday life
- Be aware that many images are not always universally understood

Use of images

Images should:

- be meaningful to the reader
- make your key messages easier to understand
- emphasise the key points in the document
- help the reader to remember information.

Images are only useful for people who recognise and understand images.

There are a number of factors to consider when using images

- How similar the images look to the real object or activity
- Whether the image can be confused with something else
- How clear the image is. The background of the image should not distract from the image
- How the thickness of the image lines affects the clarity
- How acceptable the image is to the target audience. For example,
  - culturally appropriate
  - within the life experience, and
  - age appropriate

Some images can be recognised and understood immediately. Other images need to be learnt. If the image is representing a complex concept, it can be difficult to understand. This could be because the person looking at the image has no experience of the object or concept that is being shown.

If you cannot find a suitable image it may be because the language is too complex. Go back and review the language used to make sure it is as simple as possible.
2 Easy English Recommendations

Types of images to use in Easy English documents

- Photographs
- Logos
- Illustrations and line drawings
- Pictographs

A note about copyright
Many images have restrictions due to copyright. Check the copyright on the particular image you use.

You should:

- use an image on the title page to show what the document is about
- use coloured images if possible. If you are photocopying to black and white, choose black and white images
- present images on the left, then the writing. This may support the person to ‘read’ the image and then read the text or have the text read to them
- have space around the image
- use a plain, solid background. DO NOT use watermark text or graphics behind the image
- keep the writing and images separate. Do not overlap the writing with the images.
2 Easy English Recommendations

How to use images

Clarity
- Use clear, high quality images
- Use images to illustrate key points or the main idea in a paragraph
- Use an image that accurately shows the idea in the text, e.g. send the form back to me
- Use an image on the title page that represents what the document is about

Relevance
Use an image that is appropriate for your target audience, e.g. Vietnamese family.

Symbols
Use symbols such as arrows and ticks to show concepts such as good, yes, go and leave.

Highlighting
Use a cross or place a diagonal line over an image to indicate a negative concept

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2 Easy English Recommendations

- Use circles rather than arrows to highlight a part of an image
- Arrows can be difficult to track visually
- When you create a line or circle, use a 4 point line stroke/weight

Time
Represent time using both a 12 hour clock and a digital clock

Images to avoid
- Avoid or minimise the use of speech and thought bubbles
- Avoid the use of tables, maps or diagrams. These can be hard to understand
- Be aware that some illustrations or cartoons can be viewed as childish

Pictographs
A pictograph is a pictorial representation of a physical object or concept, e.g. disability service, Scope service.
2 Easy English Recommendations

Logos
- A logo is an emblem or graphic mark of a company or organisation
- Use appropriate logos, as required
- Check with the owner for permission to use their logo
- Check the owner’s style guide for the rules for using their logo

Photographs
- Use clear photographs
- Remove background and foreground clutter
- Make sure the concept or message is the main feature of the photograph
- Use a clear background screen when you take photographs of objects
- Avoid or reduce glare from reflective surfaces

Repetition
- Use the same image for the same concept throughout the document
- Consider including the image with a definition in your glossary (“Words in this book”)

Avoid overuse
- Use images sparingly
- Do not insert images purely for decoration
- Do not use an image for every word in the document

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3 Consumer Testing

3.1 Who are the consumers?
Community members with low English literacy are appropriate consumers for Easy English testing. People with low English literacy are experts in deciding if a document is Easy English or not.

Choosing appropriate consumers
Documents should be matched with consumers based on the consumers’ interests, life experiences, and/or their affinity with the intended audience.

Consumer testing with a reference group or advisory group
Many organisations already have a ‘reference group’ or ‘advisory group’ that they consult with. If you plan to test your Easy English documents with your existing group/s, it is important to make sure the group is appropriate for the consumer testing job. For example, if a council wants to test an Easy English document with their ‘disability reference group’ – do the group members actually have reading difficulties? Will the council get the right kind of feedback on the document?

Consumer testing - individual or group?
Both methods can be useful. The approach you choose will depend on the consumers and the type of documents being tested. If people are reluctant to read aloud or speak up in groups, individual testing may be more successful.

3.2 What does consumer testing involve?
Consumer testing involves obtaining direct feedback from an individual or a group of people to determine the readability and usability of written material.

In order to participate in individual or group consumer testing, most people will need assistance. Some participants will read all or parts of the document themselves. Others will need the document read to them. Most will need guidance to be able to read and understand the information, as well as discuss and provide feedback.

Consumers are supported to provide feedback on:
- the general layout and presentation of the information: Is the document easy to follow? Is the format accessible?
- the language used: Is the content clear and easy to understand?
- images used: Do the images make sense and support the language?
- overall ease of use and readability.

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4 References & Contact Information

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• **Mencap. Make it Clear.** http://www.mencap.org.uk/make_it_clear

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  http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/
4 References & Contact Information

Contact Information
Scope’s Communication & Inclusion Resource Centre

Address  
830 Whitehorse Road
Box Hill, VIC 3128

Phone  
(03) 9843 2000

Fax  
(03) 9843 2033

Email  
circ@scopevic.org.au

Website  
www.scopevic.org.au

Facebook  
https://www.facebook.com/scopevic

Twitter  
https://twitter.com/scopevictoria

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References


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