



Lesson 1: Communication and communication difficulties

Communication is how people connect and create understanding together. When we communicate, we continuously send signals to each other. We work together as communication partners to build a shared understanding.

Communication is:

- Essential to all aspects of life
- A human right.

Types of communication	Description	Example
Unaided communication	Communication that uses a person's own abilities without using equipment. This may include using speech, facial expression, gestures, or sign language.	
Aided communication	When people use equipment to assist communication, this is known as aided communication. Communication assistive products are an example of aided communication.	

Communication problems

Communication problems are temporary barriers to communication caused by the situation or environment. For example, language differences, not knowing or not being used to a person, or environmental noise. Communication problems can often be resolved using different types of aided and unaided communication.

Communication difficulties

Communication difficulties are ongoing challenges a person has with speaking or understanding in any situation or environment. They may experience difficulties using speech, or difficulties both using and understanding speech.

People with these communication difficulties can be described as having communication support needs.

Communication assistive products may assist.

People who may benefit from communication assistive products include people who have:

- Speech which can only be understood by some people, such as family and close friends.
- Speech which only includes a few words that are useful for communication. They may use words which are not meaningful or relevant to the context. They may also have difficulty speaking or understanding full sentences.
- Speech which is not possible in some situations, such as when they feel anxious, overwhelmed or unwell. At other times the person can speak and be easily understood by other people.

Impact of communication difficulties

People with communication support needs can have difficulty:

- Creating and maintaining relationships
- Participating in activities they want or need to do.

People with communication support needs may also be more vulnerable to abuse and neglect. This is because they may have difficulty using speech to defend themselves, asking others to treat them kindly or report harm.

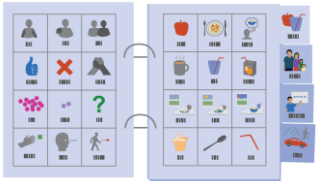
Suggestions for communication partners	
Take your time	• Speak slowly. • Speak in shorter sentences. • Allow plenty of time for the person to respond.

Ask questions	- Ask the person about the different ways they communicate. - If a person has difficulty understanding or answering your question, ask in a different way. For example, ask questions which can be answered yes or no. - Ask family members or caregivers but always check their answers with the person with communication support needs.
Listen	- You may have to put more effort into listening when communicating with people who have speech difficulties. - Observe different ways of communicating. For example, facial expressions and gestures.
Keep trying	Keep exploring ways to involve the person in conversation and decision making.

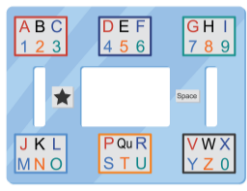
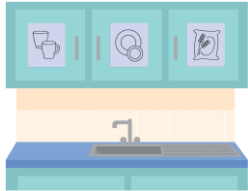
Lesson 2: Communication assistive products

Communication aids are a term commonly used to describe the communication assistive products included on TAP.

Communication assistive products included on TAP

Communication board	Communication book	Text-based communication app on a smartphone	Symbol-based communication app on a tablet
			

Communication assistive products not included on TAP

E-tran (eye-transfer) frame	Environment supports	Eye gaze systems	Switch systems
			
Used with eye pointing.	Prompts in the environment.	Track eye movements.	Access text/symbol vocabularies.

Lesson 3: How to carry out a communication screen

Use the TAP communication screen to find out the different ways the person communicates. Identifying their communication abilities will support the person to be included and participate in the screening process.

The TAP communication screen helps identify whether a person may benefit from:

- Referral to a rehabilitation service or health professional
- An assessment for a communication assistive product included on TAP.

It is important to check the preferred language of the person and their family members. This is the language most commonly spoken in their daily activities. Check the communication aid can be provided in that language.

Communication abilities

First ask the person questions to find out about their communication abilities and the way they express themselves. Use the other ways a person communicates (in addition to speech) to involve them in the screening process.

- Describe any difficulties the person has with their speech
- Identify other ways the person communicates.

If it is difficult to communicate with the person, ask if a family member or caregiver can assist.

Hearing

If the person is unable to hear (even when wearing their hearing aids), with their permission  refer them to an ear and hearing professional and  stop screen.

Vision

If the person is unable to see words or pictures (even when wearing spectacles), with their permission  refer to an eye health professional and  stop screen. Explain that if their vision improves, they can return for a communication screen.

A person who is unable to hear or see words or pictures may still benefit from a communication aid. However, they have more complex needs which are not included on TAP.

Speech

A communication aid may assist:

- Adults and children who have an unexplained change in their speech
- Any child using very limited or different speech compared to other children of the same age.

Continue with the communication screen **and**  refer to a health professional if the person has not already been assessed.

Impact on daily life

A person may benefit from a communication aid if their difficulties using or understanding speech affects their ability to:

- Get their message across
- Create and maintain relationships
- Participate in activities they want to do or need to do.

Language and environment

Consider both communication books and boards and electronic communication aids.

If your service does not have access to tablets or smartphones with a communication app, **only** consider an assessment for communication books and boards.

If electronic communication aids are available, check:

- If the language/s used by the person are available on the electronic communication aid
- If the person has access to electricity to charge a smartphone or tablet.

Lesson 4: Plan

Other assistive products

During the communication screen, ask the person if they have difficulties in other areas, such as vision, hearing, mobility, self care, or cognition (planning or remembering).

Next actions

- **Assess:** If a person may benefit from one or more of the communication aids available at your service, continue to assess for communication aids.
- **Refer** a person to:
 - An ear and hearing professional if they cannot hear people speaking
 - An eye health professional if the person cannot see the communication aid
 - A health professional for an unexplained change in speech, or a significant delay in speech development.
- **Screen** a person for other assistive products if they have needs in other areas.
- **Follow up** if the person will return for an assessment for communication aids on another day.