



## Communication Toolkit. (what you say)

This is a toolkit to help you make communication easier for people with a learning disability.

**You will still need to support people. Accessible information is not meant to stand alone.**

You can use it as a checklist. Please feel free to photocopy it on blue paper as you need to.

This page is about the **content** or **what** you are trying to say.

### Vocabulary (the words you use).

- Use **familiar** words e.g. "drink" rather than "refreshment".
- Use words with **one meaning** e.g. "happy or sad" rather than "moody".
- Use **concrete**, not abstract words e.g. "after lunch" not "later".
- **Avoid jargon** words, explain or substitute them e.g. use "car" not "transport or vehicle".
- **Avoid abbreviations** such as "Rd" for "road" and "no." for "number".
- **Use names** not pronouns e.g. "the Doctor", not "she".
- **Check** people can understand the words you use.

### Sentences.

- Use **short sentences** with one main idea.
- Use **active** not passive sentences e.g. "Paul drove the bus" not "the bus was driven by Paul".
- Keep sentences **uncluttered**, miss out words you don't need e.g. "we need to write a shopping list" rather than "I think we could do with writing a list before we go out shopping".
- **Avoid unnecessary punctuation marks** such as !!! for emphasis.
- Use **positive sentences** whenever you can e.g. "Simon should eat breakfast" rather than "Simon should not miss breakfast".
- Use **straightforward, unambiguous** sentences, e.g. avoid things like "thinking outside the box" and "taking your ball home".

# Communication Toolkit. (how you communicate)

This page is about **how** you say or write your message.

You can use it as a checklist. Please feel free to photocopy it as you need to.

## Speaking.

- **Avoid distractions** like noise, clutter, interruptions and being uncomfortable.
- Make sure people can **hear and see** any screens, flipcharts and speakers.
- Ensure **seats** are in the right place and the sun doesn't dazzle people.
- Make sure people are **listening** before you start. Check people keep listening and **understand** after each main item.
- Give people **breaks**, at least every 45 minutes.
- Lots of people (at least 40%) have a hearing loss. Speak **clearly and loudly** enough for people to hear. Use the **loop system** if it is available. Carpeted rooms and soft furnishings help.
- Make sure your tone of voice and **facial expression** matches what you say.
- Use **signing, symbols or pictures** to help people understand (see standardised list).

## Writing.

- **Big clear typeface** helps. Use Arial font size 18 to 24 if possible, 14 minimum.
- **Avoid underlining, italics and block capitals.**
- Some groups use **coloured paper** to identify them, e.g. Quality Forums are purple.
- The layout of documents should be **clear and uncluttered**. Use lists, bullet points, boxes, keywords, headings and symbols to help people. Colour coding of topics can also be used.
- Keep documents as **short** as possible.
- **Symbols or pictures** should be used for extra information wherever possible. Usually we put the symbol on the left or directly above the message or idea.
- Do not use symbols or pictures to just decorate a document. They must have a **specific meaning** and help the reader.
- Use symbols or pictures from the **standard list**.
- **Avoid coloured** symbols or pictures if possible, as they don't photocopy as clearly. Also too much colour can be confusing.
- Make sure symbols and pictures are **big enough** for people to see.
- Visually impaired people need non-glossy paper (e.g. not laminated) and high contrast ink to paper, such as black ink on white or yellow paper.