

Communication Matrix Questions and Answer Options

©Charity Rowland, 1994

Updated 09-2012

GETTING STARTED...

Please check **ONE** of the four statements below that **best** describes the communication skills of your child.

___A. *My child doesn't seem to have real control over his body yet. The only way I know that he wants something is because he fusses or whines when he's unhappy or uncomfortable, and he smiles, makes noises or calms down when he's happy and comfortable. Does this statement describe your child? If you checked this statement, go to Section A (p. 1)*

___B. *My child has control over her own behaviors, but she doesn't use them to try to communicate to me. She doesn't come to me to let me know what she wants, but it's easy for me to figure out, because she tries to do things for herself. She knows what she wants, and her behavior shows me what she wants. If she runs out of something to eat, she will just try to get more, rather than trying to get me to give her more. Does this statement describe your child? If you checked this statement, go to Section B (p. 2)*

___C. *My child clearly tries to communicate his needs to me through gestures, sounds or language. He knows how to get me to do something for him. He uses some of the kinds of behaviors below to communicate:*

- Gestures such as pointing, shaking his head, tugging at my arm or looking back and forth between me and what he wants
- Sounds such as squealing to show you he wants something or fussing when he doesn't want something
- Language or symbolic forms of communication such as speech, written words, Braille, picture symbols, 3-dimensional symbols or sign language

If you checked this statement, go to Section C (p. 4)

SECTION A

At this stage your child doesn't seem to have control over her own behaviors, but seems mostly to react to sensations. Her reactions show you how she feels.

A1. *Expresses Discomfort.* Can you tell when your child is uncomfortable (in pain, wet, hungry, startled)? If so, what does your child do to make you think s/he's uncomfortable?

Body movements

- change in posture (stiffen body, twist, turn away)
- limb movements (kick legs, bat arms)
- head movements (turn head away)

Early Sounds

- cry, grunt, scream

Facial expressions

- grimace

A2. *Expresses Comfort.* Can you tell when your child is contented, comfortable or pleasantly excited? If so, what does your child do to make you think s/he's comfortable?

Body movements

- Change in posture (stiffen body, relax)
- Limb movements (kick legs, bat arms)
- Head movements (bob head)

Early Sounds

- coo, squeal

Facial expressions

- smile

A3. *Expresses Interest in Other People.* Can you tell that your child is interested in other people? If so, what does your child do to make you think she's interested in you or other people?

Body movements

- change in posture (stiffen body, relax)
- limb movements (kick legs, bat arms)

Early Sounds

- coo, fuss

Facial expressions

- smile

Does your child also have a few behaviors that appear to be under his control (that are intentional?). If so, then go on to Section B and see if you can answer "Yes" to any of those questions.

SECTION B

At this stage your child is able to do things on purpose (intentionally), but he doesn't yet realize that he can communicate things to you using his behaviors. For instance, he may cry and roll over to get his bottle when he wants more to drink, but he doesn't seem to whine to get YOU to get him his bottle.

B1. *Protests.* Can you tell that your child doesn't want some specific thing, such as a certain food or a toy or a game you're playing, like tickling? If so, what does your child do to make you think s/he doesn't like something?

Body movements

- head movements (turn head away, pull back head)
- arm movements (bat arms, push or throw away)
- leg movements (stamp, kick)
- moves away from person or object

Early Sounds

- whine, fuss, scream

Facial expressions

- frown, grimace

B2. *Continues an Action.* Can you sometimes tell that your child would like to continue an action or activity that you have just stopped doing with her (such as bouncing, patty cake, playing a musical toy)? If so, what does your child do to make you think s/he would like to continue an activity?

Body movements

- head movement (moves forward, bobs head)
- arm movement (bats arms)
- leg movement (kicks)

Early Sounds

- coo, squeal, fuss

Facial expressions

- smile

Visual

- looks at person

B3. *Obtains More of Something.* Can you sometimes tell that your child wants more of something specific (such as food or a toy)? If so, what does your child do to make you think s/he wants more of something?

Body movements

- approaches desired object
- head movement (moves head forward, bobs head)
- arm movement (bats arms)
- leg movement (kicks)
- takes desired item

Early Sounds

- coo, squeal, fuss

Facial expressions

- smile

Visual

- looks at desired item

B4. *Attracts Attention.* Does your child do certain things that attract your attention to him, even though he isn't purposefully trying to get your attention? If so, what behaviors does your child produce that attract your attention?

Body movements

- approaches person
- head movement (moves head forward, bobs head)
- arm movement (bats arms)
- leg movement (kicks)

Early Sounds

- coo, squeal, fuss

Facial expressions

- smile

Visual

- looks at person

Does your child also have a few behaviors that she clearly uses with the purpose of communicating something to you? If so, go to Section C and see if you can answer “Yes” to any of those questions.

SECTION C

At this stage, your child knows that if he does certain things, you will react in certain ways, and he uses his behaviors to communicate very intentionally. There are many different ways that a child may communicate intentionally. Some involve symbols (speech, sign language, picture symbols, 3-dimensional symbols); others involve specific gestures or body movements; some involve early sounds that aren't yet speech. Some children with severe physical impairments may use electronic devices to communicate. Whatever the behavior the child uses to communicate, what's important here is that he uses those behaviors on purpose, obviously trying to communicate something specific to you. Remember that some children may access symbols through a communication device.

C1. *Refuses or Rejects Something.* Does your child **intentionally** show you that he or she doesn't want a certain thing or a certain activity? If so, what does your child do to refuse or reject something?

Body movements

- whole body movement (twist, turn away)
- head movement (turn head away or to side)
- arm or hand movements
- leg movement (kick, stamp feet)

Early Sounds

- scream, whine

Facial expressions

- frown, grimace

Simple gestures

- pushes away object or person

Conventional gestures & vocalizations

- gives unwanted item to you
- shakes head “no”
- specific vocalizations (“uh uh”)

Concrete symbols

- rejects photo or drawing of unwanted item
- rejects object symbol representing unwanted item

Abstract symbols

- spoken word (“no”, “finished”)
- manual sign (“no”, “stop”)
- written word (“no”, “finished”)
- brailled word (“no”, “stop”)
- abstract three-dimensional symbol (for “no”, “stop”)
- abstract two-dimensional symbol (for “no”, “stop”)

Language

- Combines two or more symbols (“stop it”, “all done”, “no go out”)

C2. *Requests More of an Action.* Does your child **intentionally** show you that s/he wants more of an action (such as playing peek-a-boo or making a musical toy go) that you have just stopped doing? If so, what does your child do to show you that s/he wants more of an action?

Body movements

- whole body movement (lunge)
- arm/hand movement (bats arms)
- leg movement (kicks)

Early Sounds

- coo, squeal, laugh

Facial expressions

- smiles

Visual

- looks at you

Simple gestures

- takes your hand
- touches you
- reaches towards or taps you

Conventional gestures & vocalizations

- beckons you to come
- holds hands up or out to you (for "up")
- nods head

Concrete symbols

- indicates photo or drawing of desired action
- indicates object symbol representing desired action
- pantomimes desired action

Abstract symbols

- spoken word ("more", "tickle")
- manual sign ("more", "swing")
- written word ("more", "tickle")
- brailled word ("more", "rock")
- abstract 3-dimensional symbol ("more", "tickle")
- abstract 2-dimensional symbol ("more", "eat")

Language

- combines two or more symbols (“more tickle”, “do it again”)

C3. *Requests a New Action.* Does your child **intentionally** indicate that s/he wants you to perform a new action (one that you have not just been engaged in)? If so, how does your child request (or command) a new action?

Body movements

- whole body movement (bounce up and down, as in desired new action)
- arm/hand movements (move arms as in desired new action)
- leg movements (move legs as in desired new action)

Facial expressions

- smiles

Visual

- looks at you

Simple gestures

- takes your hand

Conventional gestures & vocalizations

- beckons you to come
- holds hands up or out to you (for "up")

Concrete symbols

- indicates photo or drawing of desired action
- indicates object symbol representing desired action
- pantomimes desired action
- mimics sound that goes with desired action—such as a tune

Abstract symbols

- spoken word ("tickle")
- manual sign ("eat")
- written word ("tickle")
- brailled word ("swing")
- abstract 3-dimensional symbol ("rock")
- abstract 2-dimensional symbol ("tickle")

Language

- combines two or more symbols ("tickle me", "I want swing")

C4. *Requests More of an Object.* Does your child **intentionally** show you that s/he wants more of something (such as a toy or some food), after already having some of it? If so, how does your child request more of an object?

Body movements

- whole body movements (lunge toward object)
- move head towards desired item
- arm/hand movements
- leg movements

Early Sounds

- fuss, squeal

Visual

- looks at desired object

Facial expressions

- smile

Simple gestures

- guides your hand to or pulls you over to desired item
- touches desired object (without taking it)
- reaches towards or taps object

Conventional gestures & vocalizations

- looks back and forth between you and desired item
- points at desired item

Concrete symbols

- indicates photo or drawing of desired item
- indicates object symbol representing desired item
- pantomimes desired item
- mimics sound of desired item

Abstract symbols

- spoken word ("more", "ball")
- manual sign ("more", "doll")
- written word ("more", "juice")
- brailled word ("more", "ball")
- abstract 3-dimensional symbol ("more", "ball")
- abstract 2-dimensional symbol ("more", "cracker")

Language

- combines two or more symbols (“more juice”, “ want more bubbles”)

C5. *Makes Choices.* Does your child **intentionally** make a choice between two or more items that you offer at the same time? (Make sure that your child is aware of all the choices presented and doesn't just indicate the first item he notices) If so, how does your child make choices?

Body movements

- whole body movement (lunge toward object)
- move head towards desired item

Visual

- looks at object

Simple gestures

- guides your hand to desired item
- reaches towards, touches or taps desired item (without taking it)

Conventional gestures & vocalizations

- looks back and forth between you and desired item
- points to desired item

Concrete symbols

- indicates photo or drawing of desired item
- indicates object symbol representing desired item
- pantomimes desired item
- mimics sound of desired item

Abstract symbols

- spoken word ("that" or name of item)
- manual sign ("that" or name of item)
- written word (name of item)
- brailled word (name of item)
- abstract 3-dimensional symbol (name of item)
- abstract 2-dimensional symbol (name of item)

Language

- combines two or more symbols ("that one", "I want train")

C6. *Requests a New Object.* Does your child **intentionally** show you that s/he wants a new object (such as a toy or some food) that is within his sight, hearing or touch, but that you have not offered? If so, how does your child request new objects?

Body movements

- whole body movements (lunge toward object)
- move head towards desired item

Visual

- looks at object

Simple gestures

- guides your hand to or pulls you over to desired item
- touches desired object (without taking it)
- reaches towards or taps object

Conventional gestures & vocalizations

- looks back and forth between you and desired item
- points at desired object

Concrete symbols

- indicates photo or drawing of desired item
- indicates object symbol representing desired item
- pantomimes desired item
- mimics sound of desired item

Abstract symbols

- spoken word ("car")
- manual sign ("doll")
- written word ("ball")
- brailled word ("cracker")
- abstract 3-dimensional symbol ("car")
- abstract 2-dimensional symbol ("juice")

Language

- combines two or more symbols (“want car”, “I want ball”)

C7. *Requests Objects that are Absent.* Does your child **intentionally** request things (toys, food, people) that are not present in the immediate environment (things that are out of sight, hearing, touch, in another room, etc.)? If so, how does your child request absent objects?

Concrete symbols

- indicates photo or drawing of desired item/person
- indicates object symbol representing desired item/person
- pantomimes desired item
- mimics sound of desired item

Abstract symbols

- spoken word ("ball")
- manual sign ("doll")
- written word ("cracker")
- brailled word ("juice")
- abstract 3-dimensional symbol ("book")
- abstract 2-dimensional symbol ("ball")

Language

- combines two or more symbols (“want ball”, “I want car”)

C8. *Requests Attention.* Does your child **intentionally** try to attract your attention? If so, how does your child request your attention?

Early Sounds

- coo, squeal

Facial expressions

- smile

Visual

- looks at you

Simple gestures

- arm/hand movement (bats arms)
- touches you
- activates switch or “calling device”

Conventional gestures & vocalizations

- beckons you to come
- points to you

Concrete symbols

- indicates photo or drawing representing concept such as "look at me"
- indicates object symbol representing concept such as "look at me"

Abstract symbols

- spoken word ("look", "mama")
- manual sign ("look", "daddy")

- written word ("look", "mama")
- brailled word ("look", Bobby)
- abstract 3-dimensional symbol ("look", "mama")
- abstract 2-dimensional symbol ("look", "teacher")

Language

- combines two or more symbols ("daddy, look", "look at me")

C9. *Shows Affection.* Does your child **intentionally** demonstrate affection toward you or anyone else? If so, what does your child do to show affection?

Early Sounds

- coo, squeal

Facial expressions

- smile

Visual

- looks at you

Simple gestures

- arm/hand movements
- touches you

Conventional gestures & vocalizations

- hugs, kisses, pats you

Concrete symbols

- indicates photo or drawing representing concept such as "love"

Abstract symbols

- spoken word ("love")
- manual sign ("hug")
- written word ("love")
- brailled word ("love")
- abstract 3-dimensional symbol ("hug")
- abstract 2-dimensional symbol ("love")

Language

- combines two or more symbols ("love you", "I like mama")

C10. *Greets People.* Does your child **intentionally** indicate hello or goodbye when someone arrives or leaves? If so, how does your child greet you or other people?

Conventional gestures & vocalizations

- Waves "hi" or "bye"

Concrete symbols

- Indicates photo or drawing representing greeting ("hello", "goodbye")

Abstract symbols

- spoken word ("hi", "bye")
- manual sign ("hi", "bye")
- written word ("hi", "bye")

- brailled word ("hi", "bye")
- abstract 3-dimensional symbol ("hi", "bye")
- abstract 2-dimensional symbol ("hi", "bye")

Language

- combines two or more symbols ("bye, Mommy", "good morning, Daddy")

C11. *Offers or Shares Things.* Does your child **intentionally** offer things or share things with you, not expecting anything in return? If so, how does your child offer or share something with you?

Conventional gestures & vocalizations

- gives or shows something to you
- specific vocalizations (questioning sound as if for "want this?")

Concrete symbols

- indicates photo or drawing representing concept such as "yours"
- indicates object symbol representing concept such as "yours"

Abstract symbols

- spoken word ("yours")
- manual sign ("yours")
- written word ("yours")
- brailled word ("yours")
- abstract 3-dimensional symbol ("yours")
- abstract 2-dimensional symbol ("yours")

Language

- combines two or more symbols ("for you", "cookie for you")

C12. *Directs Your Attention to Something.* Does your child **intentionally** direct your attention to something that s/he is interested in (as if saying "look at that")? If so, how does your child direct your attention to something?

Conventional gestures & vocalizations

- points to something
- looks back and forth between you and object, person or place

Concrete symbols

- indicates photo or drawing representing concept such as "look at that"
- indicates object symbol representing concept such as "look at that"

Abstract symbols

- spoken word ("look", "there")
- manual sign ("look", "there")
- written word ("look", "there")
- brailled word ("look", "there")
- abstract 3-dimensional symbol ("look", "there")
- abstract 2-dimensional symbol ("look", "there")

Language

- combines two or more symbols ("over there", "look at that")

C13. *Uses Polite Social Forms.* Does your child sometimes **intentionally** use polite forms of social interaction such as asking you for permission before doing something, indicating "please", "thank you" or "excuse me"? If so, how what polite social forms does your child use?

Conventional gestures & vocalizations

- points to something (as if asking "can i have it?")
- specific vocalizations (questioning sound for "may I?")

Concrete symbols

- indicates photo or drawing representing concept such as "please", "thank you"
- indicates object symbol representing concept such as "please", "thank you"

Abstract symbols

- spoken word ("please")
- manual sign ("thanks")
- written word ("please")
- brailled word ("sorry")
- abstract 3-dimensional symbol ("please")
- abstract 2-dimensional symbol ("thanks")

Language

- combines two or more symbols ("yes, please", " Mommy, may I?")

C14. *Answers "Yes" and "No" Questions.* Does your child **intentionally** indicate "yes" or "no" or "I don't know" in answer to a question? If so, how does your child answer "yes" or "no" questions?

Conventional gestures & vocalizations

- nods head "yes"
- shakes head "no"
- shrugs shoulders
- specific vocalization indicating yes, no ("uh-huh", "nu-uh")

Concrete symbols

- indicates photo/drawing representing "yes" or "no"

Abstract symbols

- spoken word ("yes", "no")
- manual sign ("yes", "no")
- written word ("yes", "no")
- brailled word ("yes", "no")
- abstract 3-dimensional symbol ("yes", "no")
- abstract 2-dimensional symbol ("yes", "no")

Language

- combines two or more symbols ("no way", "I don't know")

C15. *Asks Questions.* Does your child ask you questions (not necessarily using words), clearly wanting an answer from you? If so, how does your child ask questions?

Conventional gestures & vocalizations

- holds up hands, shrugs shoulders, as if questioning
- specific vocalizations, as if questioning
- looks back and forth between you and object or place

Concrete symbols

- indicates photo or drawing representing a question ("who?", "what?", "where?", "when?", "why?")
- indicates object symbol representing a question ("who?", "what?", "where?", "when?", "why?")

Abstract symbols

- spoken word ("who?", "what?", "where?", "when?", "why?")
- manual sign ("who?", "what?", "where?", "when?", "why?")
- written word ("who?", "what?", "where?", "when?", "why?")
- brailled word ("who?", "what?", "where?", "when?", "why?")
- abstract 3-dimensional symbol ("who?", "what?", "where?", "when?", "why?")
- abstract 2-dimensional symbol ("who?", "what?", "where?", "when?", "why?")

Language

- combines two or more symbols ("why not?", "where you go?")

C16. *Names Things or People.* Does your child name or label objects, people or actions, either spontaneously or in response to a question from you (such as "what's that?")? If so, how does your child name something?

Concrete symbols

- indicates photo/drawing of object/person/place/activity
- indicates object symbol representing object/person/place/activity
- pantomimes action or object
- mimics sound of object

Abstract symbols

- spoken word (name of item)
- manual sign (name of item)
- written word (name of item)
- brailled word (name of item)
- abstract 3-dimensional symbol (name of item)
- abstract 2-dimensional symbol (name of item)

Language

- combines two or more symbols ("that car", "this your car")

C17. *Makes Comments.* Does your child spontaneously (without being asked) provide information to you about things in the form of comments ("that's pretty", "hot", etc.). If so, how does your child make a comment?

Concrete symbols

- indicates photo/drawing of object/person/place/activity/quality
- indicates object symbol representing object/person/place/activity/quality
- pantomimes action, object, person or quality

Abstract symbols

- spoken word ("pretty")
- manual sign ("cold")
- written word ("hot")
- brailled word ("bad")
- abstract 3-dimensional symbol ("nice")
- abstract 2-dimensional symbol ("yellow")

Language

- combines two or more symbols ("you nice", "that too cold")