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# The Communication Matrix

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Communication is the foundation for all learning!



Dedicated to *Life* Without Limits

# The Communication Matrix

## An assessment tool:



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- For children with severe or multiple disabilities
- Documents expressive communication
- Results in the completion of a profile which maps results & provides a framework for goals
  - <https://www.designtolearn.com/uploaded/pdf/CM/Communication-Matrix-For-Parents-Profile.pdf>
- Developed by Charity Rowland (websites):
  - Hard copies: <https://www.designtolearn.com/> 10 for \$74.00
  - On-line: <https://www.communicationmatrix.org/WhatIsComm.aspx>

# The Communication Matrix Includes:



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- 4 reasons to communicate
- 9 categories of communication behavior
- 7 levels of communication

# The Communication Matrix

## 4 reasons to communicate:

- Refuse
- Obtain
- Social interactions
- Provide or seek information-initially begins with:
  - “Yes” “No” questions
  - Asking simple questions
  - Labeling things
  - Making comments



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# Communication Matrix

## 9 Categories of Communicative Behavior



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- Body Movements
- Early sounds
- Facial expressions
- Visual responses
- Simple gestures
- Conventional gestures and vocalizations
- Concrete symbols
- Abstract symbols
- Language

# The Communication Matrix

## Seven levels of communication:



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- Level I Pre-intentional Behavior
- Level II Intentional Behavior
- Level III Unconventional Communication
- Level IV Conventional Communication
  
- Level V Concrete Symbols
- Level VI Abstract Symbols
- Level VII Language

# Communication Matrix

## Level I: Pre-intentional



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Pre-intentional Level or reflexive behavior that:

- Expresses state of child (i.e. hungry, wet, )
- That is interpreted by caregiver

Matrix – does the child use pre-intentional behavior to:

- Refuse-express discomfort (cry)
- Obtain-express comfort (coo)
- Social- express interest in others (i.e. smiles)
- Seek/Provide information-NA

# Level I: Pre-intentional .....



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Child's behavior may include:

- Body movements
- Facial expressions
- Early sounds

Goal-to establish purposeful behavior by creating highly responsive environments



# Communication Matrix

## Level II Intentional Behavior



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Intentional Behavior-behavior that:

- Is intentional but not intentionally communicative
- Affects caregiver behavior since intent is inferred

Matrix – does the child use intentional behavior to:

- Refuse-protest
- Obtain-continue action, obtain more of something
- Social- attracts attention
- Seek/provide information-NA



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## Level II: Intentional Behavior .....

Child's behavior may include:

- Body movements
- Facial expressions
- Vocalizations
- Looks at desired object/person
- Takes desired object

Goal – is to respond to potentially communicative behaviors so that the child becomes aware of their communicative purpose

# Communication Matrix

## Level III Unconventional Communication



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Unconventional Communication- is considered communication and involves:

- Gestures used by child-with the intent of affecting caregiver behavior
- Behaviors typically seen as not appropriate in adults

Child's behavior may include:

- Whole body movements, facial expressions, vocalizations (whining)
- Pushes away object/person, turns head
- Looks at/takes desired object, tugs/takes/guides your hand or taps object/person



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## Level III Unconventional .....

Matrix – does child intentionally indicates a desire to:

- Refuse-intentionally refuses/rejects
- Obtain-request more action, new action, more object, make choices, new object
- Social- request attention, shows affection (vocalizes, moves toward, looks/touches another person)
- Seek/provide information-NA

Goal – to shape unconventional gestures into conventional gestures and/or target symbol use



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# Communication Matrix

## Level IV Conventional Communication

Conventional Communication Involves:

- Use of gestures
- Used with the intent of affecting caregiver
- Child shows “dual orientation”
- Are considered socially and life long appropriate
- Disadvantage-does not enable the child to communicate about something not there



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## Level IV Conventional Communication ....

Matrix: does the child intentionally use gestures to:

- Refuse-refuses or rejects (i.e. shake head no)
- Obtain-request more action, new action, more object, make choices, new object
- Social –request attention, shows affection, greets people, offers, shares, directs another's attention, polite social forms (please, excuse me, thank you)
- Seek/provide information – answers yes/no questions, ask questions



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## Level IV Conventional communication...

Child's behavior may include:

- Shakes head “No”
- Pointing
- Shrugging shoulders
- Beckons you to come
- Holds out hand with open palm
- Headshake “Yes”
- Holds hands up for “up”
- Waves for attention



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## Level IV Conventional communication....

Child's behavior may include:

- Points at desired object/person/place
- Nods head
- Specific vocalizations (i.e. I want)
- Waves hi or by
- Hugs/kisses/pats someone





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## Level IV Conventional communication....

Goal: Teach 1:1 correspondence between symbols (concrete and abstract) and referents.

Advantage: Makes it possible to communicate about things, places, people, and concepts that are physically absent.

# Communication Matrix

## Level V Concrete Symbols



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Concrete Symbols involve:

- Limited use of abstract symbols to represent entities
- Provide a 1:1 correspondence between symbols and referent



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## Level V Concrete Symbols.....

Matrix: does the child intentionally use concrete symbols to:

- Refuse-refuses or rejects
- Obtain-request more action, new action, more object, make choices, new object, absent object
- Social – request attention, shows affection, greets people, offers, shares, directs another's attention, polite social forms
- Seek/provide information – answer yes/no questions, ask questions, names things/people, makes comments (that's pretty, hot, etc.)



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## Level V Concrete Symbols.....

Child may use concrete symbols in this manner:

- Rejection or Request what is represented in a photo/line drawing
- Rejection or Request what is represented through an object symbol
- Pantomimes actions or objects
- Mimics sound of desired action/object
- Use of photo/drawing of social concept (i.e. someone waving)
- Uses photo drawing or object symbol to indicate yes/no for an item/person/place/activity



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## Level V Concrete Symbols.....

Goal: Teach 1:1 correspondence between abstract symbols and referents

# Communication Matrix

## Level VI Abstract Symbols



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Abstract Symbols involves:

- Limited use of abstract symbols to represent entities
- Symbols are used one at a time



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## Level VI Abstract Symbols.....

Matrix – Does the child use abstract symbols to represent entities for the following:

- Refuse – refuses or rejects
- Obtain – request more action, request new action, request more object, make choices, request new object, request absent object
- Social – request attention, shows affection, greets people, offers, shares, directs another's attention, polite social forms (i.e. Please, look, hi, yours)
- Seek information – answer yes/no questions, ask questions, names things/people, makes comments (i.e. yes, no, why, name of item)



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## Level VI Abstract Symbols....

Child may use the following:

- Spoken word (i.e. no, yes, more, ball)
- Manual sign (i.e. Sign for finish or more)
- Written word
- Braille word
- Abstract 3 dimensional symbols (i.e. represents no/yes)
- Abstract 2 dimensional symbol (i.e. represents no/yes)



# Level VI Abstract Symbols



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Goal – To teach the combination of symbols into two and three – symbol utterances!

# Level VII Language



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## Language:

- Is a rule bound use of symbol system
- Ordered combinations of two or three symbols according to syntactic conventions

# Level VII Language.....



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## Matrix- Does the child use formal language to:

- Refuse – refuse or reject (i.e. stop it, no want, no go out)
- Obtain – request more action, request new action, request more objects, make choices, request new object, request absent object (more juice, want ball)
- Social- request attention, show affection, greet people, offers, shares, directs another's attention, polite social greeting (i.e. love you, out please, over there, bye-bye Mommy, see you later)
- Seek Information – answers yes/no, ask questions, names things/people, makes comments (i.e. no thanks, that car, why go, who go home)



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## Level VII Language.....

Goal – Expand upon semantics and syntactic abilities

# Communication Matrix Profile and Use!



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- Competence is indicated if the child uses at least one behavior independently and consistently at a given level to express a given message.
- Child should be allowed to perform at his/her current level of competence while being steadily pushed toward the next level of competence.
- Opportunity for customized reports.

# Let's Explore!



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- <https://www.communicationmatrix.org/>

# Community of Practice



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- Welcome to The Communication Matrix Community!
- [Join our Community now!](#)
- On behalf of the Communication Matrix Leadership Team it is our pleasure to welcome you to our online community. The community is designed to help professionals and parents share tools, ideas, and challenges in a supportive and welcoming environment. As an early adopter, you are granted the opportunity to shape this evolving community. The greatest benefit of our community is that it allows for “Just in time” collaboration that is “Just for you.” Your questions can be answered with the help of others who are passionate about helping individuals with significant communication challenges.