

# SUPPORT SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION



*When supporting someone to communicate it is important to create supports that will lead to successful interactions. The following are support strategies designed to ensure that the person trying to communicate can get their message across.*

## **START OPEN ENDED**

If you are starting by asking the person questions such as:

- “Why do you think Fern wanted to protect Wilbur?”
- “What is the name for gold on the periodic table of elements?”
- “What electives do you want to take this semester?”
- “How was your weekend?”

and you are not getting a clear response (for example the person is typing parts of words, random letters, or nothing at all) then you can provide the following supports to ensure that they can communicate their message.

## **SUCCESSFUL SUPPORTS:**

### 1. Suggest Sentence Starters:

Suggest sentences and ideas that will help the person to get started. Say “start by typing...” or “you may want to start with...” and then give them a starter to the sentence. You can provide further support with this strategy by saying, “Ok start by typing Fern. Now start with F, look at it and get it.” If they are still stuck coach them to get the e. Remember in this process you are teaching and coaching, not testing.

<b>If Asking...</b>	<b>Sentence Starter...</b>
“Why do you think Fern wanted to protect Wilbur?”	“Fern protected Wilbur because...”
“How was your weekend?”	“This weekend I...”
“What electives do you want to take this semester?”	“Next semester I am thinking...”

## 2. Share Full Ideas:

If you have tried step 1 and the person is not able to get started communicating their message you can give some suggestions of full ideas that can be communicated. Say these orally or write them and put the writing away when they go to type as the person should not copy the written ideas. Your ideas are meant to start their thinking and help support initiation.

When providing this support say, "If I was answering this question I would say...," "One thing that could be said about this is..." or "Some people might say..."

If Asking...	Idea Sharing
"Why do you think Fern wanted to protect Wilbur?"	"Some might say it was because she wanted to care for Wilbur."
"How was your weekend?"	"If I had your weekend I think I would say it was adventurous."
"What electives do you want to take this semester?"	"I've heard other kids say they would like to take theater and photography."

## 3. Create a Word / Phrase Board:

If you have tried step 1&2 and the person is not having success in communicating their thoughts move to using a word board. This is easily done by writing word selections on a dry erase board or piece of paper. Using either of these materials divide the area into two, four, or six sections and write word or phrase options in each of the sections. Be sure to have a section that says, "none of these" or "something else."

For example, if asking "Why do you think Fern wanted to protect Wilbur?" you can create a board with the following options:

She wanted to raise Wilbur	She loves animals
She wanted to see how big Wilbur would get	None of these

Using this style of communication supports is the most limiting as far as the expressiveness the person with a disability utilizes when sharing their message. This is not the most ideal strategy for supporting communication and it should be used mainly for quick communication, when there is a stressful situation, or when no other communication technique is working. However, this communication strategy can be very valuable in ensuring that a message is communicated.

#### 4. Use Pictures, ABCD, or Yes/No

Another strategy that can be useful in supporting successful communication interactions is using pictures for the person to point to, yes/no answers, or ABCD choices.

When asking questions the person with a communication disability can be supported to make a selection from a group or pictures. These should be related to the curriculum or communicating ideas and thoughts that can lead to conversation or participation in the classroom.

A yes/no board or the words yes/no can be written on a piece of paper or a post it note can be used to support communication. The communication partner should frame question in a yes/no fashion being sure to only ask one question at a time.

In addition an ABCD board can also be used. The letter selection can be pre written on a board or a piece of paper and the communication partner would frame questions and present answers so that the person with a communication disability can select the answer that corresponds with the idea they wish to share. This works well with school work and also choices such as seating placement, classroom jobs, and/or materials to use in art.