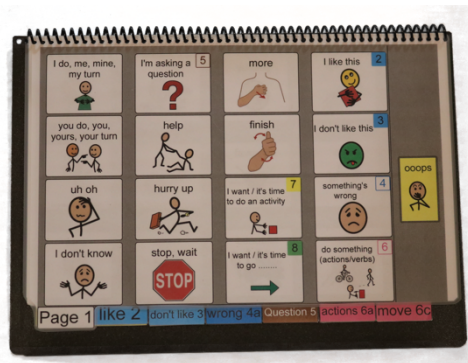# Group book – early functions

General description

This PODD book is designed for partners (teachers, assistants, therapists, parents and volunteers) to talk to groups of children learning to use aided language.

The aim of using a group PODD book is to increase the ease for adults to provide receptive input using aided language to model and/or support understanding of general, routine messages in a class, early childhood program or intervention group. The PODD communication book supports communication at any time throughout the day. Other aided language supports, e.g., activity displays, schedules, social scripts, to suit specific activities and individual requirements in the group, supplement the vocabulary included in this communication book.

Group books are primarily used in specialist programs or classes where there are multiple children learning to use AAC. In environments, where only one person uses (is learning) AAC, adults tend to use the individual's communication book to talk.

- This group book could also be modified for use in adult specialist programs where there are multiple individuals learning to use AAC. Significant customisation of the vocabulary would be required to suit the adult program activities and locations.

There are two versions of this group book to suit the varying requirements and preferences of adult partners.

1. **VEST version –** The vest version is designed to be attached to a communication vest worn by the adult for hands-free transport. The tabs are at the top of pages that open to hang down when the book is open. Wearing a group PODD book on a vest facilitates more frequent, spontaneous, incidental use of aided language to support spoken communication, as the book is always readily available. Separate "adult" books tend to be put down when adults use their hands for other purposes. People are unlikely to interrupt the flow of interaction and instruction with an individual or group to retrieve a book that was left across the room where it was last used in a different activity.

2. **BOOK version –** This version is formatted the same as personal one page opening PODD communication books. Adults will need to problem solve how they are going to carry the book with them all the time to be prepared for communication at any time. A ribbon or other thin material can be threaded through the spiral or rings of the book binding to make a shoulder strap.

Each version requires a different page layout. You will be asked to select your preference for a BOOK (default) or VEST format of the early functions group book when adding a new book in simPODD. There is a *group early functions VEST construction file* and a *group early functions BOOK construction file*. It is important to select and follow the correct version of the construction file.

The early functions group communication book focuses on expressing earlier acquired communication intents. It can be a useful introduction in classes where the **staff are just beginning to explore the use of PODD books** in their classes.

- The book is easier to produce with fewer pages than a personal or the expanded functions group book.
- Staff can begin to provide receptive input to their class as part of a dynamic observational assessment process to determine the specific requirements of the students and staff.
- Receptive input using aided language can begin while personal aids are being developed.
- The early functions vocabulary in this book can be used across the day, in a range of activities providing staff with many opportunities to develop their fluency using a PODD communication system.
- For some staff whose previous experience using graphic symbols has been primarily for curriculum content vocabulary, the focus on early functions vocabulary (without a categories index) can assist them to discover that AAC can be used for interaction throughout the day (i.e., symbols are being used differently than their previous experience of using symbols to tell students the schedule, make choices or answer curriculum questions).

However, experience reveals that partners frequently find it more difficult to use a PODD book with a limited vocabulary to express a restricted range of communication intents.

- Adults communicate a full range of communication intents with children. In addition to early communication intents, adults relate information and talk about what has or will happen in the child's daily life.
- Partners require considerable knowledge of this restricted page set in order to plan what messages they can, and cannot, express using the communication book.
- Partners often express frustration when they make the effort to use the group communication book and either the vocabulary is not present, or the pragmatic branches do not support their intent.
- Many partners have expressed relief when given the group book with expanded functions and report more frequent use of this expanded vocabulary to communicate with the students.

Therefore, after an initial period of use to develop some understanding and fluency using the early functions group PODD book, it is recommended that staff move to using the expanded functions group book.

The early functions PODD book is unlikely to provide sufficient vocabulary for students who rely on visual symbols to understand (i.e., they have difficulty understanding spoken language). Supplemental displays of symbols will need to be used alongside the early functions PODD book and gesture and sign added to speech to support understanding. These students will benefit from the additional vocabulary in the expanded functions group book. Staff use of a PODD page set on an electronic device with a message window may further support understanding using graphic symbols for these students.

NOTE: On the screen to *Add New Book*, the group books are below the personal PODD books. Scroll down to locate the group books.

Language

- Vocabulary is included in the page set to express a range of pragmatic functions typically seen in the expressive communication of 1-2yr old children.
  - o attention seeking
  - o request objects, action
  - o request information
  - o reject, protest, complain
  - o respond/acknowledge
  - o inform (draw attention to something)
  - o comment on action/object
  - o answer

- Vocabulary is included in the page set to express a range of semantic meanings typically seen in the spoken language of children 1-2yrs of age.

- A restricted range of vocabulary is available to express each type of semantic meaning/pragmatic function. There is a focus on selecting vocabulary related to the routine activities which occur within the group program.

> Vocabulary for some words typically used at this stage such as YES, NO, HELLO, THERE, is not included on the templates for this page set based on the assumption that the communicator will (be learning to) use unaided modes to express these messages more efficiently, e.g., pointing in the environment, head movements for YES/NO, look plus vocalisation for HELLO. Partners should model these forms of communication to stimulate the individual's learning to use these modes to communicate these messages (multi-modal communication).

- Parts of speech represented in the page set for this PODD communication book include subject and object nouns, pronouns, WH-question words verbs, negative, interjections, adjectives and adverbs.

- Predictably associated vocabulary supports the use of 1-3 key word sentences.

- The symbols in this page set primarily represent single words. This allows for multiple meanings to be assigned to the one symbol. For example, the single word HELP can be accompanied by the spoken message "Can I help you?"; "I'm helping"; "I need some help", depending on the context.

NOTE that this book is not intended to provide a full language system. It only provides general vocabulary that can be used throughout the day in a range of activities and contexts. Adults are encouraged to only use this book for a short period of time and replace it with the expanded functions group book as soon as possible.

Layout

- One page opening group communication book.

- PODD communication book size is A4 landscape. It is not recommended to change the size of this PODD book to be used in a group.

- The page background is light grey to visually highlight the location of the symbol cells on the page.

- The VEST version of this group book has the page tabs at the top of the page. The book pages open downwards when the worn on a vest. Strips of Velcro® between the book and the vest hold the book closed with the front page showing. The Velcro® is released to turn to other pages in the book. (see the VEST construction file for details).

- The BOOK version has the page tabs at the bottom of the page.

- The first page (*01 main*) has sixteen vocabulary items (four columns of four items), other pages have twelve vocabulary items (four columns of three items).
  - On page *01 main*, the symbol cell size is approximately 4.4cm high, 5.5cm wide. Cell spacing is 0.9cm width between columns and 0.15cm height between cells in a column.
  - On all other pages, the symbol cell size is approximately 4.75cm high, 5.1cm wide. Cell spacing is 1.3cm width between columns and 1.5cm height between cells in a column.

- Operational cells are located on the right side separated from the main symbol cells with a vertical line. Each operational cell is approximately 4.75cm high, 2.75cm wide.
  - *GO BACK TO PAGE 1* is on the first page in each section.
  - *GO BACK TO PAGE (number)A* is included to get back to the first page in a section from all other pages in that section.
  - *OOOPS* – used to indicate that something has gone wrong with the communication process
  - *GO TO LIST* – included on the final page for each branch/section.

- Page *01 main* has a different operational column from all other pages as there is no need for a *GO BACK TO PAGE 1* operation.

- The operational instruction to *TURN THE PAGE* is located in the main symbol grid in the bottom right hand corner. This location is chosen to increase ease of access for communicators to control the movement to the next page of vocabulary.

- Cells with *GO TO PAGE (number)* instructions have a small square in the top right hand corner. The number of the page (darker colours) or the background of the small square (lighter colours) matches the colour of the page tag for the target page/section.

- List pages are attached to the back of the page preceding the page with the GO TO LIST instruction (see the *construction file*).

Navigation

Vocabulary in this PODD is organised into pragmatic branches according to the communication intent being expressed.

- **Pragmatic branch starters** on *page 1*

- Predictive links are included to support communicators to locate the required vocabulary to express their messages.

- Operational commands to move between pages, e.g., *GO BACK TO PAGE (number), TURN THE PAGE*.

NOTE: Select this icon on the top left corner of the screen to view a list of the pages included in this PODD book. Scroll down the list to select a specific page.

Selecting preferences and Optional Pages

When you add this book to simPODD you will be asked to select your preference for a BOOK or a VEST format.

(Note: the Group books are below the personal books in the simPODD menu to select a book. Scroll down to see the Group books in the menu)

Which book format would you like?

1. **BOOK format –** This version is formatted the same as personal one page opening PODD communication books. The page tabs are located at the bottom of the page.

2. **VEST format –** The vest version is designed to be attached to a communication vest worn by the adult for hands-free transport. The tabs are at the top of pages that open to hang down when the book is open.

Section descriptions

> **Remember** to position items that link to another page of vocabulary on the first page of the section to reduce the number of page turns required to express the whole message. All new pages need to be linked from the front page.

01 main

- This is the **main navigation index** in this PODD. All pages are accessed via the pragmatic branch starters on this page. If making modifications to this page, ensure that you maintain all of these navigation links in order to get to other pages in the communication book. **All additional pages must be accessible via this page using either an existing branch or by adding a new branch starter to this page.**
- These pragmatic branch starters indicate the communication intent of the message with links to the pages of vocabulary required to express these intents.
- The verbal wording associated with the pragmatic branch starter I WANT … is changed to IT'S TIME TO DO AN ACTIVITY and LET'S GO.. is changed to IT'S TIME TO GO when instructing or suggesting rather than requesting.
- This page also includes vocabulary that it is generally useful to say quickly or in the context of an ongoing conversation or activity in the group.

02 like

- Vocabulary to express positive opinions and provide feedback to the student.
- In addition to adding/deleting vocabulary, you can change the words associated with some symbols to suit the staff/individual/family/peer group style of expressing opinions.

03 don't like

- Vocabulary to express negative opinions and complain/protest about something the communicator does not like. In early language development, adults often use this page in the group book to reference what a student is communicating informally through vocalisation, gesture or facial expression, i.e. "I think you're saying that you DON'T LIKE THIS".
- The item LET'S DO SOMETHING ELSE has a predictive link directly to the *07 want/activities* section to suggest an alternative activity (because you don't like the current activity).
- Note that vocabulary to complain about how someone is feeling is included in *section 04 something's wrong*. It is important when making changes to these pages to consider which section, *I DON'T LIKE IT* or *SOMETHING'S WRONG*, will most appropriately and frequently convey the communicators' intent.
- In addition to adding/deleting vocabulary, you can change the words associated with some symbols to suit the staff/individual/family/peer group style of expressing opinions.

04 wrong

- Vocabulary and phrases to complain, protest, assert self and generally relate problems or what has gone wrong for the individual. In early language development adults often use this page in the group book to reference what the individual is communicating informally through vocalisation, gesture or facial expression, i.e. "I think you're saying that SOMETHING'S WRONG".
- As some complaining vocabulary is located in the *I DON'T LIKE THIS* section of this PODD book, there is a link on page *04b* to access this other vocabulary. Its location on

the second page ensures that the communicator has checked the vocabulary available in this section prior to changing pages.

- I WANT SOMEONE links directly to the *09 people* page for the individual to identify who they want.
- Note that some of the complaints vocabulary in this section has been prioritised for inclusion because of the increased frequency of these complaints in a group environment, e.g., NO ONE TO PLAY WITH.
- Young children cannot always specifically identify what is causing them to feel upset. The I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S WRONG is useful to enable the communicator to express that they are just upset but cannot tell you why. It provides the individual with the option to not answer people's requests to know why they are upset and prevents continual guesses to discover the problem. This phrase can also be used by partners to emphasise that they really don't know what is wrong, encouraging the individual to tell them (use their words) or assist the partner to problem solve what's wrong in another way.
- The vocabulary in these template pages reflects common complaints of young children. You will need to customise this section to include common complaints or difficulties in the group.

05 questions

- Includes WH-question words and phrases. The focus is on including the questions that are frequently asked in the group/class.
- At this stage of language development, adults often model the single WH – word to start the question and then finish the question using speech and gesture (e.g., point to object or person).
- *Not* is predictably associated with the question words to ask WHY NOT?
- The commonly used question WHERE IS (PERSON)? links directly to the people section to fill in a name to finish the question, e.g., WHERE IS DAD?
- YOU NEED TO TELL ME YES/NO functions like raising intonation to mark questions in early language development. This item links directly to the first page for the communicator to indicate what they are asking. For example, YOU NEED TO TELL ME YES/NO, (*return to page 1*) GO.. (*links to p.12*) HOME? Can be interpreted as "Can we go home?" or "Are you going home?" depending on the context. Partners model the key words using the communication book as they speak the complete question.

06 do / actions

- The actions section links from the DO SOMETHING pragmatic branch starter to instruct and request actions.
- There is one subcategory *06c movements,* in this section.
- Actions most likely to be instructed or requested in a group environment have been prioritised for inclusion. There are spaces available to customise this section to include actions vocabulary frequently used in your group.

07 want / activities

- The activities section links from the I WANT … pragmatic branch starter. In the group book this section includes general play/routine activities which occur in multiple environments. This allows the adults to model during the group where this vocabulary is located in personal communication books. Group specific activities are included in *section 10 group activities*. Note there is a link on page *07b* to the *10 group activities* section. This link is positioned on the second, rather than the first page, of the section to

encourage individuals to locate general activities that occur across multiple environments in the activities section (where it is located in personal communication books).

- The subcategories *07c make something* and *07d outside activities* are used in the example page set to organise the large activity vocabulary required to request activities. Other subcategories may be required if adding large numbers of additional activities of a particular type, e.g., sports, games, sensory activities.
- SOMEONE has a predicted link to *09 people* to identify who is wanted.
- Note that there are no activity displays in the group book. Separate activity displays would be engineered in the group environment. (Activity displays need to be included in personal books as individuals need access to this vocabulary in many, including novel, environments in their daily lives).

08 places

- The places section links from the LET'S GO … pragmatic branch starter.
- The focus in this PODD book is including vocabulary for the names of places the students might go during their time at school/kinder/other group program. The example page set provides a link to *10c group place* on *08a* to more efficiently access places in the group environment.
- *07b* includes vocabulary for places that may be commonly talked about during the group, but not necessarily go to during group, e.g., going to the SHOP after the group program, or places a group may plan to go on an excursion. .
- The word VISIT links directly to the *09 people* page to identify who the communicator wants to visit (may need to include names, family relationships and other frequently visited people on the people list).

09 people

- Includes generic names/symbols for immediate family (mum, dad, brother or sister)
- Includes generic labels for children (FRIEND, ALL THE CHILDREN).
- Spaces to add the names of staff.
- All other names are included on the people list.

10 group activities

- This section includes all group specific activities (including those that may be included in a school or kindergarten section in their personal book).
- The templates include a few predictably associated words, PACK UP and NOT, DON'T, CAN'T and a link to the subcategory *10c group place*.
- Most of the spaces have been left blank to add the vocabulary for the activities and places relevant to your specific group program.
- You may choose to repeat some of the vocabulary from, or link to subcategories in, the want/activities section.

Other pages

- **List.** General list page for written word, auditory scanning list

NOTE: There is no communication instruction page for this book. As the book is owned by an adult who can independently operate the book there is no need for written instructions for partners.