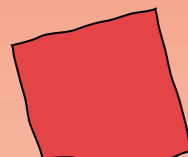
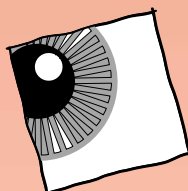


Adapted from the original  
Communication Matrix created for professionals



# Communication Matrix



Charity Rowland, Ph.D.  
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## About the Author



**Charity Rowland, Ph.D.** is associated with the Oregon Institute on Disability & Development of the Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, Oregon. She has conducted extensive research and demonstration projects on the development of communication skills in individuals with severe and multiple disabilities.

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# What is the Communication Matrix?

The **Communication Matrix** is designed to show you exactly how your child is communicating now. It will also give you an idea of logical communication goals for your child. It was first published in 1990 and was revised in 1996 by Dr. Charity Rowland of Oregon Health & Science University. The original version was designed primarily for speech-language pathologists and educators to use: it is still available through [www.designtolearn.com](http://www.designtolearn.com). This parent version was designed to be more "user friendly".

The Matrix results are summarized on a one-page **Profile**. The Profile is a matrix that shows you at a glance what level of communication behaviors your child is using and what kinds of messages he or she expresses. The Profile is exactly the same as the profile generated by the professional version of the Matrix. That means that parents and professionals can both use the same form to show each other how a child is communicating at home and at school. Below is a sample completed Profile so you can see how the results will look.

Name: Justin Dates: 5-9-04 Completed by: Mom

**Type of Symbol**  
For Levels V, VI or VII, specify types of symbols used (e.g., picture symbols, object symbols, manual signs, speech)

Object symbols

**KEY:**  
[Shaded Box] = Emerging  
[White Box] = Mastered

Level	Behavior	Mastered	Emerging
I Pre-Intentional Behavior	A1 Expresses Discomfort		
	A2 Expresses Comfort		
	A3 Expresses Interest in Other People		
II Intentional Behavior	B1 Protests		
	B2 Continues Action		
	B3 Obtains More of something		
III Unconventional Communication	C1 Refuses, Rejects		
	C2 Requests More Action		
	C3 Requests New Action		
	C4 Requests More Object		
	C5 Makes Choices		
	C6 Requests New Object		
IV Conventional Communication	C7 Requests Absent Object		
	C8 Requests Attention		
	C9 Shows Affection		
	C10 Shows Affection		
	C11 Greets People		
	C12 Offers, Shares		
V Concrete Symbols	C13 Polite Social Forms		
	C14 Answers Yes/No Questions		
	C15 Asks Questions		
	C16 Names Things/People		
	C17 Makes Comments		
	C18 Names Things/People		
VI Abstract Symbols	C19 Names Things/People		
	C20 Makes Comments		
	C21 Names Things/People		
	C22 Makes Comments		
	C23 Names Things/People		
	C24 Makes Comments		
VII Language	C25 Names Things/People		
	C26 Makes Comments		
	C27 Names Things/People		
	C28 Makes Comments		
	C29 Names Things/People		
	C30 Makes Comments		

**COMMUNICATION MATRIX PROFILE for Parents**  
Charity Rowland, Ph.D.  
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www.designtolearn.com

# Target Population

The Communication Matrix is appropriate for individuals of all ages who are at the earliest stages of communication. In the typical child the range of communication skills covered by the Matrix would occur between 0 and 24 months of age. The Matrix is appropriate for individuals with any type or degree of disability, including severe and multiple disabilities. The Communication Matrix is NOT suitable for individuals who already use some form of language to communicate meaningfully and fluently.

The Matrix accommodates any type of communicative behavior, including:

- **Augmentative and Alternative** (AAC) forms of communication, such as picture systems, electronic devices, voice-output systems, Braille, sign language and object symbols.
- **Pre-symbolic** communication, such as gestures, body movements, sounds, eye gaze, facial expressions.

# Design of the Communication Matrix

The organization of the Communication Matrix is based on a sample of nine typically developing infants who were assessed three times between 6 and 20 months of age. The Matrix involves two major aspects of communication: the reasons that people communicate and the behaviors that people use to communicate.

## Four Reasons to Communicate

The Matrix is organized into four major reasons to communicate that appear across the bottom of the columns on the Profile: to REFUSE things that we don't want; to OBTAIN things that we do want; to engage in SOCIAL interaction; and to provide or seek INFORMATION. Under each of these four major reasons are more specific messages that people communicate: these correspond to the questions that you must answer as you complete the Matrix. The specific messages are:

### 1. REFUSE

Expresses Discomfort  
Protests  
Refuses or Rejects Something

### 2. OBTAIN

Expresses Comfort  
Continues an Action  
Obtains More of Something  
Requests More of an Action  
Requests a New Action  
Requests More of an Object  
Makes Choices  
Requests a New Object  
Requests Objects that Are Absent

### **3. SOCIAL**

- Expresses Interest in Other People
- Attracts Attention
- Requests Attention
- Shows Affection
- Greets People
- Offers Things or Shares
- Directs Someone's Attention to Something
- Uses Polite Social Forms

### **4. INFORMATION**

- Answers "Yes" and "No" Questions
- Asks Questions
- Names Things or People
- Makes Comments

## **Seven Levels of Communication**

The Matrix is further organized into seven levels of communicative behavior, represented by the seven rows on the Profile. These Levels are:

### **I. Pre-Intentional Behavior**

The child's behavior is not under his own control – but it reflects his general state (such as hungry or wet or sleepy). Parents interpret the child's state from his general behaviors, such as body movements, facial expressions and sounds.

### **II. Intentional Behavior**

The child's behavior is now intentional (under the child's control), but she does not understand that "If I do this, Mom or Dad will do that for me" – in other words she does not communicate intentionally yet. Parents continue to interpret the child's needs and desires from her behavior, such as body movements, facial expressions, vocalizations and eye gaze.

INTENTIONAL COMMUNICATION BEGINS HERE, WITH LEVEL III

### **III. Unconventional Communication**

The child uses pre-symbolic behaviors intentionally to express his needs and desires to other people. The behaviors used to communicate are pre-symbolic because they do not involve any sort of symbol. They are called "unconventional" because they are not socially acceptable for us to use as we grow older: they include body movements, vocalizations, facial expressions and simple gestures (such as tugging on people).

### **IV. Conventional Communication**

The child uses pre-symbolic behaviors intentionally to express her needs and desires to other people. The behaviors used to communicate are pre-symbolic because they do not involve any sort of symbol. "Conventional" gestures include behaviors such as pointing and nodding the head "yes". The meanings of these gestures are determined by the specific culture in which they are used. We continue to use conventional gestures

as adults to accompany our language. Note that many of these gestures (and especially pointing) require good visual skills and may not be appropriate for children with severe vision impairment.

## SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION STARTS HERE, WITH LEVEL V

### **V. Concrete Symbols**

The child uses what we call “concrete” symbols that physically resemble what they represent in a way that is obvious to the child—they look like, feel like, move like or sound like what they represent. Concrete symbols include picture symbols, objects used as symbols (such as a shoelace to represent “shoe”), certain “iconic” gestures (such as patting a chair to say “sit down”) and sounds (such as making a buzzing sound to refer to a bee). Children with severe physical impairments may access picture and object symbols through the use of a mechanical device or by pointing, touching or eye gaze. Note that children who are already able to use abstract symbols (Level VI) do not need to use concrete symbols: most children skip this stage. For some children who have not learned to use abstract symbols, however, concrete symbols (Level V) may serve as a bridge to using abstract symbols (Level VI).

### **VI. Abstract Symbols**

The child uses abstract symbols such as speech, manual signs, or Brailled or written words. These symbols are NOT physically similar to what they represent. They are used one at a time.

### **VII. Language**

The child combines symbols (any sort of symbols) into ordered two- or three-symbol combinations (“want juice,” “me go out”), according to grammatical rules. The child understands that the meaning of word combinations may differ depending upon how the symbols are arranged.

# 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 or makes noises or calms down when he's happy and comfortable. **If you checked this statement, go to Section A (page 6).**

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. **If you checked this statement, go to Section B (page 9).**

C. ☐ My child clearly tries to communicate his needs to me. He knows how to get me to do something for him. He uses various gestures and sounds (like pointing, shaking his head, tugging at my arm or looking back and forth between me and what he wants) to communicate to me. For instance, when he wants more milk, he might hand his cup to me or point to the refrigerator. He doesn't use any sort of language to communicate. **If you checked this statement, go to Section C (page 13).**

OR

☐ My child lets me know what she wants by using some form of language or symbolic communication (such as speech, written words, Braille, picture symbols, three-dimensional symbols, or sign language). When he uses his symbols it's clear that he understands what they mean. **If you checked this statement, go to Section C (page 13).**

# Instructions for Section A ...

## Scoring

Each question you will see is related to a certain message that your child might be able to express in many different ways. Read each question and decide whether your child is able to express the message described. Then check off which behaviors he uses to express that message from the list below. You must also decide whether your child has mastered the use of any behaviors you checked or whether they are still at an emerging stage. Put a slash [/] in the box next to behaviors you consider to be still emerging. Put a cross [X] in the box next to behaviors you considered mastered. Use the following definitions to decide whether a behavior is mastered or emerging:

### **[/] Emerging**

- does this inconsistently
- only does this when prompted or encouraged to do so
- only does this in one or two contexts or with one person

### **[X] Mastered**

- does this independently most of the time when the opportunity arises
- does this in a number of different contexts, and with different people



# 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.

## A.1 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

- ☐ changes 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

## A.2 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

- ☐ changes in posture (stiffen body, relax)
- ☐ limb movements (kick legs, bat arms)
- ☐ head movements (bob head)



### Early Sounds

- ☐ coo, squeal



### Facial Expressions

- ☐ smile

### **A.3** 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 s/he's interested in you or other people?



#### **Body Movements**

- ☐ changes 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?**  
**If so, go on to Section B (page 9) and see if you can answer "Yes" to any of those questions. If not, go to page 31.**

# Instructions for Section B ...

## Scoring

Each question you will see is related to a certain message that your child might be able to express in many different ways. Read each question and decide whether your child is able to express the message described. Then check off which behaviors he uses to express that message from the list below. You must also decide whether your child has mastered the use of any behaviors you checked or whether they are still at an emerging stage. Put a slash [/] in the box next to behaviors you consider to be still emerging. Put a cross [X] in the box next to behaviors you considered mastered. Use the following definitions to decide whether a behavior is mastered or emerging:

### **[/] Emerging**

- does this inconsistently
- only does this when prompted or encouraged to do so
- only does this in one or two contexts or with one person

### **[X] Mastered**

- does this independently most of the time when the opportunity arises
- does this in a number of different contexts, and with different people

# 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 behavior. 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 bring him his bottle.

## B.1 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 want something?



### Body Movements

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> head movements<br>(turn head away, pull head back) | <input type="checkbox"/> leg movements<br>(stamp, kick)   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> arm movements<br>(bat arms, push, throw away)      | <input type="checkbox"/> moves away from person or object |



### Early Sounds

- ☐ whine, fuss, scream



### Facial Expressions

- ☐ frown, grimace

## B.2 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 movements  
(moves forward, bobs head)
- ☐ arm movements  
(bat arms)
- ☐ leg movements  
(kick)



### Early Sounds

- ☐ coo, squeal, fuss



### Visual

- ☐ looks at person



### Facial Expressions

- ☐ smile

## B.3 obtains More of Something

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



### Body Movements

- ☐ approaches desired object
- ☐ head movements  
(moves forward, bobs head)
- ☐ arm movements  
(bat arms)
- ☐ leg movements  
(kick)
- ☐ takes desired item



### Early Sounds

- ☐ coo, squeal, fuss



### Facial Expressions

- ☐ smile



### Visual

- ☐ looks at desired item

## B.4 Attracts Attention

Does your child do certain things that attract your attention to him, even though s/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 movements  
(moves forward, bobs head)
- ☐ arm movements  
(bat arms)
- ☐ leg movements  
(kick)



### 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 on to Section C (page 12) and see if you can answer "Yes" to any of those questions. If not, go to page 31.**

## 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.**

# Instructions for Section C ...

## Use of Communication Devices

Children with severe physical impairments may use mechanical communication devices that involve some sort of symbol system. For instance, they might use an electronic device with various panels to push that are identified by picture symbols or perhaps by printed words. When they press a panel, a recorded voice might relay the message that is identified by the picture or printed word. In such cases, you would give the child credit for using the type of symbol incorporated into the communication device (that is, the pictures or the printed words, or whatever type of symbol is used to identify the messages that can be expressed). Symbols that might be accessed through communication devices include:

### **Concrete Symbols**

- Photos/drawings
- Object symbols representing specific messages

### **Abstract Symbols**

- Written words
- Brailled words
- Abstract 3-dimensional symbols
- Abstract 2-dimensional symbols

### **Language**

- Combinations of any of the above types of symbols

## Scoring

Each question you will see is related to a certain message that your child might be able to express in many different ways. Read each question and decide whether your child is able to express the message described. Then check off which behaviors he uses to express that message from the list below. You must also decide whether your child has mastered the use of any behaviors you checked or whether they are still at an emerging stage. Put a slash [/] in the box next to behaviors you consider to be still emerging. Put a cross [X] in the box next to behaviors you considered mastered. Use the following definitions to decide whether a behavior is mastered or emerging:

### **[/] Emerging**

- does this inconsistently
- only does this when prompted or encouraged to do so
- only does this in one or two contexts or with one person

### **[X] Mastered**

- does this independently most of the time when the opportunity arises
- does this in a number of different contexts, and with different people

## C.1

# Refuses or Rejects Something

Does your child **intentionally** show you that s/he doesn't want a certain thing or a certain activity? If so, what does your child do to refuse or reject something?

### LEVEL III



## Body Movements

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



## Early Sounds

- ☐ scream, whine



## Facial Expressions

- ☐ frown, grimace

### LEVEL IV



## Conventional Gestures & Vocalizations

- ☐ gives unwanted item to you
- ☐ shakes head "no"
- ☐ specific vocalizations ("uh-uh")

### LEVEL V



## Concrete Symbols

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



## Simple Gestures

- ☐ pushes away object or person

### LEVEL VI



## Abstract Symbols

- ☐ spoken word ("no", "finished")
- ☐ manual sign ("no", "stop")
- ☐ written word ("no", "finished")
- ☐ brailled word ("no", "stop")
- ☐ abstract 3-D symbol (for "no", "stop")
- ☐ abstract 2-D symbol (for "no", "stop")

### LEVEL VII



## Language

- ☐ combines two or more symbols ("stop it", "all done", "no go out")

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## C.2 Requests More of an Action

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

### LEVEL III



#### Body Movements

- ☐ whole body movements (lunge)
- ☐ arm / hand movements (bat arms)
- ☐ leg movements (kick)



#### Early Sounds

- ☐ coo, squeal, laugh



#### Facial Expressions

- ☐ smiles



#### Visual

- ☐ looks at you



#### Simple Gestures

- ☐ takes your hand
- ☐ touches you
- ☐ reaches toward or taps you



#### Conventional Gestures & Vocalizations

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

### LEVEL IV



#### Concrete Symbols

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

### LEVEL V



#### Abstract Symbols

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

### LEVEL VI



#### Language

- ☐ combines two or more symbols ("more tickle", "do it again")

Type of symbols

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### LEVEL VII

## C.3 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?

### LEVEL III



#### Body Movements

- ☐ whole body movements (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

### LEVEL IV



#### Conventional Gestures & Vocalizations

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

### LEVEL V



#### Concrete Symbols

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



#### Simple Gestures

- ☐ takes your hand

### LEVEL VI



#### Abstract Symbols

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

### LEVEL VII



#### Language

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

Type of symbols

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## C.4 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?

### LEVEL III



#### Body Movements

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



#### Early Sounds

- ☐ fuss, squeal



#### Visual

- ☐ looks at desired object



#### Facial Expressions

- ☐ smile

### LEVEL V



#### Concrete Symbols

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

### LEVEL IV



#### Conventional Gestures & Vocalizations

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



#### Simple Gestures

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

### LEVEL VI



#### Abstract Symbols

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

### LEVEL VII



#### Language

- ☐ combines two or more symbols ("more juice", "want more bubbles")

Type of symbols

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## C.5 Makes Choices

Does your child **intentionally** make a choice between two or more items that you offer at the same time? (Make sure 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?

### LEVEL III



#### Body Movements

- ☐ whole body movements (lunge toward object)
- ☐ moves head towards desired object



#### Visual

- ☐ looks at desired object



#### Simple Gestures

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

### LEVEL IV



#### Conventional Gestures & Vocalizations

- ☐ looks back and forth between you and desired object
- ☐ points to desired object



#### Concrete Symbols

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

### LEVEL V

### LEVEL VI



#### 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-D symbol (name of item)
- ☐ abstract 2-D symbol (name of item)

### LEVEL VII



#### Language

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

Type of symbols

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## C.6 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?

### LEVEL III



#### Body Movements

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



#### Visual

- ☐ looks at desired object

### LEVEL IV



#### Conventional Gestures & Vocalizations

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



#### Simple Gestures

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

### LEVEL V



#### Concrete Symbols

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

### LEVEL VI



#### Abstract Symbols

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

### LEVEL VII



#### Language

- ☐ combines two or more symbols ("want car", "I want ball")

Type of symbols

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## C.7 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?

### LEVEL V



#### 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

### LEVEL VI



#### Abstract Symbols

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

### LEVEL VII



#### Language

- ☐ combines two or more symbols ("want ball", "I want car")

Type of symbols

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## C.8 Requests Attention

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

### LEVEL III



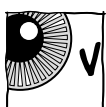
#### Early Sounds

- ☐ coo, squeal



#### Facial Expressions

- ☐ smile



#### Visual

- ☐ looks at you



#### Simple Gestures

- ☐ arm/hand movements  
(bats arms)
- ☐ touches you
- ☐ activates switch or  
"calling device"

### LEVEL IV



#### Conventional Gestures & Vocalizations

- ☐ beckons to you to come
- ☐ points to you

### LEVEL VI



#### Abstract Symbols

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> spoken word<br>("look", "mama")  | <input type="checkbox"/> brailled word<br>("look", "Bobby")         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> manual sign<br>("look", "daddy") | <input type="checkbox"/> abstract 3-D symbol<br>("look", "mama")    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> written word<br>("look", "mama") | <input type="checkbox"/> abstract 2-D symbol<br>("look", "teacher") |

### LEVEL VII



#### Language

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

Type of symbols

---



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## C.9 Shows Affection

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

### LEVEL III



#### Early Sounds

- ☐ coo, squeal



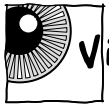
#### Facial Expressions

- ☐ smile



#### Simple Gestures

- ☐ arm/hand movements  
☐ touches you



#### Visual

- ☐ looks at you

### LEVEL IV



#### Conventional Gestures & Vocalizations

- ☐ hugs, kisses, pats you

### LEVEL V



#### Concrete Symbols

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

### LEVEL VI



#### Abstract Symbols

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> spoken word ("love")  | <input type="checkbox"/> brailled word ("love")       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> manual sign ("hug")   | <input type="checkbox"/> abstract 3-D symbol ("hug")  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> written word ("love") | <input type="checkbox"/> abstract 2-D symbol ("love") |

### LEVEL VII



#### Language

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

Type of symbols

---



---



## C.10 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?

### LEVEL IV



#### Conventional Gestures & Vocalizations



waves "hi" or "bye"

### LEVEL V



#### Concrete Symbols



indicates photo or  
drawing representing  
greeting  
("hello", "goodbye")

### LEVEL VI



#### Abstract Symbols



spoken word  
("hi", "bye")



manual sign  
("hi", "bye")



written word  
("hi", "bye")



brailled word  
("hi", "bye")



abstract 3-D symbol  
("hi", "bye")



abstract 2-D symbol  
("hi", "bye")

### LEVEL VII



#### Language



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

Type of symbols

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## C.11 offers Things or Shares

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

### LEVEL IV



#### Conventional Gestures & Vocalizations



gives or shows something  
to you



specific vocalizations with  
questioning sound as if  
for "want this?"

### LEVEL VI



#### Abstract Symbols



spoken word  
("yours")



brailled word  
("yours")



manual sign  
("yours")



abstract 3-D symbol  
("yours")



written word  
("yours")



abstract 2-D symbol  
("yours")

### LEVEL VII



#### Language



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

Type of symbols

---

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## C.12 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?

### LEVEL IV



#### Conventional Gestures & Vocalizations

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> points to something | <input type="checkbox"/> looks back and forth<br>between you and object,<br>person, or place |
|--|--|

### LEVEL VI



#### Abstract Symbols

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> spoken word<br>("look," "there")  | <input type="checkbox"/> brailled word<br>("look," "there")       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> manual sign<br>("look," "there")  | <input type="checkbox"/> abstract 3-D symbol<br>("look," "there") |
| <input type="checkbox"/> written word<br>("look," "there") | <input type="checkbox"/> abstract 2-D symbol<br>("look," "there") |

### LEVEL VII



#### Language

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

Type of symbols

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## C.13 Uses Polite Social Forms

Does your child **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, what polite social forms does your child use?

### LEVEL IV



#### Conventional Gestures & Vocalizations

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Points to something as if asking "can I have it?" | <input type="checkbox"/> specific vocalization (questioning sound for "may I?") |
|--|---|

### LEVEL VI



#### Abstract Symbols

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> spoken word ("please")  | <input type="checkbox"/> brailled word ("sorry")        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> manual sign ("thanks")  | <input type="checkbox"/> abstract 3-D symbol ("please") |
| <input type="checkbox"/> written word ("please") | <input type="checkbox"/> abstract 2-D symbol ("thanks") |

### LEVEL VII



#### Language

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

Type of symbols

---



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## C.14 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?

### LEVEL IV



#### Conventional Gestures & Vocalizations

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> nods head "yes"  | <input type="checkbox"/> specific vocalization indicating yes, no ("uh-huh," "nu-uh") |
| <input type="checkbox"/> shakes head "no" |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> shrugs shoulders |   |

### LEVEL V



#### Concrete Symbols

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

### LEVEL VI



#### Abstract Symbols

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> spoken word ("yes," "no")  | <input type="checkbox"/> brailled word ("yes," "no")       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> manual sign ("yes," "no")  | <input type="checkbox"/> abstract 3-D symbol ("yes," "no") |
| <input type="checkbox"/> written word ("yes," "no") | <input type="checkbox"/> abstract 2-D symbol ("yes," "no") |

### LEVEL VII



#### Language

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

Type of symbols

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## C.15

### 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?

#### LEVEL IV



#### Conventional Gestures & Vocalizations

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> holds up hands, shrugs shoulders as if questioning | <input type="checkbox"/> looks back and forth between you and object or place |
| <input type="checkbox"/> specific vocalizations as if questioning           |   |

#### LEVEL VI



#### Abstract Symbols

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> spoken word<br>("who?", "what?", "where?",<br>"when?", "why?")  | <input type="checkbox"/> brailled word<br>("who?", "what?", "where?",<br>"when?", "why?")       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> manual sign<br>("who?", "what?", "where?",<br>"when?", "why?")  | <input type="checkbox"/> abstract 3-D symbol<br>("who?", "what?", "where?",<br>"when?", "why?") |
| <input type="checkbox"/> written word<br>("who?", "what?", "where?",<br>"when?", "why?") | <input type="checkbox"/> abstract 2-D symbol<br>("who?", "what?", "where?",<br>"when?", "why?") |

#### LEVEL VII



#### Language

- ☐ combines two or more symbols  
("who that?", "where you go?")




Type of symbols

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## C.16 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?

LEVEL V	LEVEL VI	LEVEL VII
 <b>Concrete Symbols</b>	 <b>Abstract Symbols</b>	 <b>Language</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> indicates photo or drawing of object/person/place/activity <input type="checkbox"/> indicates object symbol representing object/person/place/activity <input type="checkbox"/> pantomimes action or object <input type="checkbox"/> mimics sound of object	<input type="checkbox"/> spoken word (name of item) <input type="checkbox"/> manual sign (name of item) <input type="checkbox"/> written word (name of item) <input type="checkbox"/> brailled word (name of item) <input type="checkbox"/> abstract 3-D symbol (name of item) <input type="checkbox"/> abstract 2-D symbol (name of item)	<input type="checkbox"/> combines two or more symbols ("that car", "this is car")  Type of symbols _____ _____

## C.17 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?

LEVEL V	LEVEL VI	LEVEL VII
 <b>Concrete Symbols</b>	 <b>Abstract Symbols</b>	 <b>Language</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> indicates photo or drawing of object/person/place/activity/quality <input type="checkbox"/> indicates object symbol representing object/person/place/activity/quality <input type="checkbox"/> pantomimes action, object, person or quality	<input type="checkbox"/> spoken word ("pretty") <input type="checkbox"/> manual sign ("cold") <input type="checkbox"/> written word ("hot") <input type="checkbox"/> brailled word ("bad") <input type="checkbox"/> abstract 3-D symbol ("nice") <input type="checkbox"/> abstract 2-D symbol ("yellow")	<input type="checkbox"/> combines two or more symbols ("you nice", "that too cold")  Type of symbols _____ _____





# The Profile ...

The Profile (on the inside back cover) is designed to give you a one-page visual summary of your child's communication skills. It will show you at a glance how your child is developing in terms of communication, using the seven levels of communication and the four major reasons to communicate that are discussed on pages 2-4. It's important to understand that a child with very severe physical impairment may only be able to produce one or two behaviors to communicate, such as eye gaze or activating a simple switch. The Profile results do not distinguish between someone who has only one way of communicating a message and someone who has many different ways to communicate the same message.

The Profile results can be entered to distinguish between mastered and emerging skills. If ANY behavior is scored as mastered for a particular message (a message is represented by one block in the Matrix), then the

message should appear as mastered on the profile, even if you also checked some behaviors as emerging for that same message. In the sample below, the solid shading indicates mastered behavior and the striped shading indicates emerging behavior.

The shaded areas of the Profile show you what kinds of messages your child can communicate now and what level of communicative behavior your child uses to communicate those messages. Most individuals straddle two or more levels of communication at any given time.

If you checked option B or C on page 5 (Getting Started), then you did not answer questions in Sections A and/or B related to the earliest levels of communication (Levels I and II). If this is the case, then nothing will appear in those Levels on the Profile (as in the sample below). The assumption is that those levels of communication have been replaced by higher levels of communication on the part of your child and they are no longer relevant.

Level	Behavior	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5	Block 6	Block 7	Block 8	Block 9	Block 10	Block 11	Block 12	Block 13	Block 14	Block 15	Block 16	Block 17
I	<b>Pre-Intentional Behavior</b> Body movements Early sounds Facial expressions	A1 Expresses Discomfort I	A2 Expresses Comfort I					A3 Expresses Interest in Other People I										
II	<b>Intentional Behavior</b> Body movements Early sounds Facial expressions Visual behavior	B1 Protests II	B2 Continues Action II	B3 Obtains More of Something II			B4 Attracts Attention II											
III	<b>Unconventional Communication</b> Body movements Early sounds Facial expressions Visual behavior Simple gestures	C1 Refuses, Rejects III	C2 Requests More Action III	C3 Requests New Action III	C4 Requests More Object III	C5 Makes Choices III	C6 Requests New Object III	C8 Requests Attention III	C9 Shows Affection III									
IV	<b>Conventional Communication</b> Conventional gestures Specific vocalizations Looks back & forth	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV	IV	C10 Greets People IV	C11 Offers, Shares IV	C12 Directs Your Attention IV	C13 Polite Social Forms IV	C14 Answers Yes/No Questions IV	C15 Asks Questions IV		
V	<b>Concrete Symbols</b> Object symbols Picture symbols Pantomime gestures Mimic sounds	V	V	V	V	V	V	C7 Requests Absent Object V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	C16 Names Things/People V	C17 Makes Comments V
VI	<b>Abstract Symbols</b> Spoken words Manual signs Written words Braille words	VI	VI	VI	VI	VI	VI	VI	VI	VI	VI	VI	VI	VI	VI	VI	VI	VI
VII	<b>Language</b> Combinations of 2 or more symbols	VII	VII	VII	VII	VII	VII	VII	VII	VII	VII	VII	VII	VII	VII	VII	VII	VII

**Type of Symbol**  
For Levels V, VI or VII, specify types of symbols used (e.g., picture symbols, object symbols, manual signs, speech)

*Object symbols*

---

**KEY:** = Emerging  
 = Mastered

## Three Ways to Complete the Profile

Transferring your information from the booklet to the Profile is a little tricky. There are three options: do it yourself, ask someone on your child's educational team to do it, or do it online.

**1. Do-It-Yourself.** You may transfer the information from the booklet to the Profile yourself, using the instructions that follow.

In your booklet, you have checked off specific ways that your child communicates for items A1-A3, B1-B4 and C1-C17. Under each of these items there are several categories of behaviors such as Early Sounds and Concrete Symbols. To complete the Profile, you will shade in the boxes that correspond to those items and categories for which you checked off at least one type of communicative behavior. Decide what code to use to distinguish between mastered and emerging behaviors: you could use different colors of shading, or perhaps use solid shading for mastered and stripes for emerging.

For A and B questions, simply shade the box on the Profile with the corresponding number for any questions under which you checked at least one behavior. For instance, Item A1, has three categories (Body Movements, Early Sounds and Facial Expressions). If you checked any behaviors under A1, you would fill out the A1 box (Express Discomfort) on the Profile. If any behavior was mastered (even if only one), you would fill it in with the mastered code. If there was one or more emerging behaviors and no mastered behaviors, you would fill it in with the emerging code. Otherwise it would be left blank. If you skipped Sections A or B because your child has moved beyond those levels, you may leave those boxes blank.

For C questions there are more categories and they span several Levels of communication, which are labeled in your booklet. For instance, question C1 has eight categories, four of which are labeled Level III, and one each labeled Level IV, V, VI and VII. If you checked off one or more behaviors under Body Movements, Early Sounds, Facial Expressions, or Simple Gestures, you would shade in the box under the C1 column (Refuse, Reject) that is labeled III. If you also checked off a behavior under Abstract Symbols, then you would shade in the box in the C1 column labeled VI. Remember to distinguish between emerging and mastered behaviors as described above.

**2. Ask Someone Else to Do It.** If your child's speech-language pathologist or teacher is using the professional version of the Matrix (or even if not), you could ask that person to transfer your information to the Profile for you.

**3. Do it Online.** The Parent Matrix is also available online at [www.communicationmatrix.org](http://www.communicationmatrix.org). You may go to this website and transfer the information from your booklet to the forms online. Once you submit the information, a Profile is automatically generated for you to print out. This is a free service.

## Using Communication Matrix Results to Plan Instruction

The Communication Matrix results may help parents and educators to decide upon general communication goals that are appropriate given your child's current skills. You may develop a general intervention goal (what **level** of communication to target), as well as specific intervention goals (what specific communicative **behaviors** and **messages** to target).

In general, a child should be allowed to perform at his or her current level of communication while being steadily pushed toward the next logical level of communication. The first decision to make is whether to focus primarily on increasing the child's competence at the current Level (which you would do if the child has a very small number of communication behaviors or messages at the current Level) and/or whether to start targeting some behaviors at the next higher Level. The next decision is which specific communicative behaviors to target. Should you target only existing behaviors or strive for new ones? This decision must take into account the child's motor, fine motor, vocal and sensory abilities and any limitations that may make it difficult or impossible for the child to produce certain behaviors. You must also consider any cognitive limitations that may prevent a child from understanding certain types of symbols. Finally, you must decide exactly which messages to target. Refer to the Profile to determine where there are gaps in the child's communication skills and consider targeting new messages that the child really needs to be able to express.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Dates \_\_\_\_\_

Completed by \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of Symbol**  
For Levels V, VI or VII, specify types of symbols used (e.g., picture symbols, object symbols, manual signs, speech)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**KEY:**

☐ = **Emerging**

☐ = **Mastered**

	OBTAIN			SOCIAL			INFORMATION		
	REFUSE	OBTAIN		SOCIAL		INFORMATION		INFORMATION	
<b>I</b> <b>Pre-Intentional Behavior</b> Body movements Early sounds Facial expressions	<b>A1</b> Expresses Discomfort I	<b>A2</b> Expresses Comfort I			<b>A3</b> Expresses Interest in Other People I				
<b>II</b> <b>Intentional Behavior</b> Body movements Early sounds Facial expressions Visual behavior	<b>B1</b> Protests II	<b>B2</b> Continues Action II	<b>B3</b> Obtains More of Something II	<b>B4</b> Attracts Attention II					
<b>III</b> <b>Unconventional Communication</b> Body movements Early sounds Facial expressions Visual behavior Simple gestures	<b>C1</b> Refuses, Rejects III	<b>C2</b> Requests More Action III	<b>C3</b> Requests New Action III	<b>C4</b> Requests More Object III	<b>C5</b> Makes Choices III	<b>C6</b> Requests New Object III	<b>C8</b> Requests Attention III	<b>C9</b> Shows Affection III	
<b>IV</b> <b>Conventional Communication</b> Conventional gestures Specific vocalizations Looks back & forth	<b>C10</b> Refuses, Rejects IV	<b>C11</b> Requests More Action IV	<b>C12</b> Requests New Action IV	<b>C13</b> Requests More Object IV	<b>C14</b> Makes Choices IV	<b>C15</b> Requests New Object IV	<b>C16</b> Requests Attention IV	<b>C17</b> Shows Affection IV	
<b>V</b> <b>Concrete Symbols</b> Object symbols Picture symbols Pantomime gestures Mimic sounds	<b>C18</b> Refuses, Rejects V	<b>C19</b> Requests More Action V	<b>C20</b> Requests New Action V	<b>C21</b> Requests More Object V	<b>C22</b> Makes Choices V	<b>C23</b> Requests New Object V	<b>C24</b> Requests Attention V	<b>C25</b> Shows Affection V	
<b>VI</b> <b>Abstract Symbols</b> Spoken words Manual signs Written words Braille words	<b>C26</b> Refuses, Rejects VI	<b>C27</b> Requests More Action VI	<b>C28</b> Requests New Action VI	<b>C29</b> Requests More Object VI	<b>C30</b> Makes Choices VI	<b>C31</b> Requests New Object VI	<b>C32</b> Requests Attention VI	<b>C33</b> Shows Affection VI	
<b>VII</b> <b>Language</b> Combinations of 2 or more symbols	<b>C34</b> Refuses, Rejects VII	<b>C35</b> Requests More Action VII	<b>C36</b> Requests New Action VII	<b>C37</b> Requests More Object VII	<b>C38</b> Makes Choices VII	<b>C39</b> Requests New Object VII	<b>C40</b> Requests Attention VII	<b>C41</b> Shows Affection VII	



## COMMUNICATION MATRIX PROFILE for Parents

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## **The Communication Matrix ... Especially for Parents**

is an assessment of communication skills designed for individuals operating at the earliest stages of communication development. It accommodates all forms of expression and is helpful for individuals without conventional means of communication. This parent version is completely compatible with the professional version, but is presented in a "user friendly" format.



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