

Personal Communication Dictionary

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For students with complex communication needs it is important that their communication partners recognize and understand their communication attempts. A personal communication dictionary documents student-specific actions and their meanings. This can help others who work with the student, and any new communication partners, understand what the student is trying to communicate and plan consistent responses. Add and delete rows as needed.

When	What the student does	What we think the student is saying	How we will respond
Eating	Groans	I need a break.	"I heard you groan, so that means you need a break. I will wait before your next bite." Count to ten before feeding her the next spoonful.
Making a choice	Looks at an object	I want this one.	"You looked towards this, so this is your choice." Follow through with the choice.
Getting ready to be changed	Bumps or pushes purse placed in lap	I'm ready to be changed.	"You moved the purse. I can see you are ready to be changed." Begin the changing procedure.
Anytime	Pulls left arm up to chin	No.	"I saw you say no." Follow through as appropriate for the situation.
Seated stationary in wheelchair	Kicks right leg	I want to move.	Say, "You want to move. Let's go!" Move wheelchair to a different position in the room.
Anytime	Crumples face	I do not like that.	Say, "You don't like that." or "You don't want that one." If being given a choice, consider this a negative response/refusal of that choice.

This document was designed to accompany the [Connecting Communication and Instruction](#) training.