



Using a Core board

Information for Parents/Carers

What is a Core board?

- A core board is a tool containing words and symbols which can help support a person's communication.
- It is typically a flat board that displays a set of commonly used words and symbols.
- The "core" refers to these basic, high-frequency words, like "I," "want," "stop," "go," "help," and "yes."
- Core words consist of all word types. Some examples include action words, describing words (big, little), pronouns (I, you we, they) and position words (in, on, under).
- Core words make up approximately 80 percent of words spoken by everyone, every day. These words tend to be small words which are not specific to a topic or activity.
- Core boards can support children to communicate. They can help children when requesting, commenting, instructing, questioning and sharing opinions.
- The Speech and Language Therapist (SLT), parent, teacher, etc., can say and point to the core words, allowing the child to hear and see the word being modelled.

Tips for using a Core board

- **Model how to use a core board** by pointing to symbols as you say the words.
- **Model key words only.** As you are introducing a new way of communication, it will be helpful to focus on key words only. Even as you speak a phrase with two words, point to one key word only.
- **Model a range of language functions** like how you would use verbal communication. Model not just requesting, but include other purposes, such as commenting, requesting, asking a question, expressing emotion, answering questions, greeting, or rejecting.



- **Model words in real life meaningful scenarios** (e.g., play time, mealtimes) rather than testing your child with 'show me'.
- **Use expectant pauses.** Provide a brief pause while looking expectantly at your child and holding out the board.
- **Motivation is key.** Think of fun activities that you can do with your child as you model the use of the core board.
- **Do it consistently.** Use the core board every day, across different activities, and across different settings.
- **Give them time to learn.** Our focus is to model the use of the core board consistently without expecting a child use it right away. Everyone communicating with the child should also use the core board.
- **Allow your child to have access to the core board all the time.** Keep it in a place where your child can easily find it or reach it. When practicing using the core board, make sure that you position it within your child's reach.

Example activity: blowing bubbles

Here is a sequence of steps on how to model the word 'more' as a child gestures for more or reaches towards the bubbles:

1. Say 'more'.
2. Point to the symbol for 'more'.
3. Provide a brief pause. If the child does not respond, continue blowing bubbles.
4. Watch what the child is doing and model words as appropriate. For example, as the child watches or pops bubbles model words like 'up', 'down', or 'happy'.
5. Repeat step 1 if you see the child requesting for more bubbles. Model 'finish' if the child has lost interest in the activity.



Core activity suggestions

Below are some common activities and examples of core words and phrases that can be used.

Modelling play dough

- Single core words: 'open', 'more', 'finish', 'like', 'play', 'happy'
- Core word phrases: 'want/get more', 'help open', 'finish play', 'put in'

Playing with cars

- Single core words: 'stop', 'go', 'up', 'down', 'big', 'little', 'uh oh' (if the car crashes or falls), 'happy'
- Core word phrases: 'go up/down', 'my turn', 'your turn', 'like car', 'not like cars'

Playing with blocks

- Single core words: 'up', 'down', 'more', 'put', 'help', 'play', 'make', 'uh oh' (if the blocks fall), 'happy'
- Core word phrases: 'go up/down', 'my turn', 'put up', 'your turn', 'give more/give me more'

Snacks/meals

- Single core words: 'eat', 'drink', 'help', 'more', 'finish', 'good', 'bad', 'open', 'uh oh', 'happy'
- Core word phrases: 'want more', 'finished eating', 'finished drinking', 'more eat', 'more drink', 'good drink', 'bad drink'



Useful sources of information

For further information about using core boards and training opportunities please see our website or call/email us to book in a time to speak with a Speech and Language Therapist:

www.whittington.nhs.uk/barnetcit

Call us on 020 3316 8900 or email: whh-tr.barnetcit@nhs.net

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please email whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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