

This week's PODD communication focus...

Providing clear, consistent partner-assisted auditory-visual scanning

What is partner-assisted auditory-visual scanning?

Communication partners provide scanning access by pointing to and speaking the names of items to allow access to the communication book. The child responds by indicating yes and/or no to each scan to select their desired message.

Partner-assisted scanning is used for a range of reasons:

- **When a child has not yet developed the fine motor control to directly point to symbols:** the child can rely on their understanding of the spoken labels or visually recognise the symbols
- **When introducing a new PODD communication book with children who have sufficient understanding of spoken language:** By reading aloud the labels on the symbols, a child can communicate using their PODD communication book before they have learnt what the symbols mean. By pointing to and showing the symbols as you read the labels, you assist your child to learn their meanings and the vocabulary organisation of the book. This applies both to children who are learning to use partner-assisted scanning as their primary access method, as well as children who are learning to directly point to their symbols.
- **When a child has cortical vision impairment:** by using both auditory AND visual scanning (rather than relying solely on auditory), you provide visual stimulation towards the development of the child's visual skills.
- **When a child has sensory processing challenges:** some children are stimulated by turning or fiddling with the pages of the communication book and can become distracted from communicating their message. Using partner-assisted scanning with the book held at a distance from the child enables them to focus on their message, rather than be overwhelmed by their sensory needs. *"Repeated experiences successfully communicating assists most children to learn to inhibit their desire to turn pages as they begin to focus on communicating their message."* (Porter, 2007, p. 12)

When providing partner-assisted scanning, you need to provide a distinction between your conversational speech and your speech for scanning. This means you need to *"state the label for each item, or group of items, without changing the wording or using the intonation or expression of social speech"* (Porter, 2007, p. 95). Do not lead your child to what you think they want to say by emphasising certain labels, and don't turn each label into a question by raising your intonation at the end of the word.

The order of the scan is very important. The symbols in PODD communication books are arranged into columns, which facilitates the visual scanning of the group of words to locate the specific word. *"Visually scanning a column uses vertical (up/down) eye movements. Visually scanning across a row requires both horizontal (left/right) eye and head movements."* (Porter, 2007, p. 44) Think about writing shopping lists, lists of names, jobs to do, etc – any task that requires you to find a specific word within a group of words. Left-right presentation, on the other hand, is generally used for reading a connected text. Similarly, sentences are built from left to right across the page in PODD communication books.

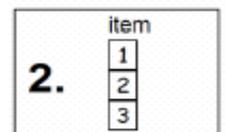
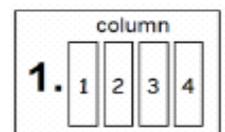
This week's PODD communication focus...

Providing clear, consistent partner-assisted auditory-visual scanning

Continued...

- The scan order/pattern can be:
 - **Linear:** The partner scans each item one at a time, starting from the top left square, down the left column, then down each column in a left to right order.
 - **Column/item** (also known as column-row scanning): The partner scans each column, starting with the left hand column and then each column across the page. Once the child has indicated "YES" to a column, the partner scans each item in that column from top to bottom.
- Unless your child has clearly indicated a section or column on the page of their communication book, ALWAYS start with the far left column. This ensures consistency between communication partners, allowing your child to become familiar with the order of the scan and therefore provide quicker, more automatic responses.

1	4	7	10
2	5	8	11
3	6	9	12



Porter, G. (2007). *Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display Communication Books: Introductory Workshop*. Melb: Cerebral Palsy Education Centre.