

Communication Functions: Why we communicate

We communicate everyday for lots of different reasons: stop and think about the last few interactions you have had and think what was the reason for them? It might have been to:

- ask for a cup of tea (request)
- to tell someone you like their outfit today (give opinion)
- to tell someone to turn the music down (protest)
- ask someone if they had a good weekend (start a conversation)

When working with children who have difficulties communicating, we often get stuck focusing on using communication to ask for things (requesting). Requesting and making choices is a great way to start as it is something really motivating, but there are many more reasons to communicate – we call these ‘**Communication Functions**’.

Communication Functions	Core words and examples
Request (object, action)	want, want that, I want to watch TV, kick ball
Protest/negate	not pink, stop music, no
Comment	look, I see mum, the dog looks happy
Direct	give me, more jumping, put it there
Ask questions	Who is going outside? What happened? Where is daddy?
Give opinions	like, not like, good, I like chocolate
Share news	I went, I saw, I went to the park
Social greetings/ interaction	hello, bye, Do you like? What?
Seek attention	saying teacher’s name, excuse me

Remember children learn best through **modelling!** Whether that be saying words and phrases they could use, pointing on a play chart or using a high tech AAC device.

