

## Some Ideas for Using TechTalk, TechSpeak or TechScan in School

*These notes were originally written for a Secondary school age student with physical, communication and learning and difficulties, using a TechSpeak 32. Some of the ideas may be applicable/adaptable as starting points for your student(s) using other types of medium-tech voice output communication aid.*

### All Purpose Overlay

Make a new blank overlay and laminate it (so it is 'wipe-off') - or make several so one can be kept in each classroom as necessary.

Take to various classes and use a felt tip pen to quickly draw/write on word/letter/drawing/symbol/number as appropriate to allow the student to answer independently to participate and show he/she has been following.

Eg.

- a) Open questions (Q: what is round the castle? A: (stored in device) *moat*)
- b) Forced alternative questions (Q: is a moat made of water or stone or material? (stored in device is *stone, water, wood* etc.))

The device can be used in ALL classes, with a little preparation. Brief the class teachers that they will be expected to ask the student at least one question during the lesson and get them to tell you in advance what the right answer is, and about 3 'distracters' (ie wrong answers). Put these 4 on the overlay and add *Can you repeat the question please*, and *I don't know (or I'm not sure)* on there too. (of the wrong answers, make at least one wildly wrong and at least one is quite plausible).

### Aiming for Greater Independence

Once the student has got the hang of this system, accept whichever answer he/she gives and mark these, *then* tell him/her whether they are right or wrong (and then supply the right answers if necessary). *Get him/her to repeat it back to you.* Do not 'negotiate' in the middle of the question asking and give lots of clues, so that he/she ends up 'finding' the right answer every time and never making any mistakes. If he/she is not sure, teach him/her to press the '*I'm not sure*' square instead of just pressing any square randomly. If necessary, then press each square in turn so he/she can review what answers are available, or turn the question into a forced alternative (easier).

Eg. If he/she can't answer a question like '*where does an archer keep his arrows?*' rephrase it as '*Does the archer keep his arrows in a pouch or in a quiver?*' (you can point out where each is on the overlay, if necessary).



The student has to learn to pay attention and make a decision about his/her answer. The voice feedback is good because it will help the student to be clear about what he/she has actually chosen, and he/she will hear any mistake. Perhaps you could add a square on the overlay that says *'No, that's wrong, I'll try again'* once the student is getting good at identifying his/her mistakes.

It's important that the student gets credit for saying he/she doesn't know or has made a mistake - that could even be a target in the IEP, perhaps for PSD. (Whether he/she gets the answer to the actual question right or wrong is much less important in fact!)

Once you all get in to the routine, it should be possible to wipe off and redo this several times in one session, with different questions.

## **Specially Made overlays**

**Morning News Time** - with messages like: *good morning, how are you, I'm fine, I'm tired, I'm looking forward to the weekend, What did you do at the weekend? etc.*

**Break or Lunch time** - with messages like: *More please, that's enough, I'm finished thanks, I'd like a drink of; milk/ribena/orange/water/coffee etc. as appropriate, I like that, I don't like that, etc.*

**Class Surveys** - ask the student to survey the class for basic 'about me' questions.

*Do you have a pet?*

*Do you have a cat?*

*hamster budgie*

*Do you have a dog?*

*fish*

*rabbit?*

*other*

*guinea pig*

His/her classroom partner has to fill in the answers each student gives on a record sheet (tick in dog column etc.)

Then between them the student and partner have to add up the number of ticks in each column.

Or - other way round

The student asks students in room to report their eye colour and hair colour and hair length. When they answer him, he/she has to use the device to shout out the answers to his/her record-keeping partner, who ticks the appropriate boxes on the record sheet.

Survey Overlay 1 - hair

What colour is your hair? (stored in device - *black, brown, blonde, red etc.*)

How long is your hair? (stored in device - *long, short, medium, crew cut etc.*)

Survey Overlay 2 - eyes

What colour are your eyes? *blue, green, grey, brown, hazel*

**Who wants to be a Millionaire Template** - overlay with the following 8 messages on it

<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>50:50</i>	<i>ask the audience</i>
<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>phone a friend</i>	<i>take the money (give up)</i>

This can then be used with ANY set of quiz questions, without having to make a special overlay (especially useful for homework). Staff or home partner reads out each question from the question sheet, in the format "Is it **A** (pointing to A on overlay) - a duck; B a swan; C a goose; or D a turkey?"

Use your imagination to create ways of doing the phone a friend etc. activities.

To improve motivation, you may have to resort to bribery or a record sheet showing how high the user's score will go before getting some kind of treat at eg. £8, 000 and £32, 000 etc.

### **All-purpose Homework overlay**

Send home a list of questions relating to some work from the day, or as a memory exercise from earlier work, surveys, discussions or observation exercises. Parent asks each question and notes the student's answer on the sheet, to be corrected next day in school. To encourage the student to be independent, and to help the process of assessment, these should be questions to which only the student (not the questioner at home) could know the correct answer. For example:

*Who has two big dogs and a budgie at home?*

*Who is off sick from school all week with chickenpox?*

*Who is the tallest boy?*

*Who is the tallest girl?*

Overlay 1 could be photos + names of pupils on the Base or class

Overlay 2 could be the hair one, with questions being such as

*Imagine Freddy. What colour is his hair, Is his hair long, short or medium length (for a boy!)*

### **Sentence Building Overlay**

Decide on the sentence model you want the student to produce. Eg.

*Babies drink milk and water but not Coke.*

*Dogs eat meat and biscuits but not vegetables*

Keep plenty blank squares on the overlay (where you can stick on cut out pics or draw in wee drawings - a mixture of possible right answers and distracters) but have a few words printed on permanently, such as

*drink, eat, and, but not*

You can use this idea with ANY type of sentence structure you want to practise, in combination with topic work if you like.

Convicted criminals *might get sent to jail or made to do community service, but not set free*

## Numbers

**Numbers** - use standard number overlay supplied with TechTalk/Speak/Scan, to answer number quizzes or to answer forced alternative or multiple choice questions in class, such as:

*Is it -*

*(1) oxygen?*

*(2) hydrogen?*

*Does Life Imprisonment mean?*

*(1) life?*

*(2) maximum 10 years?*

*(3) maximum 15 years?*

Open questions can be things like

*What age do children start going to school?*

For more able number users, make a set of new number overlays with bigger numbers, for basic mental arithmetic quizzes. Eg.

**Add 3 overlay**

<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>don't know</b>

To answer quizzes like

*6 add on 3 makes .....*

*15 add on 3 makes....*

*20 minus 6 is.....*

*3 times 3 makes.....*

**Reporting Surveys** - having collected survey data (see above) with a record sheet of notes for reference, use the number overlay to answer questions/give a report back to class, with a partner:

Partner - the number of people with blue eyes in this room is -

The student - 10

Partner - the number of people with brown eyes is -

The student - 7

Add your own ideas - Good Luck!