

Interactive Story Reading

Making and Using a Symbol Story Pack

To make a symbol pack for interactive story reading, you will need:

- suitable story books (one or two line of text per page only, regularly repeating line, eg. *"but they couldn't pull up the enormous turnip"*)
- a coloured symbol chart to match each story book (each with between 8 -12 symbols on it)
- a coloured sheet with a few key symbols from each story, with bigger size symbols on it (to make into 'tops' for BigMacks, Chippers, or One-Step Communicators,

Preparation

Before you starting with children, you will need to plan your approach and prepare your materials, to get maximum benefit from the pack. For example:

Symbol Charts

- Decide what is the maximum number of symbol charts you would be likely to use at once (ie the maximum number of children likely to be involved in group sessions), plus several spares for cutting up into flashcards, matching and Lotto type card games, snap and pairs games, labels for book packs, 'stick-ons' for books, or whatever).
- Decide whether the size of the symbol chart is OK or whether you have any children who will need a larger size for visual or physical accessing reasons. Experiment with the photocopier enlargement settings to get the right size
- make the appropriate number of colour photocopies of the paper symbol charts, in the sizes you require
- Laminate most of these copies (you may want to hold some back, to be laminated later into a different format (see 'Associated Materials' below).

VOCA overlays

- If you are using a multiple message voice output communication aid (VOCA) (such as a TechTalk), and want to use the chart as an overlay, you will have to cut out each symbol individually from a paper copy, and stick each into the squares on a blank overlay of the correct size - the paper symbol chart layout is not the exact size of any specific VOCA. Then photocopy and laminate the finished overlay. (Or use BoardMaker to create and print out an overlay of the exactly correct size.)

Big Mack Tops

- As above, decide how many copies of the larger size symbols will be required for the top of Big Macks and for associated matching games, wall displays etc. (perhaps slightly fewer than the charts)

- print out and laminate these
- cut them out into the appropriate size and attach them to the top of the Big Mack, Chipper or One-Step Communicator under the Snap Switch Cap (or stick them on to the surface with blue tack or sellotape).
- Put away and keep safe all the originals as a 'Master Copy' in case you need more copies in the future.

Associated Materials

Make the actual books as accessible as possible to the children. For example:

- use a Big Book, if possible for story reading sessions, so everyone can see.
- cover with 'Contac' to protect pages, if necessary, or 'dismember' the book and laminate each page, then reconstitute it in a ring binder, or held together with a giant individual ring (or 'treasury tag').
- make 'page turners' from stiff foam, corks, bits of carpet or polystyrene chips, so children can get their hand in between the pages more easily
- find ways of mounting and fixing the books at eye level so children can see them and you have hands free to point out words and manipulate other materials. Use rubber bands or paper clips to hold pages open at the right place.

For each book, think about additional materials (or 'props') that will be helpful, especially for children that are functioning at the level of real objects rather than pictures. Try some of the following:

- collect real objects or toys to match some of the main items in the stories, eg. Teddy, red bus, owl, shower cap, sponge, train etc. and use these to 'act out' parts of the story in 3-dimensions almost like a little scripted play, to 'bring the story to life' story.
- collect sounds or music (on tape or on Big Mack) that go with the stories, eg. train sound, car horn, (NB. There is a 'Walking through the Jungle' song) and 'illustrate' the stories with these. Perhaps these could be in the charge of a child who cannot yet insert a contribution at the appropriate place, but wants to participate and interact.

Using some of the extra photocopies -

- cut out individual symbols to make lots of symbol cards
- make matching word cards, if appropriate

Ideally, you want to end up with a set of base boards with symbols on, a set of base boards with words on, and a large set of individual symbol cards to match the base boards, and a large set of individual word cards to match the base boards, so you can 'mix and match' in various *Lotto and Snap* activities.

For example -

symbol-picture (in story book) matching; *symbol-symbol matching;*
word-symbol matching; *word-word matching*

- match word cards to Lotto base boards with words on them, and/or to other word cards.
- *'Snap'* card games, for children to 'get their eye in' to key symbols that will be used in the story.
- *'Spot the story card'* type games, where children have to identify 'sets' of symbols from the stack of cards as they are dealt out one by one, that 'go with' the story they are working on. This can be done with only Yes/ No responses. *"Does this one fit (go, belong) in our story? (Owl) No. Does this one fit in our story? (Digger) Yes*

Mounting

- use indoor-outdoor carpet doormats as a background environment (play mats) for all these materials. They can be cut to fit a wheelchair tray. Fix 'hooky' Velcro (self adhesive tags) to the back of all boards, symbol cards etc. and they will stick firmly to these mats.

Storage

- Think about how best to package, store and label the symbol story pack for rapid and easy access in the classroom (or wherever). Some people have found it best to separate the books, and put each book with its laminated symbol charts, Big Mack Tops and any associated materials into a transparent plastic 'zip-lock bags'. These can then be shelved, or hung on hooks on the wall, and easily retrieved in seconds without needing to look out various fiddly bits and pieces from different places. •
- Especially if you want children to be able to go and fetch a specific book unaided, label the outside of each zip-lock bag with a big coloured symbol to match each story (ie. rather than a using written text).

Big Macks, Chippers or One-Step Communicators

- choose how many devices you wish to use (2 is better than 1; 3 is good for small groups but may be too many for a single child)
- check out the the story book (just copy off the yellow Record Sheet, for speed) and select the appropriate messages (these will be the repeated lines occurring throughout the story; record these on to the devices
- you may wish to reserve one voice output message device for a *"Turn the Page"* message

Interactive Story Reading

In general -

- make sure the children are seated and supported safely and stably and so that they can a) see you, the book, their laminated symbol chart, and the Big Macks; b) indicate the symbols on the chart accurately; c) operate at least one Big Mack.

- do at least one or two sessions with the child on his or her own first, so he or she can learn to feel confident with the activity and the symbols.
- later, try doing interactive story reading in pairs and small groups.
- try working with and without (a) speaking child(ren) in the group, to see if this stimulates more interaction questions, and discussion. (Speaking children are usually quite happy to press BigMacks as well as speaking out themselves)
- remember that although adults may get quickly bored with the same story, children often like hearing the same story repeatedly and get a lot out of becoming totally familiar ('word perfect') with it.

Modelling

- model the response that you require, by pointing to a symbol chart yourself, as you read the story for the first time.
- if the child needs to be shown repeatedly how to interact, instead of doing it all yourself, try using a role model in the form of a glove puppet that is playing the child's role, and interacting with you, the story reader, as and when the child is expected to interact (eg pointing to a symbol or pressing the BigMack at the right moment). Then tell the child *"It's your turn now"*

Awareness of books & print

- hold the book up and read out the title on the front page, the name of the author. Slowly point out the words as you read them.
- use a sort of dialogue with yourself *"Let's see, who wrote this story?" "Oh yes, Fred Bloggs wrote this book". Who drew the pictures for this story?" It says here that Susie Smith drew the pictures"*
- with each new story, go through the book first without reading the story, show the pictures, point out items of interest, talk about each picture (if necessary, on the 'self dialogue' model as above) - without actually telling the story. This saves time and allows you to keep to the story line without digression, later.

Story Reading

- start to read the story out loud and point to the text as you read.
- go slowly and pause to allow the child to contribute.
- remember to note any eye gaze/pointing the child is doing and verbalise both sides of the dialogue for them (*"you're looking at the field. There are some animals in the field. They are cows, I think. Are they cows? Yes, they're cows"*)
- rather than prompting the child by asking direct questions (*"what's this?"*), try a more oblique comment (*"I wonder what he'll see now?"*)
- try to keep a clear rhythm, pitch and intonation pattern going as you read, to keep the child's attention and so that even if the child is not understanding

the meaning of all of the words, they are at least getting the cues for the repetitive lines and for their interactive turn.

- to stimulate the child's response, make heavy use of the technique of pausing plus expectant looking. The child will learn to associate a break in the rhythm, and a certain look on your face combined with sudden intense eye contact with the need to respond.
- combine this with shared/joint attention, making eye contact with the child, then looking back and forth (and trying to draw the child's gaze with yours) between the stimulus item on the book page and the child's symbol chart, so they realise there is a connection.
- if using Big Macks, pause at the appropriate moment and look expectantly at whichever child has the relevant message.
- if possible, don't 'dilute' the story or the rhythm of the language at this stage by digressing into long discussions about the pictures or characters (you can go back to these again later).
- try and draw the child and their symbol pointing and/or Big Mack pressing into the momentum and rhythm of the recital - this will facilitate their responses.
- don't break the rhythm of the story by stopping to praise the child for a successful response. Say a brief but sincere "good" and move along with the story.

Page Turning

- never turn any page by yourself. Pause at the end of each page and look expectantly at whichever child has a 'turn the page' symbol or message device. If they don't select it, wait, look, prompt with a "what do I do now?" question and look expectantly again.

Comprehension

After reading the story interactively, go over it to check that the child has remembered and understood the story. They should indicate comprehension by pointing out a symbol on his/her chart. Techniques to be used include:

- 'filling in the missing word' (Stage 1 - ask questions by prompting in the form of a self dialogue plus repetition of the story text, eg. 'Where did she take Teddy? She says - "I took him to the teddy"' (doctor)'
- prepare worksheets with comprehension questions to be read out orally (Stage 2 - ask direct questions. "Where did she take Teddy?"), so that you can leave assistants or volunteers or older children (reading buddies) to do appropriate comprehension work.

Extension Activities (will vary depending on the story book being used)

- drawing, colouring in, cutting out/sticking pictures of items in the story

- directional/ spatial awareness work, (eg. using symbol cards to build a Teddy, using symbols cards with Teddy's leg, arm, ear etc. Or reproducing a simple picture from the book, using symbol cards (eg. moon in the sky, chair on the ground etc.)
- number work with Teddy's body parts (2 eyes, one head etc.),
- go on real trips out - eg. to the park or to the zoo, on a real train ride.
- go outside and look at traffic - count lorries, buses, diggers etc. and note colours
- take lots of photographs on such outings and make (and then read interactively) your own story books
- find and read more stories about similar subjects (eg. animals, owls, bears, red buses)
- number work using the characters from the stories, sets of symbols the same (*"find 3 animals"; "2 things that grow in the ground"*)
- listening, auditory memory, following instructions work (eg. *"Find a sheep, a cow and a duck and put them in the big box"*).

Worksheets

- make 'real object' work sheets to develop basic symbol recognition skills - the child has to match his object to symbols on the sheet.
- make symbol worksheets - child has draw a line matching symbols; point out 'sets' or 'families' of symbols (eg all the big ones, small ones, all the animals, vehicles etc.); match symbol to symbol of associated object or concept (eg. Mummy Owl to big, baby owl to little; or red bus to red blob, yellow car to yellow blob, sad face to crying face etc.);
- make word worksheets - child has to match words; match symbols to words; choose the appropriate word to complete a symbol sentence.

And so on. No doubt you will have lots more interesting ideas yourself about associated materials and extension activities for interactive story reading! (Do please get back to us at the CALL Centre to share your ideas!)