



Communication and Social Skills

What's the aim?

Visual supports help you to communicate with your child by showing rather than (or as well as) telling them what you would like, or need, them to do. They also allow your child a means to communicate their needs and wants to you, in situations or at times when they may be unable to do this verbally or effectively through other means. Challenging behaviour often manifests out of frustration at either not understanding a situation or being unable to verbally express wants, needs and feelings and an effective visual communication support can help reduce these frustrations and behaviours.

What to do

The TomTag 4 P's approach:

Plan

- What communication needs does your child have? What do you want to help them with?

Do they need help to:

- understand instructions?
- remember social rules such as sharing, waiting or taking turns?
- communicate their feelings and choices?
- manage their emotions?

Prepare

- Choose appropriate symbols relating to the communication needs you have identified. Use the blank stickers to make your own drawings if needed.
- For help with understanding and remembering instructions, set out the symbols in one or more tags in the form of reminder checklists
- For help with teaching social rules, try to include some positive praise points in your tag to encourage and reward appropriate behaviour (e.g. good work, good effort, well done, etc.)
- To help with communicating choices, feelings or emotions, create separate lists for each set of options e.g. sensory triggers ("I feel ... too hot, too cold, tired, hungry, etc.), sensory support strategies ("I need ... count to 10, get a hug, take a rest, exercise, etc.)



- Aim to involve your child with the preparation of their tags where possible. Many children love stickers and the action of clicking the buttons into place. This helps to give them a sense of ownership and motivation to use it. This is also a great time to talk about how and why TomTag will help them.
- Have the TomTag easily to hand so that you or your child can quickly use it when the communication need occurs.

Prompt

- Prompt your child with a brief, verbal instruction e.g. "Look at your TomTag".
- Gently guide them to check their TomTag or place it in their hand
- Encourage them to communicate what they want or need by using the least amount of words, for example, "show me".
- You should also use the least amount of words to tell them what you want them to do. For example, "take turns" whilst at the same time pointing to the relevant symbol in their tag.

Praise

- Praise your child for communicating with you or for following your instructions.
- Keep prompting, praising and be patient!