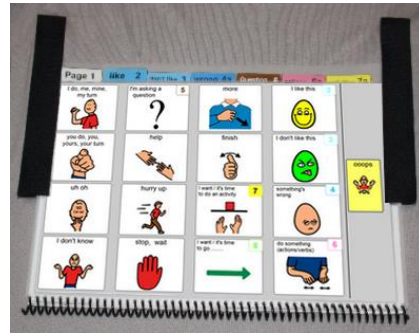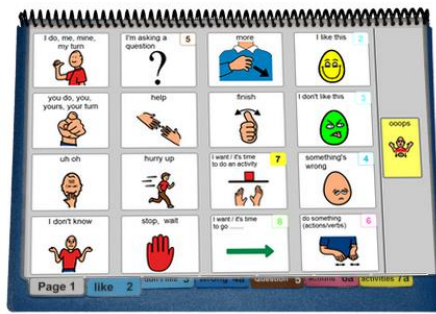# Group book – early functions

General description

This PODD book is designed for partners (teachers, assistants, therapists, parents and volunteers) to talk to groups of children learning to use aided language. The layout of this book is designed for direct pointing access.

- Note: In groups which include individuals who use partner-assisted scanning, the partner-assisted visual scanning (PAVS) group early functions PODD book (from the Alternative Access PODD resource) would be the preferred option to talk to the whole group. The advantage of using the PAVS group book in mixed groups is availability to model multiple access methods, at different times, using the operational conventions for each selection method.

There are two versions of this group book to suit the varying requirements and preferences of adult partners. Each version requires a different layout. In Mind express choose your preferred option for the *Early functions group book* in the *Group Books* menu.

1. **VEST version –** The vest version is designed to be attached to a communication vest worn by the adult for hands-free transport during the group session. The tabs are at the top of pages that open to hang down when the book is open. Wearing a group PODD book on a vest facilitates more frequent, spontaneous, incidental use of aided language to support spoken communication, as the book is always readily available. Separate "adult" books tend to be put down when adults use their hands for other purposes. People are unlikely to interrupt the flow of interaction and instruction with a child or group of children to retrieve a book that was left across the room where it was last used with a child in a different activity.

2. **BOOK version –** This version is formatted the same as a personal one page opening PODD communication books with the tabs at the bottom of the page. Adults will need to problem solve how they are going to carry the book with them all the time to be prepared for communication at any time. A ribbon or other thin material can be threaded through the spiral or rings of the book binding to make a shoulder strap.

The aim of using a group PODD book is to increase the ease for adults to provide receptive input using aided language to model and/or support children's understanding of general, routine messages used in the class, early childhood program or intervention group. The PODD communication book supports communication at any time throughout the day. Other aided language supports, e.g., activity displays, schedules, social scripts, to suit specific activities and individual requirements in the group, supplement the vocabulary included in this communication book.

Group books are primarily used in specialist programs or classes where there are multiple children learning to use AAC. In environments, where only one child uses (is learning) AAC, adults tend to use the individual's communication book to talk.

- This group book could also be modified for use in adult specialist programs where there are multiple individuals learning to use AAC. Significant customisation of the vocabulary would be required to suit the adult program activities and locations.

This group communication book focuses on expressing earlier acquired communication intents. It can be a useful introduction in classes where the **staff are just beginning to explore the use of PODD books** in their classes.

- The book is easier to produce with fewer pages than a personal or the expanded functions group book.
- Staff can begin to provide receptive input to their class as part of a dynamic observational assessment process to determine the specific requirements of the children and staff.
- Receptive input using aided language can begin while personal aids are being developed.
- The early functions vocabulary in this book can be used across the day, in a range of activities providing staff with many opportunities to develop their fluency using a PODD communication system.
- For some staff whose previous experience using graphic symbols has been primarily for curriculum content vocabulary, the focus on early functions vocabulary (without a categories index) can assist them to discover that AAC can be used for interaction throughout the day (i.e., symbols are being used differently than their previous experience of using symbols to tell children the schedule, make choices or answer curriculum questions).

However, experience reveals that partners frequently find it more difficult to use a PODD with a limited vocabulary to express a restricted range of communication intents.

- Adults communicate a full range of communication intents with children. In addition to early communication intents, adults relate information and talk about what has or will happen in the child's daily life.

- Partners require considerable knowledge of this restricted page set in order to plan what messages they can, and cannot, express using the communication book.

- Partners often express frustration when they make the effort to use the group communication book and either the vocabulary is not present or the pragmatic branches do not support their intent.

- Many partners have expressed relief when given the group book with expanded functions and report more frequent use of this expanded vocabulary to communicate with the children.

Therefore, after an initial period of use to develop some understanding and fluency using the early functions group PODD book, it is recommended that staff move to using he expanded functions group book.

The early functions PODD book is unlikely to provide sufficient vocabulary for students who rely on visual symbols to understand (i.e., they have difficulty understanding spoken language). Supplemental displays of symbols will need to be used alongside the early functions PODD book and gesture and sign added to speech to support understanding. These students will benefit from the additional vocabulary in the expanded functions group book. Staff use of a PODD page set on an electronic device with a message window may further support understanding using graphic symbols for these students.

Language

- Vocabulary is included in the page set to express a range of pragmatic functions typically seen in the expressive communication of 1-2 yr old children.
    - attention seeking
    - request objects, action
    - request information
    - reject, protest, complain
    - respond/acknowledge
    - inform (draw attention to something)
    - comment on action/object
    - answer

- Vocabulary is included in the page set to express a range of semantic meanings typically seen in the spoken language of children 1-2 yrs of age.

- A restricted range of vocabulary is available to express each type of semantic meaning/pragmatic function. There is a focus on selecting vocabulary related to the routine activities which occur within the group program.

> Vocabulary for some words typically used at this stage such as YES, NO, HELLO, THERE, is not included on the templates for this page set based on the assumption that the children will (be learning to) use unaided modes to more efficiently express these messages, e.g., pointing in the environment, head movements for YES/NO, look plus vocalisation for HELLO. Partners should model these forms of communication to stimulate the children's learning to use these modes to communicate these messages (multi-modal communication).

- Parts of speech represented in the page set for this PODD communication book include subject and object nouns, pronouns, WH-question words verbs, negative, interjections, adjectives and adverbs.

- Predictably associated vocabulary supports the use of 1-3 key word sentences.

- The symbols in this page set primarily represent single words. This allows for multiple meanings to be assigned to the one symbol. For example, the single word HELP can be accompanied by the spoken message "Can I help you?"; "I'm helping"; "I need some help", depending on the context.

NOTE that this book is not intended to provide a full language system. It only provides general vocabulary that can be used throughout the day in a range of activities and contexts. Adults are encouraged to only use this book for a short period of time and replace it with the expanded functions group book as soon as possible.

Layout

- One page opening group communication book.

- PODD communication book size is A4 landscape. It is not recommended to change the size of this PODD book to be used in a group.

- The VEST version of this group book has the page tabs at the top of the page. The book pages open downwards when the worn on a vest. Strips of Velcro® between the book and the vest hold the book closed with the front page showing. The Velcro® is released to turn to other pages in the book. (see the VEST construction file for details)

- The BOOK version has the page tabs at the bottom of the page.

- The first page (*01 main*) has sixteen vocabulary items (four columns of four items), other pages have twelve vocabulary items (four columns of three items).
  - On page *01 main*, the symbol button size is approximately 4.2cm high, 5.5 cm wide. Button spacing is 0.9 cm width and 0.4 cm height.
  - On all other pages, the symbol button size is approximately 4.6 cm high, 5.15 cm wide. Button spacing is 1.2 cm width and 1.5 cm height.

- Operational buttons are located on the right side of all pages, separated from the main symbol buttons with a vertical line. Each operational button is approximately 4.6cm high, 2.8cm wide.
  - *GO BACK TO PAGE 1* is on the first page in each section.
  - *GO BACK TO PAGE (number)A* is included to get back to the first page in a section from all other pages in that section.
  - *OOOPS* – used to indicate that something has gone wrong with the communication process
  - *GO TO LIST* – included on the final page for each branch/section.

- Page *01 main* has a different operational column from all other pages as there is no need for a *GO BACK TO PAGE 1*, *GO BACK TO PAGE (number)A* or *GO TO LIST* operations.

- Buttons with *GO TO PAGE (number)* instructions have a small square in the top right hand corner. The number of the page (darker colours) or the background of the small square (lighter colours) matches the colour of the page tag for the target page/section (see *colour master file*).

- Buttons with operational functions have a thicker border appearance to help discriminate them from symbol buttons that provide vocabulary to be included in the message.

- The operational instruction to TURN THE PAGE is located in the main symbol grid in the bottom right hand corner.

- List pages are attached to the back of the page preceding the page with the GO TO LIST instruction (see the *construction file*).

Navigation

Vocabulary in this PODD book is organised into pragmatic branches according to the communication intent being expressed.

- **Pragmatic branch starters** on *page 1*

- Predictive links are included to model the use of these to children and allow people who are new to using PODD communication books to locate the required vocabulary to communicate their messages.

- Operational commands to move between pages, e.g., *GO BACK TO PAGE (number), TURN THE PAGE.*

- The *10 group activities* section is accessed via the pragmatic branches
    - I WANT > TURN THE PAGE > GROUP ACTIVITY (10)
    - LET'S GO > GROUP PLACE (10C)

Customise PODD book

This Mind Express program includes vocabulary for Australian English and UK English. Australian English is the default. **To switch to UK English select the button with the UK flag.**
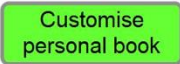
The next step consists in making a copy of the template so the original can be used to create more copies if needed. **To make a copy, select the green button 'Customise personal book'.**

On the SAVE window that opens up, **type a name for the book** (for example, the user's name) **and a date.** Select the OK button.
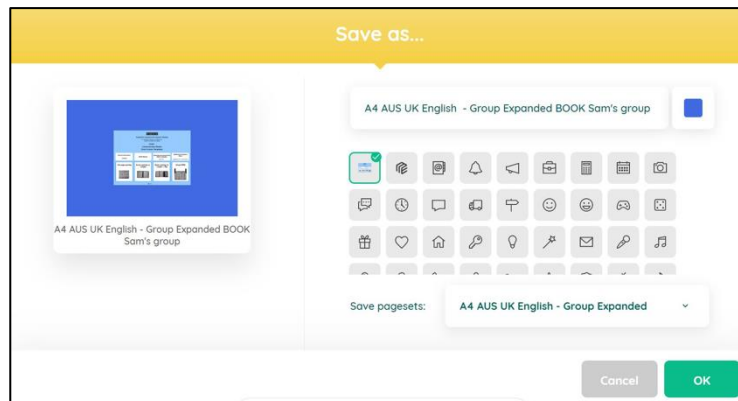
The individual's PODD book will be available at the end of all the files in the user portal, ready to be customised.

When you open the individual's PODD book files the first display will include instructions for use and links to the information and construction files for this PODD book. You will need to go to MENU – EDIT (or press the F2 key) to view and customise the pages. Once you are in edit mode you can navigate between pages using the green toolbar at the bottom of the screen.
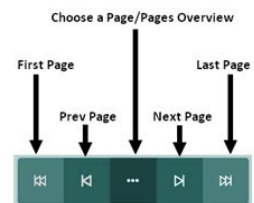
Customise the PODD book pages

You need to be in **edit mode** to customise the PODD book pages. Go to Menu > Edit (or press the F2 key). You can then use the green navigation toolbar at the bottom of the page to move between pages. The following information in the *section descriptions* will assist you to understand the vocabulary organisation in this PODD book to make appropriate changes to the individual's PODD book. To learn how to use Mind Express, read the online manual available directly from the software by selecting Menu > Help > Online help or watch the video tutorials available on the Jabbla website or on the Jabbla YouTube channel.

Section descriptions

> **Remember** to position items that link to another page of vocabulary on the first page of the section to reduce the number of page turns required to express the whole message. All new pages need to be linked from the front page.

01 main
- This is the **main navigation index** in this PODD book. All pages are accessed via the pragmatic branch starters on this page. If making modifications to this page ensure that you maintain all of these navigation links in order to get to other pages in the communication book. **All additional pages must be accessible via this page using either an existing branch or by adding a new branch starter to this page.**
- These pragmatic branch starters indicate the communication intent of the message with predictive links to the pages of vocabulary required to express these intents.
- The verbal wording associated with the pragmatic branch starter I WANT … is changed to I WANT / IT'S TIME TO DO AN ACTIVITY and LET'S GO.. is changed to LET'S GO / IT'S TIME TO GO so staff can use them to both request and instruct .
- The PCS symbols for I LIKE THIS and I DON'T LIKE THIS have been modified using different colours to increase the visual contrast for easier location and discrimination.
- This page also includes vocabulary that it is generally useful to say quickly or in the context of an ongoing conversation or activity in the group.

02 like
- Vocabulary to express positive opinions and provide feedback to the child.
- In addition to adding/deleting vocabulary, you can change the words associated with some pictographs to suit the individual/family/peer group style of expressing opinions.

03 don't like
- Vocabulary to express negative opinions and complain/protest about something the person does not like. Adults often use this page in the group book to reference what an individual is communicating informally through vocalisation, gesture or facial expression, i.e. "I think you're saying that you DON'T LIKE THIS".
- The item LET'S DO SOMETHING ELSE has a predictive link directly to the *06 want/activities* section to suggest an alternative activity (because you don't like the current activity).
- Note that vocabulary to complain about how someone is feeling is included in *section 04 something's wrong*. It is important when making changes to these pages to consider which section, *I DON'T LIKE IT* or *SOMETHING'S WRONG*, will most appropriately and frequently convey the child's communication intent.
- In addition to adding/deleting vocabulary, you can change the words associated with some pictographs to suit the individual/family/peer group style of expressing opinions.

04 wrong
- Vocabulary and phrases to complain, protest, assert self and generally relate problems or what has gone wrong for an individual. Adults often use this page in the group book to reference what a child is communicating informally through vocalisation, gesture or facial expression, i.e. "I think you're saying that SOMETHING'S WRONG".
- As some complaining vocabulary is located in the *I DON'T LIKE THIS* section of this PODD, there is a link on page *05b* to access this other vocabulary. Its location on the second page ensures that the communicator has checked the vocabulary available in this section prior to changing pages.

- I WANT SOMEONE links directly to the *09 people* page for the communicator to identify who they want.
- Young children cannot always specifically identify what is causing them to feel upset. The I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S WRONG is useful to enable the communicator to express that they are just upset but cannot tell you why. It provides the option to not answer people's requests to know why they are upset and prevents continual guesses to discover the problem. This phrase can also be used by adults to emphasise that they really don't know what is wrong, encouraging the child to tell them (use their words) or assist the adult to problem solve what's wrong.
- The vocabulary in these template pages reflects common complaints of young children. You will need to customise this section to include common complaints or difficulties in the group of children.

05 questions
- Includes Wh-question words and phrases. The focus is on including the questions that are frequently asked in the group/class.
- At this stage of language development, adults often model the single WH – word to start the question and then finish the question using speech (with gesture to objects or locations).
- *Not* is predictably associated with the question words to ask WHY NOT?
- The commonly used question WHERE IS (PERSON)? links directly to the people section to fill in a name to finish the question, e.g., WHERE IS DAD?
- YOU NEED TO TELL ME YES/NO functions like raising intonation to mark questions in early language development. This item links directly to the first page for the communicator to indicate what they are asking. For example, YOU NEED TO TELL ME YES/NO, (*return to page 1, turn the page*) GO.. (*goes to 12*) HOME? Can be interpreted as "Can we go home?" or "Are you going home" depending on the context. Adults model the key words using the communication book as they speak the complete question.

06 do / actions
- The actions section links from the DO SOMETHING pragmatic branch starter to instruct and request actions.
- There is one sub-category *06c movements,* in this section.
- 06b includes the OPEN, CLOSE, TURN, PUT, TAKE/TOOK with the predictably associated prepositions ON, OFF, IN, OUT and pronoun IT.
- Actions most likely to be instructed or requested in a group environment have been prioritised for inclusion. There are spaces available to customise this section to include actions vocabulary frequently used in your group.

07 want / activities
- The activities section links from the I WANT … pragmatic branch starter.
- In the group book this section includes general play / routine activities which occur in multiple environments. This allows the adults to model during the group where this vocabulary is located in the children's personal communication books.
- A link to *10 group activities* is included on *07b* (accessed via TURN THE PAGE). It is located on the second page so that communicators see and use the vocabulary already in the activities section on both *07a* and *07b*, before turning to the group activities page.
- The subcategories *07c make something* and *067outside activities* are used in the example page set to organise the large activity vocabulary required to request. Other subcategories may be required if adding large numbers of additional activities of a particular type, e.g., sports, games, sensory activities.

- I WANT SOMEONE has a predicted link to *09 people* to identify who is wanted.
- Note that there are no activity displays in the group book. Separate activity displays would be engineered in the group environment (this works as the staff are using the displays in one environment, as opposed to the student's personal book which they will use in multiple, including novel, environments). They are not included in the group book in order to reduce the weight of the PODD communication book worn on a vest or carried by the staff.

08 places
- The places section links from the LET'S GO … pragmatic branch starter.
- In the group book this section includes general places supporting adults to model during the group where this vocabulary is located in the children's personal communication books. These places that may be talked about during the group, but not necessarily gone to during group, e.g., going to the SHOP after group.
- *08a places* includes a link to *10c group place* for the names of places the children might go during their time at school/kinder/school/kinder/another group.
- The word VISIT links directly to the *09 people* page to identify who the child wants to visit (may need to include names family relationships and other frequently visited people on the people list)
- Fringe vocabulary for low frequency places that may be talked about in the group/class, e.g., a place the child went on holiday or visited only occasionally can also be added to the places list.

09 people
- Includes generic names/symbols for immediate family (mum, dad, brother or sister)
- Includes generic labels for children (FRIEND, ALL THE CHILDREN).
- Spaces to add the names of staff in group.
- All other names, including the class members names, are included on the people list.

10 group activities
- This section includes all group specific activities and places. This section will require customisation to suit the specific class or group.
- *10a group activities* includes the vocabulary TIME; GO, WENT; SING, SONG and PACK UP. There is also a link to the *10c group place* sub-category on this page.
- The other spaces on *10a* and *10b* are blank to add the activities that are specific to that class/group.
- *10c group places* has spaces to add the locations/places the children may GO at the class/group location.
- Note that there are no activity displays in the group book. Separate activity displays would be engineered in the group environment (this works as the staff are using the displays in one environment, as opposed to the student's personal book which they will use in multiple, including novel, environments). They are not included in the group book in order to reduce the weight of the PODD communication book worn on a vest or carried by the staff.

Other pages

- **Grid pages.** 4 blank grid pages are included as templates to create additional pages
  - *grid a page* – template for *"a"* (first pages) in a section. Includes *TURN THE PAGE.*
  - *grid b page* – template for other, not first pages, in a section. Includes instruction to *GO BACK TO PAGE (number)A*, the beginning of the section, and *GO TO LIST*.
  - *grid a page no turn* – Used to make a single page section. It includes the operational controls for a first page in a section, but no TURN THE PAGE
  - *separate activity display grid* – used to create new separate activity displays

Mind Express database

In the print settings window, after all of the PODD pages, there are some additional pages that the Mind express software uses to execute some programming. For example, to make the vocabulary changes between Australian and UK languages. **Be careful: Do NOT delete or alter these pages when customising your PODD book.**

Note: there are no lists for stickers in this PODD book. Lists in this PODD book are printed onto the back of the main pages using weatherproof paper (that can be directly written on using any writing implement)