# Inclusive Education
### COMOX VALLEY SCHOOLS
### Embracing Diversity

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# HOW-TO: Modelling on the Talker

Modelling is THE key to a child learning to use their talker to communicate. What do we mean by modelling? How do we do it? And why does it work?

The terms *aided language input, aided language stimulation,* and *aided language modelling* all mean the same thing—use the talker yourself to represent a simplified version of what you are saying. If you were to say with your voice "I want a turn, please" you might model "want...turn." The value of this is at least three-fold: 1) the child sees the talker is accepted and valued in the environment, 2) the child sees how to use the talker to say the word/s, and 3) the child learns that communicating "want...turn" has the effect of getting a turn. So powerful!

Modelling really means IMMERSION. Like French Immersion, TALKER IMMERSION gives the student the chance to learn a language by living in that language. The difference is that we, the ones modeling talker use, are also learning. So be patient with yourself—it will come together and you will become more and more fluent. In doing so, you are showing the student how to use a talker to convey ideas, get needs met, make connections, and more.  Here are some tips and tricks:

1) Choose a very small number of common, powerful, motivating words to learn and model as much as you can. Pre-thinking and planning reduces the stress on you of having to find the word on-the-fly when you are in the middle of an interaction.

2) Make modelling very efficient and almost casual—just weave it into the interaction but don't dwell on it.

3) Avoid questioning/testing/quizzing the child. The purpose of modelling is exposure and nothing more. When we model, we do not have the expectation that they are learning in order to demonstrate their attention and learning. We have the expectation that they see the talker as a viable way to communicate things that are important to them.

4) Try to remember that it is important to only model messages that a) the child might conceivably need to produce (content and language level), and b) that are not going to be messages that are negatively received by the child. I like to keep the talker in the "neutral-to-positive range."

5) Have fun with it 😊 Choose positive or dramatic responses to be modelling, i.e. "awesome" or "uh oh!" or "gross!"—whatever the child responds well to.

Jennie Rankin, Registered Speech-Language Pathologist – Alternative and Augmentative Communication

# Modelling Q&A

**What if my student doesn't pay attention when I model?**

*That is ok—not a problem at all. They are HEARING the word/s, witnessing you accepting and using the talker, and learning that using the talker to communicate causes wanted outcomes.*

**What if my student wants to hold/use the talker themself? I can't model!**

*It can be worthwhile asking them if you can push a word button. Sometimes they just want to be asked. (Of course, if they say no, we need to respect that and find another way.)*

*There are several things you can try:*

*1) reposition the talker between you so you both can press the word buttons,*

*2) try to be as fast as possible in modelling a single word on the home page, and then shift the focus back to your shared experience—this works for kids who don't like the interruption to the activity,*

*3) try a my-turn-your-turn structure in an activity that supports this—some kids can settle into a structure,*

*4) try modelling by hovering rather than pressing the word button—this is a favourite strategy of mine because it is well received so often,*

*5) produce paper versions of the word/s you are wanting to model and use them instead—this works well for core words (all of those common words you find on the home page),*

*6) have a second talker for you to model on (sometimes this needs to be only a short period of time)—this is a very common solution and can increase their talker use incredibly; it also allows for more modeling by peers.*

**What do I model?**

*Anything relevant and motivating. Keep it simple! Single words are fine as is modelling one single word again and again throughout the day.*

If you're feeling stuck, please reach out to the speech-language pathologist and to other people supporting students with talkers. Spending time with others also figuring this task out is important—you will gain new perspectives, new ideas, alternate ways of looking at things, and confidence and reassurance.

Jennie Rankin, Registered Speech-Language Pathologist – Alternative and Augmentative Communication