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An online information, sharing and community resource for individuals with disabilities, parents, carers and professionals

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Positive two-way Communication with students with learning disabilities

Some suggestions on how to create positive two-way communication take place between you and students with learning disabilities

To be a good communicator with people with a learning disability you need to:

- Be clear and concise.
- Avoid jargon or long words that might be hard to understand.
- Try to use concrete concepts rather than abstract concepts. If you need to use abstract concepts such as feelings, support this with pictures, objects and visual aids.
- Work at the person's pace. Check back with them that you have understood what they are communicating and that they have understood you. Do not ask closed questions such as "Do you understand?" as the person may say yes because they feel worried about not understanding. Try to use open questions and give the student the opportunity to explain their understanding.

Top tips for good communication:

- One to one will tend to be more successful than groups. If you need to communicate to your students as a group, support your student to sit close to you or additional support staff so you can provide additional support.
- Ask open questions; questions that don't have a simple yes or no answer to avoid your student responding with what they feel you want to hear. Open questions will give you a clearer understanding of their what they think, feel and understand.
- Check back with the student when they communicate with you. Repeating their response to check that you have understood what they have said e.g. "You want to make a model of a Jaguar, is that right?"
- Watch the person; they may tell you things by their body language and facial expressions.
- Be observant, much of what your student communicates may be through body language, tone and physical movement. If you are finding it difficult to understand aspects of your student's communication, speak with their family/ carer to find out what it means.
- If you are explaining some information via the black board or verbally, make it as accessible as possible. You can support what you are saying by;
- Drawing pictures for the key information you are conveying
- Use gestures and facial expressions
- Act out/role play the information
- Use objects
- Take time to communicate. Your student may need longer to fully explain what they have to say and respond to your information.

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