

Object Communication

Many students who are deaf-blind need a variety of communication systems for their different needs and settings. Using objects for communication is a form which is easily understood by most listeners in both new and familiar situations. This system may also be used with sign language and/or speech to make sure the listener clearly understand their message.

The purpose for using object communication is to provide students with dual sensory impairments with an alternative form of communication. Objects are used to represent activities, places, and people. Examples of these objects include: textures (i.e., piece of carpet, blanket, wood, plastic), miniatures, pieces of the real object, and objects that are exactly the same as those being used. The student uses these objects for getting information about the activities, people, and places around him, making choices, and/or telling others his message.

Points to Remember

1. Students, families, and teachers need to work together to choose the objects which will have the most meaning for the student's needs.
2. The number of objects used to represent the student's daily activities can be increased over time. When the student understands that the objects represent something that is about to happen, additional objects can be added.
3. The use of objects can begin with the purpose of giving the student information about activities, people, and places. Later a few objects can be shown to the student to see which activity, person, and place the student prefers. The choice can be made by a hand movement, body movement, or facial expression (i.e., if the student throws one object on the floor and allows one to stay in front of him, he may be telling you he is choosing the object on the table).
4. Students should be encouraged to speak and/or sign in addition to using the objects if they have those skills.
5. Objects can be used with students in a number of different ways: daily calendar boxes, portable systems, or both.

Procedure for Calendar Boxes

1. Objects are put into the boxes before the student comes to school, in order of the day's activities.
2. The student is taken to the boxes and looks at or feels all the objects in the boxes. The adult labels each object or activity with speech or sign as the student examines it. If the student does not like objects to touch his hands, then the object can be placed on another part of the student's body (e.g., elbow or shoulder) which may not be as sensitive to touch.
3. After examining each object in sequence, the student returns to take the object out of the first box and goes to that activity with the object.
4. At the place of the activity, the student matches the object to the activity. He will see or feel how that object always is a part of that activity (e.g., spoon during lunch, blanket during nap time, ball during P.E., etc.). As the object and activity always happen together, the student will begin to expect the activity when the object is in his hand.
5. As the activity ends, the student returns to the calendar box and puts the object in a separate "finished" box or puts the object back into the original box and covers it. The adult labels this box, object or activity verbally or by sign as "finished".
6. Move to the next box and repeat the same procedure.

Portable object systems for use in the community

Objects can be used in the same way described when the student is going out into the community. The student can easily use a purse, hip pack, or backpack in place of the boxes when a portable system is needed.

Resources: *American Printing House for the Blind:* <http://www.apb.org/>