



Spectronics *Expertly supporting your choice*

Symbol Supported Text.

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Speech Language and AAC Consultant

Today we are going to talk about symbol supported text.

What? Why?  
Who? When?  
Where? How?

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**Communicate: Symwriter**

- Successor to *Writing with Symbols 2000*
- Write directly onto the document or by using grids

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**Boardmaker Plus**

- Version 6
- *Symbolate Tool*
- Boardmaker Plus – Read with highlighting

**Symbols are used to support:**


- Communication
- Independence eg. Timetables, Chores Charts
- Writing eg. Using grids for writing for people with limited access or in creative writing
- Reading
- Access to Information

Aphasia is caused by damage to the brain.  
It can make it hard for you to communicate.  
If you have aphasia, it can make it hard to:

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## Who do symbols help?

- Anybody who has difficulty with text
- People with recognised learning difficulties
- People for whom English text presents challenges




## Who are these people?


- Young Children
- Intellectual Disability
- Dyslexia, eg: Reading difficulties
- Acquired Disability eg: After a stroke or car accident.
- Culturally or Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds (CALD)
- Limited educational outcomes
- Aging and sensory issues
- Psychiatric difficulties
- Everyone in the community!!!!



## Research – word reading


- Samuels, 1967; Samuels et al. 1974; Lang & Solman, 1979; Saunder & Solman, 1984
- Children learned more words and learned words faster when not paired with symbols
- Questions:
  - How old is this research/impact on technology if repeated?
  - Methodology?
  - What symbol set?
  - Exposure to symbols through the use of AAC?



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- Research clearly suggests that pairing pictures with words slows down word identification instruction, but no clear research to guide our use of picture supported text in supporting areas of reading outside of word reading.
- Current practice has suggested that modified picture supported reading can be of benefit if your goal is to develop emergent readers and writer's literacy attitudes and understanding.

Center for Literacy and Disability Studies


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## Current Practice suggests

- Increased
  - Interest
  - Attention
  - Time on task
  - Comprehension of content
  - Self-esteem

## Warwickshire Symbols Inclusion Project

- Impact of using symbols to help enable inclusion
  - Improving behaviour and motivation by understanding and remembering visual information
  - Creating greater independence by providing print information in a way they can understand
  - Giving access to the curriculum and learning by making the comprehension more permanent once concept is understood
  - Self Study or reference books in a variety of formats ie. Text only, supported text, symbol, simplified and one symbol
  - Learning to Read for students who will never gain full functional mastery of text, can improve self esteem and their ability to learn



## Sum, H. & Johnson, H. (2006)

- Further research is needed to explore the effect of pictures on the ability to extract meaning from information presented in text for people with developmental disabilities
- Especially adults
- The use of pictures to facilitate understanding of meaning presented in printed material is recommended.....little empirical literature to support this recommendation



## What? When? Who?

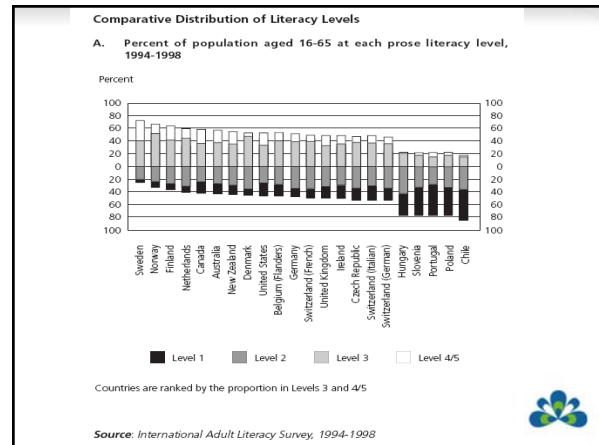
Reading Words	No (? Research)
Language Learning	?
Access to Information/Curriculum	Yes little research
Comprehension of Content	Yes little research
Writing Support	Yes little research
Support Independence	Yes practice/little research
Increase interest and motivation	Yes practice/little research
Increase attention	Yes practice
Increase self-esteem	Yes practice
Improve literacy attitudes and understanding	Yes practice
Communication	Yes
Behaviour	Yes



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“while this practice provides some (people) with access to content they would otherwise be unable to access independently, there are many issues to consider before implementing this practice broadly”

Center for Literacy and Disability Studies



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### What do we expect people to be able to read?

- Storybooks
- Text Books
- Instructions
- Papers/fact sheets
- Surveys
- Signs
- Computer - internet, email, messaging, etc
- Brochures
- Catalogues
- Letters
- Invitations
- Minutes
- Newspapers
- Other Technologies - Mobile phones, electronic diary, I-pods, ATM's

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### Literacy Bill of Rights

- “Everyone, regardless of extent of severity of their disabilities, have a basic right to use print.”

Yoder, Erickson, & Koppenhaver, 1996. p.3

## Australian Laws and Policy Documents

- Federal  
Disability Discrimination Act (1992)
- State  
Victorian Disability Act (2006)  
Equal Opportunity Act (1995)  
Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities (2007)



## Translating into Plain Language

- Complex Language  
It is important that you shall read the notes, advice and information detailed opposite then complete the form overleaf (all sections) prior to its immediate return to the Council by way of the envelope provided.
- Plain Language  
Please read the notes opposite before you fill in the form. Then send it back to us as soon as possible in the envelope provided.



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## Translating into Easy English



- Read all the information on page 13.
- Fill in the blue form.
- Put the form in the envelope.
- Send the envelope to me by Friday 20<sup>th</sup>  
May, 2005



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## Symbols for Easy English

- Should add meaning to a document
- Can help people to remember information
- Make a document more interesting and attractive to the reader
- Should be provided with support so they understand how the information relates to them

Communication Resource Centre, Scope 2008.

## Who should be doing this?

- Government
- Healthcare
- Employers and employment services
- Education
- Travel and Leisure Industry
- Shopping and Marketing Centres
- Any Organisation needing to include people with low levels of literacy



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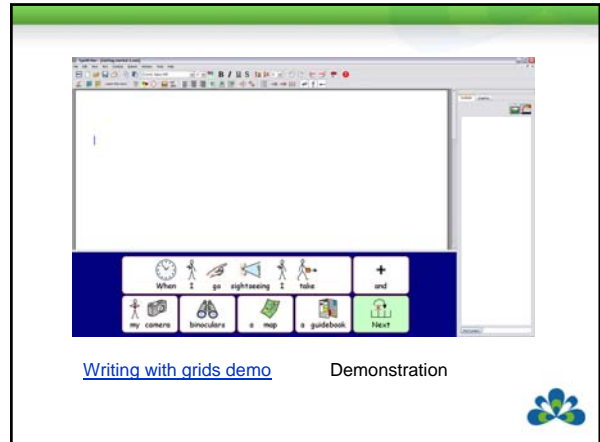
## Communicate: Symwriter



- Over 8000 Widgit Literacy Symbols (WLS) in colour and B&W
- Drop pictures from symbol browser 1500 Widgit pictures or from anywhere on your computer

## What is Communicate: Symwriter?

- You can write directly into a document using the keyboard
- You can write using grids – for those who find text more difficult, can also be selected by switch users with a range of scanning options



## Widgit Literacy Symbols

- Previously known as Rebus
- Designed to support literacy and written information ie. Documentation and signage
- Have a schematic structure – all items conform to a set of rules
  - Buildings, rooms, shops etc
  - Quantity
  - Tenses
  - Comparatives

	Writing with Symbols 3000	Communicate: Symwriter
Talking word processing	✓	✓
Rich Text Formatting	✓	✓
Spell checking with pictures	✓	✓
Graphics on the Page	✓	✓
Flexible, scalable page layout	✓	✓
Drag and drop graphics	✓	✓
Easy file sharing	✓	✓
Talking symbol processor	✓	✓
Pictics Communication Symbols (PCS)	✓	Available as add-on
Widgit Literacy Symbols (WLS)	✓	✓
Smart Symboling based on parts of speech	✓	✓
Quotifiers to show plurals and tenses	✓	✓
Adjustable text and symbol size	✓	✓
Choice of the best symbol for the word	✓	✓
View your symbol choices, even in text mode	✓	✓
Symbols appear above or below text	✓	✓
Add your own graphics as symbols	✓	✓
Thumbnail views of graphic choices	✓	✓
Thumbnail views for browsing pictures	✓	✓
Grids for writing	✓	✓
Easy creation of grids for writing	✓	✓
Free form grids	✓	✓
Scanning for one or two switches	✓	✓
Grids for Printing	See Communicate: in Print	✓

## Boardmaker v6 comes in three versions

- Boardmaker
- Boardmaker Plus
- Boardmaker with Speaking Dynamically Pro

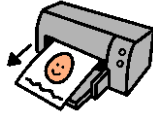
## Picture Communication Symbols

What are they?

- Stylised drawings of objects, activities, feelings and more
- Designed for face to face communication

## Boardmaker

- Resource for making printable materials.
- Core library of 4500 symbols
  - Addendums
  - Import digital images and additional symbols



## Boardmaker Plus

- Resource for making printable materials.
- Also allows you to make interactive on-screen activities.

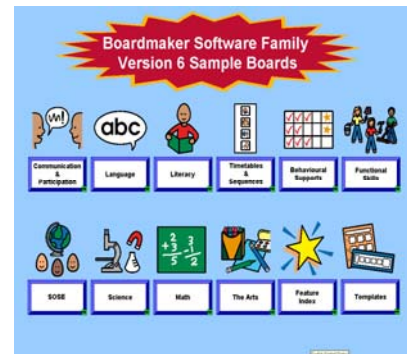


## BM+: Interactive Activities

- On-screen interactive activities
- Interactive talking books
- Songs
- Games
- Pop-Up Questions
- Assessments with feedback
- Plus Much, Much More!



## Sample Boards



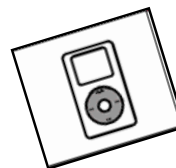
## Boardmaker with Speaking Dynamically Pro

- Resource for making printable materials.
- Also allows you to make interactive on-screen activities.
- Includes Word Prediction and Abbreviation Expansion for writing and communication: eg. Word prediction – predicts spelling as you type.; Type abbreviation and expanded text will appear (GH – Hello, how are you?)
- Includes additional voice options



## PCS Addendums

- 2000, 2002, 2004 & 2008
- 6000 extra symbols
- Build your symbol libraries



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## Symwriter Practical – Hands On

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## Activity Ideas and Applications Environments



Anything of interest??? [Link to templates](#)


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## Boardmaker Practical Hands On

Symbolate


### In both programs....

- place symbol above or below the text
- alter the size of the symbol in relation to the text
- change the font colour or symbol colour including monochrome
- Have only key words or all words linked with a symbol
- Use a range of picture and symbol options
- Alter the background and foreground colours to suit user needs
- Talking symbol processor
- Grids for Writing (on-screen)
- Switch Access




### Why Symwriter?

- Talking word processor
- Smart Symbolising Technology
- Allows you to view alternative symbols as you go
- Can change qualifiers (plural, verb tense, comparative or superlative) locally for one symbol or for the whole document
- Pictorial spellchecker
- Can switch between colour and monochrome
- Skin tone icon
- Text only or symbols



### Can be useful for people to:

- Attempt spelling words with visual and auditory feedback
- Check the meaning of complex vocabulary
- Help them understand the meaning of words that they don't use correctly in their spoken language ie. He/she/they
- Get access to information
- Help them remember and understand complex concepts



## Why Boardmaker Plus?

- Grids for Printing ie. Communication aids, timetables
- Flexible interface – drag and drop
- PCS
- Interactive On-screen activities
- NB: Needs someone to set it up



## Can be useful for people to:

- Make communication aids using the grids for printing
- Design interactive onscreen activities
- Quickly and easily develop symbol supported documents
- Needs someone to set it up to read with highlighting
- Not ideal for independent student use



## Symbol Software Comparison Chart

- <http://www.spectronicsinoz.com/article/symbol-software-comparison-chart>
- Search site



## [www.widgit.com](http://www.widgit.com)

Widgit SOFTWARE Products Resources Support Events Symbols

**Symbol Showcase:**  
Bringing the most up-to-date information to you

Over 40 FREE! half day events allowing you to see what's new with symbols, software and resources. Get free trials and discounts on the latest software.

**Products**  
Key Products:  
TEFL SymbolPad  
Communication 1, 2 & 3  
Communication 4, 5 & 6  
Communication 7, 8 & 9  
Communication 10, 11 & 12  
Communication 13  
Communication 14  
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**Teaching and Learning**  
Widgit Cards  
Widgit Books  
Widgit Games  
Widgit Activities  
Widgit Worksheets  
Widgit Templates  
Widgit Resources  
Widgit Support  
Widgit Events  
Widgit Symbols

**Information**  
Widgit News  
Widgit Updates  
Widgit Feedback  
Widgit Contact Us  
Widgit Privacy Policy  
Widgit Terms and Conditions  
Widgit About Us  
Widgit History  
Widgit Future  
Widgit Partners  
Widgit Sponsors  
Widgit Donors  
Widgit Volunteers  
Widgit Advisors  
Widgit Consultants  
Widgit Trainers  
Widgit Facilitators  
Widgit Instructors  
Widgit Mentors  
Widgit Coaches  
Widgit Supervisors  
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Widgit Singers



## <http://www.symbolworld.org/>

SymbolWorld.org  
MERRY CHRISTMAS  
From everyone at SymbolWorld

eLive  
Learning  
Stories  
My world

New! Communication Patterns  
Story Construction

Symbols Resources Help



## [www.mayer-johnson.com](http://www.mayer-johnson.com)

Mayer-Johnson  
The leading brand for learning and language acquisition

Boardmaker Plus!  
The #1 way to teach and learn language and literacy

BACK TO SCHOOL  
Dynamilis  
Widgit

Support – Knowledge Base  
Downloads – Updates for free!  
Training – online live and recorded sessions  
Sharing – More free resources





[www.adaptedlearning.com](http://www.adaptedlearning.com)

Localised Ideas!

Activity Exchange

[www.spectronicsinoz.com](http://www.spectronicsinoz.com)

**Online Resources & Support**

- Widgit Resources  
<http://www.widgit.com/resources/index.htm>
- Widgit Product Support  
<http://www.widgit.com/support/index.htm>
- DynaVox Knowledge Base  
<http://dynavoxsys.custhelp.com/>

**General Principles from Widgit**

1. Never just type - check the meanings for words is correct and it is not cluttered
2. Only include relevant, key symbols that support the text
3. Remove symbols that make no sense to the user ie. Turn off or change label
4. Make sure each sentence begins on a new line
5. Remove pronouns and replace with a noun
6. Remove qualifiers if necessary
7. Increase the spacing for visual clarity
8. Evenly space the symbols

**Level of Symbol Support**

Text only    Supported text    Symbol    Simplified    One Symbol

It is inappropriate to use symbols if you are working with readers who will understand very few symbols

- Support the whole sentence with a single symbol or image

[www.widgit.com](http://www.widgit.com)

**Communication Resource Centre, Scope**

- Easy English Style Guide  
[http://www.scopevic.org.au/therapy\\_crc\\_easyenglishstyleguide.html](http://www.scopevic.org.au/therapy_crc_easyenglishstyleguide.html)
- Images for Easy English  
<http://www.scopevic.org.au/ImagesforEasyEnglish.pdf>

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## Images for Easy English

- Symbols should:
  - Be meaningful to the reader
  - Make your key messages easier to understand
  - Emphasize the key points in the document
  - Help the reader to remember information
  - Have space around them

Communication Resource Centre, Scope 2008.

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## Photographs

- Useful to show specific people, places etc
- [www.google.com.au/images](http://www.google.com.au/images)
- Copyright and permission
- How clear is it?
- Black and White vs Colour



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## Logos

- Can assist understanding if they are well known
- Copyright
- Check re: colour, size, quality etc



## Signage

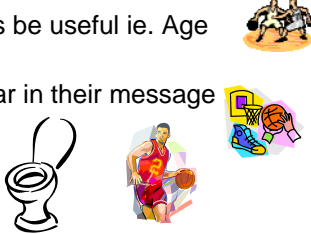
- Use community signs where available
- Can be more familiar



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## Illustrations and Line Drawings

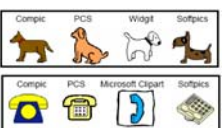
- Can sometimes be useful ie. Age appropriate
- Need to be clear in their message
- Don't overuse



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## Pictographs


- Eg. PCS, Widgit, COMPIC, Softpics
- Can use symbols from a variety of sources, unless the reader or audience is used to the concepts within one symbol set eg. Widgit Literacy Symbols
- Copyright




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## Interpreting Symbols

- Some people with limited life experience or different cultural background may not have a broad understanding of symbols
- Choose the clearest, least confusing symbol – more complex will need to be learnt
- Use concrete images, don't rely on literacy or numeracy
- Beware of Metaphors



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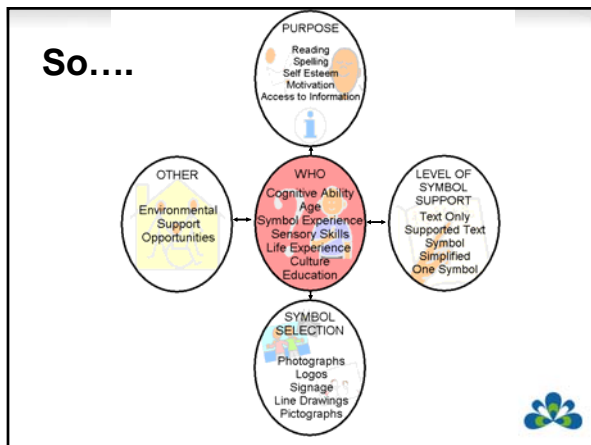
- Make sure symbols match the meaning 
- Use specific language and symbols
- Consistency ie, position – check with target audience, symbol used, size, space
- Use symbols to represent an object rather than a person carrying out the activity
- When symbols of people are used, show the whole person where possible - usually more meaningful to use a photo where appropriate
- Think about the colour of the images and the information it conveys - can be motivating but think of the audience

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## Do you know your audience?


- Encourage them to be involved in the development and selection of symbols
- Consider their life experience, age and culture
- Pilot the resource

Communication Resource Centre, Scope 2008.



Communicate: Symwriter

- 21 day demo available
- Single user license \$295
- Upgrade \$196



## Boardmaker Plus

- 30 day demo available
- Single user from \$559
- Upgrade from ANY Boardmaker Software Family Product \$169



## References & Acknowledgements

- Communication Resource Centre – Accessible Information Unit [www.scopevic.org.au](http://www.scopevic.org.au)
- <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/>
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