

# Overview of Level VII



## Language

Individuals at Level VII can use Symbols (concrete or abstract) combined into two- or three-symbol combinations ('want juice', 'me go out'), according to grammatical rules. The individual understands that the meaning of symbol combinations may differ depending upon how the symbols are ordered. Children with severe orthopedic impairments may access the symbols through the use of a switch or other AAC device through pointing, touch, eye gaze, etc.

### Messages communicated at Level VII include:

- Refuse: Protest, Refuse or reject something
- Obtain: Request more of an action or object, Request a new object or action, Make choices Request absent objects
- Social: Request attention, Show affection, Greets people, Offers things or shares, Directs someone's attention to something, Uses polite social forms
- Information: Answers yes and no questions, Asks questions, Names things/people, Makes Comments, Abstract, subtle and sophisticated intents

### Messages at Level VII are communicated through:

- Behaviors used in previous levels: Body movements, sounds, facial expressions, looking, gestures and vocalizations may be used
- Abstract or Concrete symbols used in combinations using syntax and grammatical order
  - » Spoken word, manual sign, written word, brailled word, abstract 3-D or 2-D symbols
  - » Objects, part of object, photograph of object, textures, iconic gestures, pantomime action or object, mimic sound of object

## Partner

### Goals for the Communication Partners

- » Increase the number of different abstract symbols (vocabulary) in the symbol mode that the learner currently uses.
- » Expand the use of abstract symbols to new contexts, partners, materials and settings.
- » Check for comprehension of symbols, and target a more abstract symbol if success has been demonstrated in the current mode. Target a less abstract symbol if the learner has failed to acquire the current mode.
- » Target a more conventional or more portable mode if this would encourage more responsiveness by communication partners.
- » Teach the combination of abstract symbols into two-and three-symbol utterances.

## Individual

### Goals for the Individual from Communication in Action

- » Communicate a message currently communicated using a single symbol with a combination of symbols.
- » Combine familiar symbols to express messages across all intents in new activities and routines, and/or with new communication partners.

## Level VII Examples: from Communication in Action

**Goal 1:** Individual will combine known symbols to make choices, comments, ask/answer questions, label or request, exchange information in a variety of environments and activities.

**Goal 2:** Individual will combine multiple symbols in familiar routines to make requests, comments, or ask questions, or exchange information (go outside swing please).

**Goal 3:** Student will use combinations of symbols to have a communication exchange with a peer.

### Intervention Principles at Level VII

- Provide many opportunities to use symbols in motivating activities. Success is more likely to occur in highly preferred activities in meaningful contexts.
- Model combining abstract symbols into 2-3 symbol utterance.
- Remember to use speech and correct grammar when modeling with the individual's mode of communication.
- Be responsive to all communication intents.
- Individuals must have physical access to symbols throughout the day.
- Use Focused Stimulation, Explicit Vocabulary, and Shared reading to build vocabulary.
- Build grammar skills by
  - » Modeling grammatical utterances in meaningful activities (spoken or signed)
  - » Modeling using individual's AAC device paired with words or signs

| Communication Level                                | Continuing Strategies                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Strategies to Introduce                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Tools                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Level VII Formal Symbolic Communication (Language) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Routines</li><li>• Wait Time</li><li>• Touch and Object Cues</li><li>• Continue AT Consideration</li><li>• Development of Symbolization</li><li>• Tangible Symbols</li><li>• Abstract Symbols and Combining</li><li>• Conceptual Grouping</li><li>• Vocabulary (LEER)</li><li>• Transitioning from Object to Sign Language</li><li>• Daily Calendars</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AT Symbol Concept Considerations</li><li>• Symbol Combinations</li><li>• Building Vocabulary Skills</li><li>• Building Syntactic and Morphological Skills</li><li>• Semantic Relations</li><li>• Building Operational Competency</li><li>• Building Strategic Competency</li><li>• Combining Abstract Symbols Across Communicative Intent</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communication Opportunities Data Sheet</li><li>• Embedding Goals Into Routines</li><li>• My Signal Dictionary</li><li>• Communication Dictionary</li><li>• Conceptual Grouping Chart</li></ul> |

## Essential Takeaways Level VII

- Level VII is when formal language begins. The focus is to combine symbols to create spontaneous phrases and sentences.
- The Communication Matrix is designed to capture the development of individuals typically acquired from birth-24 months. It provides the opportunity to look at 2-to-3-word utterances across communicative intent. It is NOT designed to analyze more formal language structures.
- All communication can be multi-modal, but should be moving towards a linguistically rule-based language.
- Decrease prompts as language use becomes more spontaneous.
- Symbols are the individual's "words" and must be accessible to him at all times. Speech generating devices (SGD) must be accessible and programmed.
- Symbols must be known to the individual or taught.
- Label symbols. All communication partners must know what the symbol represents.
- Symbols must accommodate an individual's sensory needs. Pictures and line drawings may need to be highlighted; words may need to be enlarged or outlined.
- Provide opportunities during each routine throughout the day for communication practice across all intents.
- Use literacy activities to expand communication opportunities.
- It is important to expand and extend symbol use across environments and partners. Peers are a great resource.