

Overview of Level V



Concrete Symbols

Individuals at Level V use Concrete symbols that physically resemble what they represent, to communicate. Concrete symbols look like, feel like, move like or sound like what they represent. Concrete symbols include pictures, objects (such as a shoelace to represent shoe), iconic gestures and specific sounds used to represent things. Level V is a transitional step which many individuals skip. Many individuals with sensory loss who have limited concepts about the world around them may need concrete symbols to make sense of the connection between symbol and thing/activity. For some individuals concrete symbols serve as a bridge to more abstract symbols.

Messages communicated at Level V 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

Messages at Level V are communicated through:

- Unconventional gestures and vocalizations continue to be used (body movements, facial expressions)
- Concrete symbols:
 - » Reject object symbol, photo or drawing, point to object symbol, photo or drawing, pantomime action or object, mimic sound of object, AAC device with concrete symbols

Partner

Goals for the Communication Partners

- » Teach 1:1 correspondence between concrete symbols and referents.
- » Increase the number of different concrete symbols (vocabulary) in the symbol mode that the learner currently uses and model two or three-symbol sequencing.
- » Expand the use of concrete symbols to new contexts, partners, activities and settings. Symbols should be used across all communicative intents.
- » Introduce a symbol higher on the hierarchy if the student is successful with concrete symbols, or consider a more concrete symbol if not.
- » Target a more conventional or more portable mode if this would encourage more responsiveness by communication partners.

Individual

Goals for the Individual from Communication in Action

- » Expand the use of concrete symbols used in specific routines or with specific communication partners to new partners and new activities/routines.
- » Use concrete symbols to express intents currently communicated with behavior, unconventional gestures or vocalizations.
- » Use _# of new concrete symbols intentionally.
- » Begin to communicate a particular message currently communicated through a single concrete symbol, using combined symbols (“juice” to “want” “juice”).

Level V Examples: from Communication in Action

Goal 1: Student will use new concrete symbols to make choices, comments, ask/answer questions, label or request.

Goal 2: Student will use concrete symbols across all communicative intents in a variety of activities, routines, and with multiple communication partners.

Goal 3: Student will combine 2 or 3 concrete symbols in familiar routines to make requests, comments, or ask questions (“pencil” “where?”)

Goal 4: Student will use concrete symbols to have a communication exchange with a peer.

Intervention Principles at Level V

- Provide many opportunities to use symbols in meaningful, motivating activities. Successful use of concrete symbols are more likely to occur in the context of highly preferred activities.
- As new symbols are introduced, remember to be responsive and acknowledge all communicative intents (even refusals).
- Check for comprehension of concrete symbols and consider introducing abstract symbols paired with known concrete symbols.
- Physical access to symbols must be established and maintained.
- Remember to use speech when modeling along with the individual’s mode of communication. (ex. signs, pictures, objects)

Communication Level	Continuing Strategies	Strategies to Introduce	Tools
Level 5 Concrete Symbolic Communication	• Routines • Wait Time • Touch and Object Cues • Continue AT Consideration • Development of Symbolization • Hand-Under-Hand	• Tangible Symbols • Conceptual Grouping • Vocabulary (LEER), Moving Toward Abstract • Transitioning from Object to Sign Language • Daily Calendars	• My Cue Dictionary • Communication Opportunities Data Sheet • Embedding Goals Into Routines • My Signal Dictionary • Communication Dictionary • Conceptual Grouping Chart

Essential Takeaways Level V

- Intervention focuses on increasing the use of concrete symbols across environments and partners, including peers.
- Choice of a symbol must be meaningful for the individual. (A link of a chain may make more sense to an individual who is blind than a toy swing set.)
- Symbols must be accessible based on an individual's sensory needs.
 - » Pictures and line drawings may need to be highlighted; objects may need to be mounted on a contrasting color; photographs of the student's own cup instead of a different cup.
- An individual's symbol use will range from actual objects to abstract symbols as they transition to Level VI. As symbols are KNOWN, try moving along the symbol hierarchy to a symbol that is easier to reproduce, carry, or be universally understood.
- Label symbols. Ensure all partners know the meaning of the individual's symbols.
- Symbols are the individual's "words" and must be available to them at all times. Augmentative/Alternative Communication (AAC) devices must be accessible and programmed.