# SPARK: Simple Play Adaptations to Reference for Kids

## Portable Object Communication Unit

(Object Communication – EC COE)

| Description: | Image: |
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| The Portable Object Communication Unit measures 30" x 15.5" when open and 12" x 15.5" x 6" when closed.is equipped with an adjustable handle and hook-and-loop closures. Stiffened, wide binding allows for accommodation of objects up to 6" in height, including large switches. Objects can be used to represent activities, places, and people. Examples 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. Users employ these objects for getting information about the activities, people, and places around them, making choices, and/or telling others their message. The Portable Object Communication Unit is made with VELTEX Brand Fabric surface inside and waterproof nylon material outside (filled with plastic board for stiffened surface). Tangible Object Cards (pictured) are not included. | <br>Purchasing Information |

**Who Might Benefit?**

Those who…

- Have difficulty expressing ideas, feelings, needs, wants.
- Exhibit frustration or anger because others are unable to understand their communication attempts.
- Struggle socially with peers because of communication difficulties.
- Have difficulty understanding and completing multi-step activities (schedules, routines, directions).

**Why Use?**

Provides an opportunity to…

- Make choices.
- Develop object/word relationships.
- Build skills like classification, sequencing, function, opposites, and comparatives.

| Instructions for Use: | Adaptation Ideas: |
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| • Families, and teachers need to work together to choose the objects which will have the most meaning for the child's needs.<br>• The use of objects can begin with the purpose of giving the child 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.<br>• 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 them, they may be telling you they are choosing the object on the table).<br>• The child should be encouraged to speak and/or sign in addition to using the objects if they have those skills.<br>• Objects can be used with students in a variety of ways: daily calendar boxes, portable systems, or both.<br>Environmental Considerations<br>• The Portable Object Communication Unit can be easily used in almost any environment because of the relatively small size, weight, and easy transportability.<br>• If the Portable Object Communication Unit is used as a part of a child's total communication system, it should be available in all the child's environments, at all times, and without restriction.<br>Positioning<br>• The Portable Object Communication Unit is best used laying on a flat surface such as a table or on the floor. A child could interact with the device in a position such as sitting, standing, on their belly (prone), laying on their back (supine), kneeling, etc. | Optional Additional Materials/Supplies<br>• Velcro<br>Stabilize It<br>• The Portable Object Communication Unit could be velcroed or placed on Dycem or non-skid shelf liner on most any surface to help stabilize it so it doesn't move away when the child selects an object or picture symbol to communicate.<br>Simplify It<br>• The number of objects used to represent the child's daily activities can be increased over time. When the child understands that the objects represent something that is about to happen, additional objects can be added.<br>Add Sensory Cues<br>• High contrast board with items that have color preference.<br>• Reflective shiny objects.<br>• Borders with preferred colors.<br>Communication Support<br>• Vocabulary words would depend on the activity supported by The Portable Object Communication Unit.<br>DIY Alternatives<br>• A 3-ring binder could be substituted for The Portable Object Communication Unit. Pages in the notebook could be created from laminated cardstock or colored opaque plastic binder dividers. Objects for communication could be velcroed to the pages. |

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| Alternate Positioning<br>• The Portable Object Communication Unit could also be used on a slant board to improve physical and/or visual access of the device to the child.<br><br>Basic Play/Use<br>• In the most simplistic way the unit can provide a child with an opportunity to communicate a clear message to a communication partner. However, communication is complex and has many purposes.<br>• It is important to note that young children need intentional and consistent opportunities to be exposed to, provided specific instruction in, and learn how to use a communication system. In particular, children need to develop the ability to understand that a particular symbol (e.g. real object, photo, line drawing, etc.) represents an action or object and that their use of that symbol is respected by their communication partner so that successful and effective communication can develop.<br>• NOTE: Research has shown that early use of an alternative communication system does not impact a child's ability to develop oral speech later and will actually often help to enhance development of oral speech.<br><br>Extended Play/Use<br>• Set up to make tangible requests, such as selecting a snack food, choosing a musical instrument to play at circle time, selecting an art activity (paint, color, draw, or playdoh), indicating a sensory choice (I need squeeze ball, I need sensory bottle, I need to swing), etc.<br>• Set up with objects or picture symbols to indicate the weather (rainy, sunny, snowy, etc.) during circle time.<br>• Select objects and/or picture symbols to represent characters or actions in a story. | |

Additional Considerations:

Additional Resources:

- Object Communication Fact Sheet
- How to Make and Use Object Schedules

Ohio Early Learning Standards

- LL: Language and Communication. Develops and expands understanding of vocabulary and concepts (1b.).
- Depending on the activities supported by the AAC device a wide range of Early Learning Standards could be impacted.

Words to Encourage Play/Use

- Dependent on activity supported by the Unit.

Adapted from: Haugen's Modes for Adapting Toys based on materials from the "Let's Play" Project at the University of Buffalo

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