Expressive Communication Forms

Communication by recognition:

- **Vocalization** - The “pre-language” sounds that a child may make in response: e.g., 'ee' vowel (like 'heed'), 'oo' vowel (like 'hoot') “uh” vowel (like 'hut'), the 'ae' vowel (like 'hate'), the 'a' vowel (like 'hat'). Sometimes the child may just be “playing” with his voice; at others, he may be expressing pleasure or displeasure via specific sounds.

- **Movement** - Most children will move their limbs, head, even eyes - in response to someone interacting with them. “Interactional synchrony” has long been known to occur early on between mother and infant - and shows the importance of this early communication in bonding and mental ability - i.e., to both emotional and cognitive growth. It is almost rhythmic in nature. The mother says or communicates something. A pause may occur. And then the infant responds through a movement and/or vocalization. The key is the “wait time” or pause.

- **Cooing/laughing** - a child may use the sounds he has learned to make to coo or babble. In babbling, sounds are repeated in rapid succession: “dadadadada”. Note: Babbling also occurs in children who are Deaf - and they may babble with their hands and fingers rather than their voice. This handshape/finger-movement babbling develops through the same developmental sequence and time course as children going through vocal babbling.
  - Laughter may also convey meaning expressively, and either occur on its own as a response to someone’s interaction; or be interspersed with cooing and babbling.

Contingency communication:

- **Calling switch** - A child learns to use a switch because he has learned that someone will give him the attention he is requesting.

- **Touch person or object** - To get someone’s attention, a child may touch a person; or if he wants something, he may touch the object in order to request it.

- **Jargon/melodic** - a child may use strings of babbled sounds together making them sound like sentences, sometimes with the right intonations for questions and statements. However, there are no words and no apparent meaning. Deaf infants produce manual jargon as well - and it has been noted that there is a continuity between the syllabic forms used in the deaf infants’ manual babble and their first signs.
**Instrumental communication:**

- **Manipulate person or object** – this is the next step from touching a person or object. A child will now treat the person as a “tool” to get something. For example, a child will go up to someone, hold their hand and attempt to drag them towards something they want (usually something that is not accessible – too high up, in a locked drawer etc). They may manipulate an object to request an adult to help it “work” – e.g., they may turn the blades of a toy fan to indicate, “Please turn on fan”.

- **Touch person or object** – a child may touch a person or a switch to indicate something specific

- **Gaze shift** – a child will purposefully look from one person or thing to another in order to indicate choice, preference, or interest.

**Conventional communication:**

- **Proto words** – these are consistent “word-like” sound patterns that may develop into recognizable words. For example, “wawa” for “water”, “binki” for “blanket”, Gaga for “Olga”, etc.

- **Extend object** – Instead of just pointing to or touching an object, the child has now figured out the object’s purpose – and will extend the object. For example, hold out their plate to request more food, or a cup to request more to drink; They may also extend an object and gesture at the same time – e.g., extend a toy and point to a key that needs to be turned to get the toy running.

- **Simple/symbolic gestures** e.g., tapping his chest and holding out his hand to say, “I want”, holding out a cup and pointing to the milk to ask for “more”, shaking head to indicate “yes” or “no”, waving goodbye; pointing outside to indicate, “Let’s go into the yard”.

- **Pointing** – this encourages others to help him learn the names of everything around him.

**Emerging symbolic communication:**

- **Limited words** (2-25). A child will start with one word utterances, progress to two or more

- **Complex gestures** – As a child matures, simple gestures will change and become more complex – just as single words or “protowords” become words and then phrases. A child may hold out the empty cup and, with the other hand indicate he wants 2 of these. He may also combine facial and gesture cues – e.g., when
asked, “Where’s Mom?”, he may direct his gaze up the stairs, gesture “up” and “sleep”.

- **Miniature objects** - the child picks from an array of “doll house” or miniature objects to express himself - especially what he wants

- **Picture drawings** - the child uses the array of picture drawings or picsyms that are gradually included in his repertoire as he attaches meaning to each one.

- **Tactual symbols** - Unlike the whole “object cue”, this is a tactile cue that has gradually been given meaning. It could be:
  - a part of an object - e.g., the cup handle meaning “drink”, a small piece of carpet meaning, “Time for calendar; Go get your carpet”; the cap from the toothpaste meaning, “Brush your teeth”.
  - A texture square that has come to be associated with an activity, place etc.
  - A shape - e.g., square represents “classroom”; triangle represents “gym”, circle represents “music room” etc.


**Symbolic communication:**

- **Extended vocabulary (+25)**

- **Manual signs** - See Visual Sign Cues, and Tactile Sign Cues under Receptive Communication.

- **Electronic systems** - These may range from really simple to very complex taking in the whole range of children who have a variety of needs. These devices include ones that enhance visual and/or auditory capabilities of children so that they can interact better with those around them.
  - Among these are cochlear implants - a device that is rapidly changing the lives of many children and their families.

**Examples:**

**Dynavox** (provider of speech generating devices and symbol-adapted special education software) [http://www.dynavoxtech.com/products/v/](http://www.dynavoxtech.com/products/v/)

Speech -- Use of voice is often not a good option for children who are deafblind, but one must never rule it out. Working with the sounds a child makes, a skilled team may be able to coax reasonable speech from a child. Speech could then be used in tandem with picsyms or a technology

2-word relations

Communication Options (gives a quick overview of child development in the area of vocalization and speech):

Parent Narrative: Introduction to Vocalizing 10-12 months – towards the first word.
http://www.theroadmap.ca/vocalizings/parents/10-12