



# Decision Making Skills: 04 Early Conventional

## Ranking and Comparing

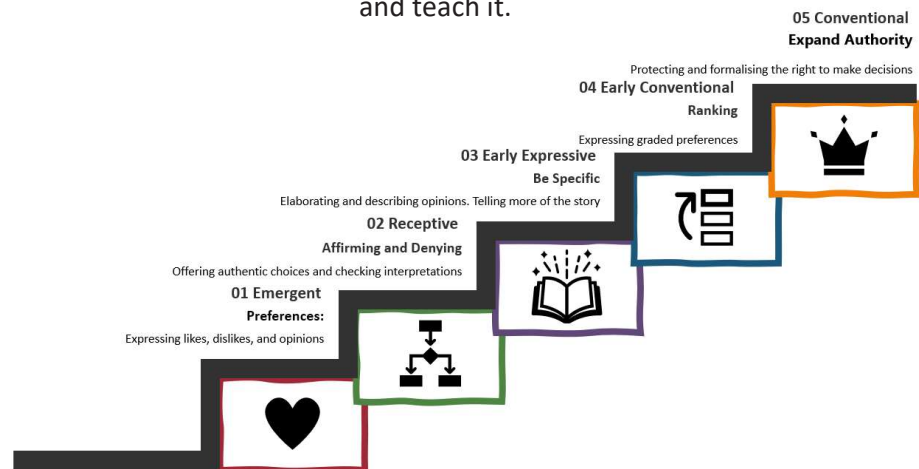


### An individual demonstrating skills at this stage may:

- Use language or behaviours which ranks options.  
“I like these, but I like this one the best”
- Use language or behaviours which compare options to each other.  
“This one is better than that one”
- Expect to be asked their opinion.

### Goals at this stage:

- Introducing the concept of ranking.
- Use everyday opportunities to rank (thumbs up) – they expect to be asked about their opinion.
- Support communication partners to be consistent in how they understand and respond to the individual’s opinions.
- Creating an environment in which opinions are expected to be given by all.
- Ensuring someone has access to words that support ranking.
- Creating a structure to express a preference and teach it.



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Strategies to support an individual demonstrating skills at this stage

## Personal Communication Dictionary

A communication dictionary is a valuable tool for an individual who has complex communication needs.

It contains information about the unique or unconventional ways they communicate, and what others should do in response.

The dictionary acts as a common reference for understanding and interpreting what the individual is doing and how others should respond.

The individual has the chance to ensure their choices and preferences are recognised and respected.

## Modelling Augmentative and Alternative Communication Strategies

Using AAC strategies to highlight spoken words can support an individual to understand what is being said to them as well as add clear language in a way they could access in the future.

Modelling language helps an individual see their communication strategy being used to:

- Compare and rank options  
“I like these. I like this one more”  
“This is my top choice”  
“I prefer this one”

## Verbal Referencing

This strategy is used to describe the behaviour of an individual and provide them with an explicit interpretation of that behaviour.

Describing an individual’s behaviour can help them refine that behaviour and link it to language being modelled.

It can also provide a way of giving feedback about how clear their communication attempts have been.

“I can see you’re giving me a big thumbs up and smile. This is one you like the most”

## Talking Mats

This is a tool which uses visual communication symbols to support a discussion around a particular topic.

Talking Mats give an individual another way to express their views. There are no right or wrong answers in a Talking Mat session, and each session follows the same structure.

The tool can be used to:

- Support understanding
- Reduce memory demands
- Provide a structure to answer open questions
- Give individuals processing time
- Discuss a topic in a non-confrontational way
- Supplement existing AAC strategies