



Partner Skills: Talking Mats®

Organising thoughts and expressing opinions

What are Talking Mats?

Talking Mats is a visual framework that can be used to support people to express their opinions and take a more active role in decision making

The goal

Support individuals to participate in discussions and decision making around a range of topics

This is not a conversation. The person facilitating the session leaves their opinions at the door

The results of the mat can be used in later conversations

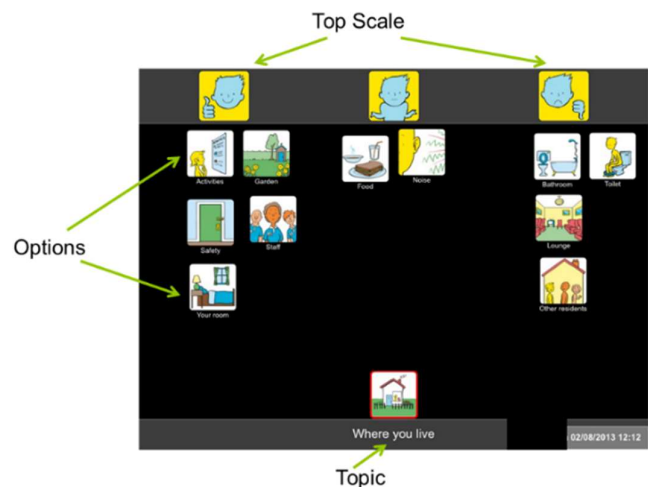
More information

- www.talkingmats.com
- talkingmatsaustralia.com.au

How Talking Mats can help

- Use of visuals can reduce the load on memory and cognition – ideas that have been discussed remain visible and available
- Large topics can be broken into manageable chunks to help the individual think about the different elements
- A pre-planned top scale provides a structure to respond to open questions

What a Talking Mat can look like



Communication Partner Skills: Talking Mats

Organising thoughts and expressing opinions

Step 1 – Plan the topic

Plan the top scale and option involved in the topic you want to do with the individual

Ensure the individual has the experiences they need to understand the options

Step 2 – Set up

Set up in a quiet space

Introduce the Mat, Topic, & Top Scale. Tell them why the mat is being done

Reinforce that there are no right/wrong answers. This is not a test

Step 3 – Introduce the options

Introduce each option the same way each time

Use an open question:

E.g., "how do you feel about xxx?"

Encourage the individual to place the options under the most appropriate top scale

Step 4 – Add extra options

Use comments the individual makes throughout the mat session to add items not prepared ahead of time

If a new option is identified, present it in the same way as others (do not assume you know how they feel about it)

Step 5 - Finish

Starting with the negative side, go through the options. "You've told me..."

Provide an opportunity to change anything.

Take a photo with permission from the individual

Ideas for when to use

- Preparing for planning meetings
- Preparing for workplace learning
- Helping to express opinions and preferences
- Preparing for a decision
- Getting to know the individual

Things to keep in mind as a facilitator

- There are no right or wrong answers
- The facilitator can unknowingly influence the individual by offering their own opinions
- If an individual makes a comment, this can be a good opportunity to add another option to the mat
- If a facilitator wants to provide feedback, they should use descriptive language
"You've told me don't like xxx".
- It is essential that the top scale is kept consistent
- There are ways the presentation of a Talking Mat can be changed to support different people's needs
- Modifications to how a mat is presented could be something to discuss and problem solve with the individual and their team