



# Partner Skills: Making Options Accessible

Using partner assisted scanning to access real choices, every day

## What is 'Partner Assisted Scanning'?

- A way for communication partners to help others by listing or scanning through possible options
- It is an alternative to pointing
- The access methods are only covered here briefly - it is important to find out an individual's preferred communication style

## The goal

- To provide a consistent structure to the way language and (genuine) choices are offered

## Direct/Independent

- If someone uses 'direct selection' this means they are using part of their body to select a choice
- Others may type, sign, or say their choice – this would be independent
- Individuals can also be independent if they access electronic communication using switching, eye gaze, or other strategies

## Formal vs informal scanning

Partner assisted scanning can be used with:

- Formal communication systems (e.g., PODD books, letter boards, communication boards...); or
- Informal opportunities that present themselves during the day (e.g., what to wear, drinks, places to go...)

## Partner assisted – auditory scan

- Options are listed verbally

## Partner assisted – auditory + visual scan

- Options are shown in a visual way (written or picture symbol) **and** verbally listed at the same time

## Partner assisted – visual scan

- Visual choices are pointed to but not labelled

## Partner assisted – eye point

- Choices are shown to the individual in a way they can point with their eyes

## Combination

- Where an individual uses different methods (e.g., eye point to group of options, and then visual scan of those options)

# Communication Partner Skills: Accessible Options

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## Things to be aware of, regardless of how choices are offered

### Movements for communication

- A communication dictionary a critical tool for an individual using partner assisted strategies
- Some movements may be different to what someone else might be expecting
- Communication partners must be responding consistently
- Typical accept/reject movements like nodding and shaking head are able to be recognised by more, unfamiliar partners

### One movement – select

- The communication partners must wait the same amount of time between options before moving on
- The amount of wait time should be the longest it takes an individual to respond
- This requires less movement but can take longer and be more cognitively tiring

### Two movements – select and reject

- The communication partner waits for the individual to either accept or reject the option
- This can allow for variability in response times but also requires more movement so can be more physically tiring

### Present all options

- When presenting options as a verbal list or a visual/verbal list, make sure all options are listed
- After the options have been listed, present them again in a way that leaves room for a selection to be made
- This allows for an informed choice to be made

### Include a way to control the conversation

- When someone relies on partners to scan, there is the possibility that only some of a message will be expressed
- Some systems (like alternative access PODD Books) have inbuilt ways individuals control the conversation
- Be sure to include ways for someone to say: “I have more to say”; “mistake”; “I’ve finished”

### Include a way out

- Any list of choices must include (as a minimum): “Something different”
- An individual’s robust language system should always be available to add more to a choice.
- Choosing nothing is also a valid choice

### Consistency & predictability

- Always present options in the same order
- Mixing up the options (either by accident or deliberately) makes the process harder than it already is

### Neutral voice

- Keep a neutral voice when listing options.
- Options can be descriptive (e.g., outside where it is warm, or inside with the aircon)
- Avoid emotive language (e.g., outside where it is yucky and hot, or inside where it is nice and cool)
- Avoid making someone confirm at every step

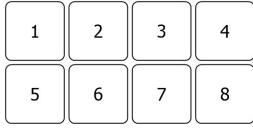
### Recommended further reading

- Centre for Literacy and Disability Studies  
[www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds/](http://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds/)

# Scanning Patterns

## Linear

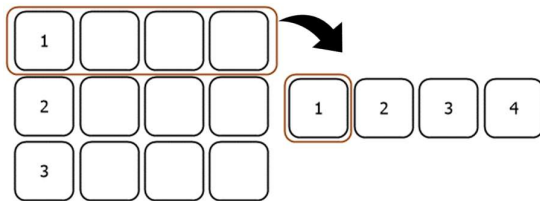
The options are all scanned through one at a time



## Row / Column

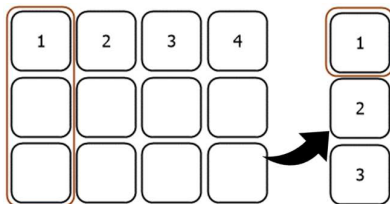
The individual chooses which row their choice is in. Once a row is chosen, the options are scanned in a linear pattern across the row

This can reduce the time taken to get to some options



## Column / Row

The individual chooses which column their choice is in. Once a column is chosen, the options are scanned in a linear pattern down the column



## Group

The individual can choose, or move onto the next, group

Once a group is chosen, the options are listed in a linear pattern

Depending on the size of the group, a row/column or column/row scanning pattern could also be the second step

This option is good for a large number of options or for using a combination access method (e.g., eye pointing to the group and then partner assisted scanning the group)

