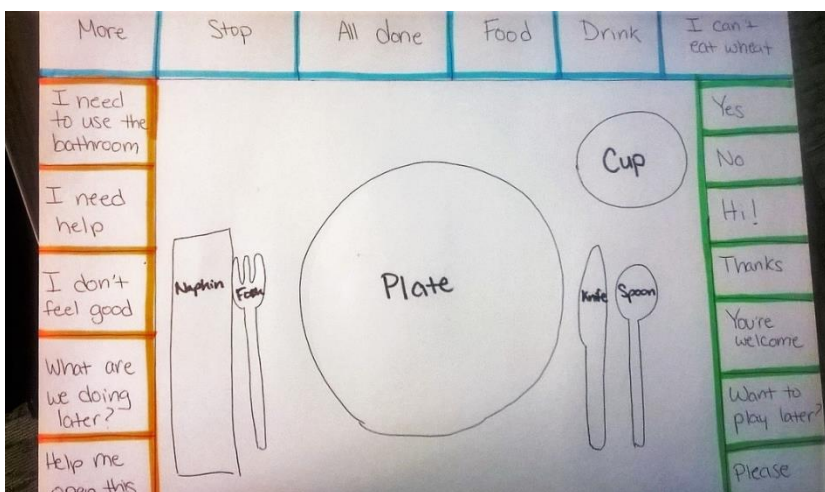


## Communication Placemat for Mealtimes

Mealtimes are often a social time. Having a communication placemat can be useful if you are not able to use your usual robust communication system (core board, PODD book or high tech communication device) due to worries about getting it covered in food or accidentally spilling a drink on it.

### What

A communication placemat is simply a laminated A3 mat with some communication symbols positioned around the outside which are particularly useful for mealtimes. Communication placemats can be used with children and adults and can be modified to ensure it is age appropriate regarding the words or phrases and the use of text verses symbols. Placemats don't even need to be printed with fancy symbols, you can draw one up yourself!

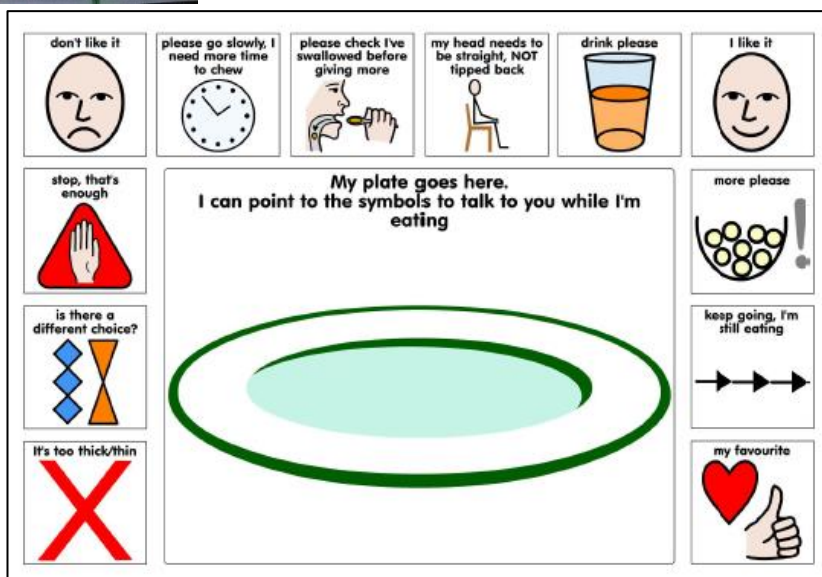


Some people decorate their placemats with drawings/photos/paintings before laminating it, so that there is some ownership over the placemat.

Sometimes reminders of allergies or modifications to feeding can also be listed on the placemat. For example have a look at the placemat below. There are some important reminders as well as social phrases.

It is recommended that you always have a way to ask to use the robust communication system or high tech device if they have a story that they think of during the mealtime. It might be a symbol they can point to or ensuring that their communication system is positioned close by where they can point at it or using sign language which everyone understands to mean "I have something to say, please get my communication system".

TalkLink have created 2 placemat templates for you to print out at the end of this document – simply print it out in A3 size (perhaps decorate the middle), laminate and start using it!



## How to use a mealtimes communication placemat?

Position the placemat at the person's seat when setting the table and then start communicating with it! Easy as that! They are not just for decoration! At first, just model communication using the placemat with no expectation on the person to use it. Avoid forcing the person to point to symbols or using hand under/over hand prompting. Just give the person lots of opportunities to watch you using the placemat to communicate about the meal and interacting socially. For example, you might sit down and say (underlined words are being pointed to on the placemat) "It's time for lunch (points to food symbol) Jenny. Hmm! This looks yummy! I like tomatoes." "Your tomatoes are all finished. Would you like more hummus and cucumber? Yes? You seem to like hummus." "Lunch is all finished. No. There is no more. It's time to clean up."

## Examples of phrases and placemats

Examples of words/word combinations you can use with a mealtimes placemat:

I want more.

I help.

I want open.

Help eat.

You open.

Help drink.

You eat.

All done eat.

I eat.

All done drink.

I like it.

You help

Want

different.

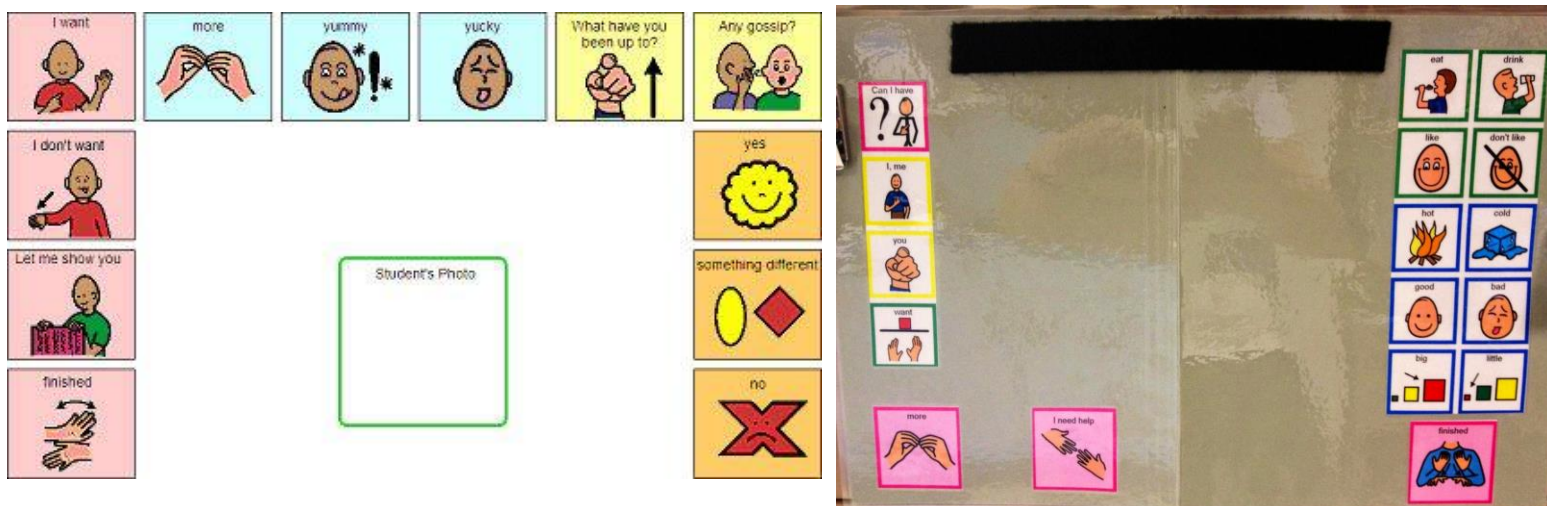
I/You clean.

I hungry.

I thirsty.

Any gossip?

What have you been up to?



References for photos: <https://bit.ly/2Flju9B>

<https://www.autismspectrumexplained.com/our-blog/communication-placemat>

<https://bit.ly/2CGbQso>

<https://sites.google.com/a/esc13.net/corevocab13/implementation-ideas/snack-time>

<http://icannews.blogspot.com/2014/10/i-can-share-my-love-of-aac.html>

Created by Jessamy Bell (Speech Therapist) on 01/08/2019

drink please



yummy



yucky



that's my favourite



I hate that



How are you?



I need help



great



good



I have finished



I'm not so good



bad

