

Caregiver Communication Strategies to Support Communication

General Strategies

- Make sure you have your listener's attention
- Reduce distractions and unnecessary noise around you
- Use short and simple sentences
- Use concrete and familiar vocabulary Be direct, for example say: "I'd like to close the window" instead of "it's cold in here"
- Rephrase your message with different words, if necessary
- Integrate as many visual aids as possible by using gestures and pointing
- Have a handy "backup" system, like a pen and paper (or tablet)
- Avoid important conversations when there is little time or the person is tired
- Ask yes/no questions or offer choices
- Keep up normal exchanges and begin with simple and pleasant topics
- Signal as soon as you don't understand

To understand

- Give your undivided attention
- Observe the speaker to have access to non-verbal information and to take advantage of every clue available
- Rephrase what the person said to confirm you understood
- Leave room for pauses in the conversation
- Watch for turn-taking signals
- Make sure you know the topic or identify it by asking yes/no questions
- Let the speaker know which part of the message you didn't understand
- Ask the person to describe the word (first letter, function, etc)

To be understood

- If you are changing topic, prepare the person and mention what the new topic is
- Use as many visual aids as possible, like gestures and pointing Use turn-taking signals
- Humour and sarcasm can be difficult to understand, so it may be better to express them in other ways
- Verify comprehension

