

# Developing Early Social Language Use by using Person Action Object (Subject-Verb-Object) Sentence Strips

Dr Geoff Morgan, Senior Educational Psychologist

## Introduction

The following is guidance for teaching children with communication and interaction needs to put words together to make sentences. The preferred sentence for developing sentence level communication is person-action-object. This is because most requesting and commenting activities follow that sequence in everyday language use. For example with requesting “, Daddy (person) can you get (actions) my coat (object)?” or commenting, “mummy (person) look (action), a tractor (object)” or “Ryan (person) is kicking (action) a ball (object)”. The aim is to develop the ability to put sentences together with visuals while developing the social functions of using names to draw another person’s attention to an event or request.

## Scaffolding

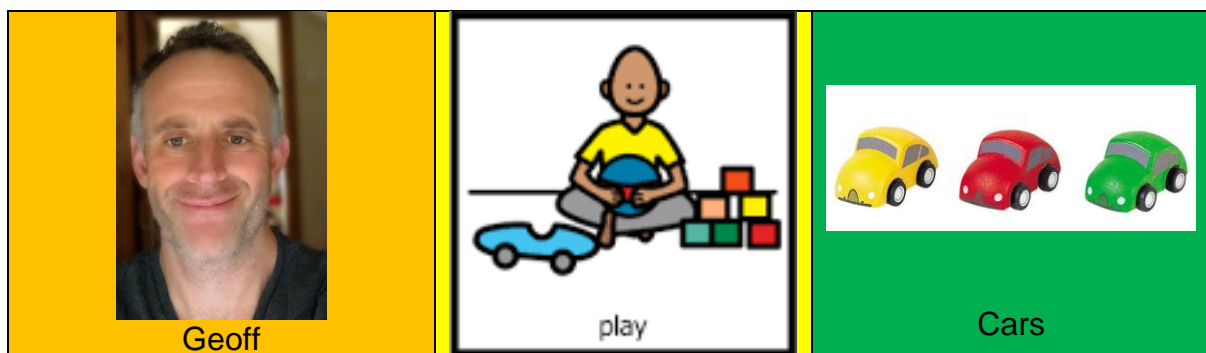
When chaining or scaffolding these approaches it is preferred to focus first on getting them to place a laminated visual with the person’s photograph into the sentence strip. A repeated sequence is key so this may need to be repeated over and over with highly motivating activities in order for the child to learn what to say or how to use the sentence strip. Model the required language verbally once the visual sentence has been completed e.g. “Geoff play trains.” Use gentle hand-over-hand to model the required behaviour. The learner will need to associate using names and looking at faces with positive experiences so developing these skills gently using favourite activities (within reason) is essential.

## Developing Resources

A programme such as BoardMaker can be helpful to support with developing these resources quickly.

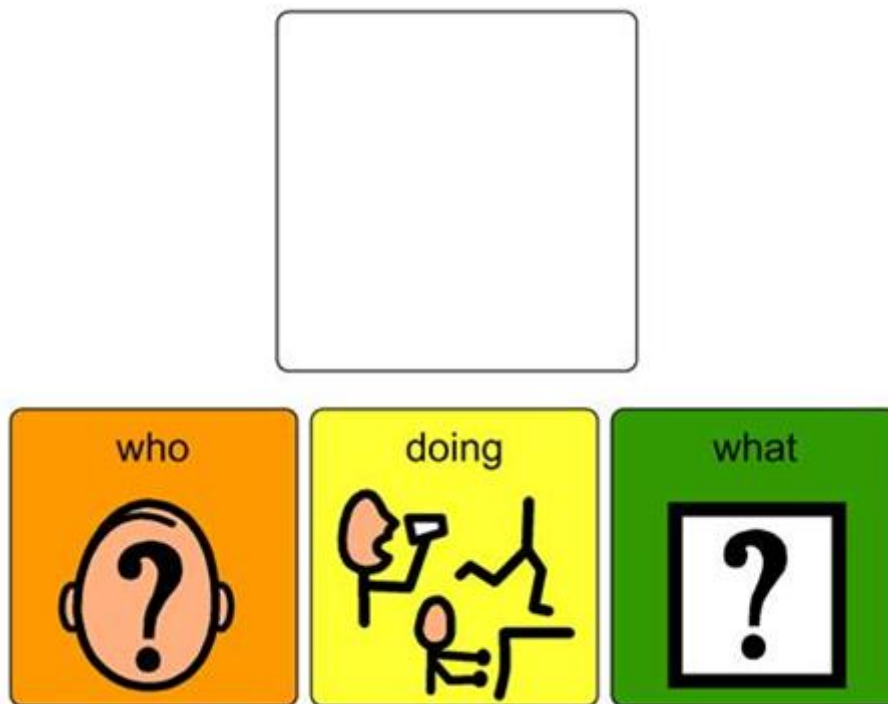
## Requesting

Example of a three-part sentence strip which can be used to support choosing (as part of a Choose Board), requesting a social activity and learning to use names in sentences. Use Velcro tabs to fix laminated cards to the strip.



## Commenting

Example of Colourful Semantics used as a scaffold to develop commenting skills such as talking about past or current events. (See [Colourful Semantics: A teacher's guide \(structural-learning.com\)](http://structural-learning.com) for information on how to implement). The blank square at the top can be used to insert a photograph of a familiar motivating activity (e.g. mud kitchen) or visual prompt. This can be used to support communication as part of a differentiated literacy curriculum or in communication skills activities.



## Answering W Questions

The following uses Colourful Semantics to scaffold commenting and question answering activities. This could be paired with a picture of an activity featuring the child. The adult can ask questions and model the correct responses using visuals and language.



