

## Using a Big Mack

Big Macks are used to give a single message. You record the message on it. Children press the button to make it talk. They help children who are starting to give messages. You can use them in different ways.

Big macks can also be used by children who have more complex ways of communicating but need a way to give quick messages.

### How to help your child learn to use a big mack

Children will learn to use the big mack in activities and routines they know well to start with.

Pick routines that your child knows. Introduce the big mack with favourite books or songs, snack time or a favourite game. Remember to:

- Model using it – press the big mack to show your child how it works and the message it is giving
- Wait - do some of your routine and wait. Give your child time to press the big mack and give the message. If they do not press the it model and show them what to do
- Reinforce communication – when your child presses the big mack respond straight away to reward the message. Look for other communication too – your child might communicate by looking, making a noise or reaching for something.

### Ideas for using a big mack

- greetings such as 'hello everyone'
- special messages e.g. 'Happy Birthday' 'Merry Christmas'
- messages for mealtimes e.g. 'I've had enough,' 'more please,' 'drink'
- games and activities e.g. 'SNAP,' 'my turn,' 'bubbles please,' 'I know the answer,' 'I've got that card,' 'music please,' 'TV please'
- indicating 'more' – at mealtimes, on a swing/roundabout etc.
- giving news between school and home e.g. 'I went swimming today'
- telling you about something funny that has happened

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With all of us in mind.

- telling you something the child is happy or excited about e.g. 'I'm going bowling tonight'
- taking part in songs or stories e.g. 'EE-I-EE-I-O', 'I'm going on a bear hunt.'
- answering the register in class 'here'
- making choices – some children can use 2 big macks to make a choice e.g. stop/go, juice/water. You can put symbols on the big mack to help your child remember them

### **Skills children need to practice**

1. operational – reaching for and pressing the big mack
2. social – knowing when to use it, wanting to use it and being confident to use it
3. linguistic – knowing what the message means.
4. strategic – using other communication skills too e.g. making eye contact with you when they give the message

Make sure you use the big mack in lots of different activities with your child to help their communication. Remember to keep modelling how to use it. This helps your child know what to do.

Using symbols and photographs with your big mack can help build understanding and knowledge of words.



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