

COLOR-Coding Communication Displays

Color-coding black and white line drawings (e.g., Mayer Johnson picture communication symbols) allows the user and facilitator to locate symbols more easily. If color-coding is organized according to grammatical categories, the user has an added feature to assist in learning how to sequence symbols, and in turn, to support the development of sentence-building or syntax skills. Because shape is a salient clue, color-code the background, not the figure, so that the shape of the symbol will be more visible to the student.

Any color-coding system is acceptable, but keep color codes consistent across displays. **Tips:**

- If hand coloring, use transparent-read-through light shades of highlighters to provide good contrast between the background and the symbol.
- For paper displays, always make a copy of the symbol display before coloring it.
- If using older versions of BoardMaker, you may need to purchase the 'nontransparent' symbol set, so the background won't 'spill' into the symbol.

Arranging Color-Coded Symbols: Symbols are easier to locate if they are grouped in blocks of colors or grammatical categories. For example, a display should be organized as follows from the left side of the overlay to the right side:

MISCELLANEOUS	VERBS	DESCRIPTORS	PREPOSITIONS	NOUNS
I	like	green	for	trees.

Two widely used systems are the Mayer-Johnson color-coding system, and the Goossens', Crain, and Elder system. We are recommending the Goossens', et al system, because of the wide range of clinical materials available using that system.

Goossens', Crain, & Elder Color-Coding System:

VERBS	words which tells action	OPEN, COME	(Pink)
DESCRIPTORS	adjectives and adverbs	PRETTY, SLOW	(Blue)
PREPOSITIONS	position words	IN, OFF	(Green)
NOUNS	person, place or thing	CAR, STRING, MARY	(Yellow)
MISCELLANEOUS			(Orange)
WH- words	questions	WHO, WHAT, HOW	
Exclamations	interjections, etc	UH OH, WOW	
Negative Words	negations	NO, DON'T	
Pronouns	personal, possessive	I, YOU	

See: Goossens', C., Crain, S., & Elder, P. (1992). *Engineering the Classroom Environment for Interactive Symbolic Communication*. Southeast Aug Comm Conference Publications, 2430 11th Avenue, N, Birmingham, AL 35234.

Sample Color Coded Display

Print on legal paper in landscape mode.

Cooking Display - adaptedstories.com



This color coded communication display shows several features:

- the background of each symbol is colored, allowing the shape of each symbol to 'pop'
- symbols are grouped according to part of speech
- a white background is used for words, so that the text is allowed to 'pop'

COLOR-Coding Communication Cards

(photocopy, cut apart, laminate, and share with teachers, parents, and therapists!)

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PREPOSITIONS	position words	IN, OFF	(Green)
NOUNS	person, place or thing	CAR, HAT, MARY	(Yellow)
MISCALLANEOUS			(Orange)
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