



I-ASC

How to use the mind mapping resource

Background

Mind mapping is a tool used by many people to get down onto paper their thoughts; it is a visual plan that helps to make sense of a range of often complex factors. Children are taught to use them in schools to structure their thinking processes, students often use them for essay writing and they can be used throughout the world of work to explain practice.

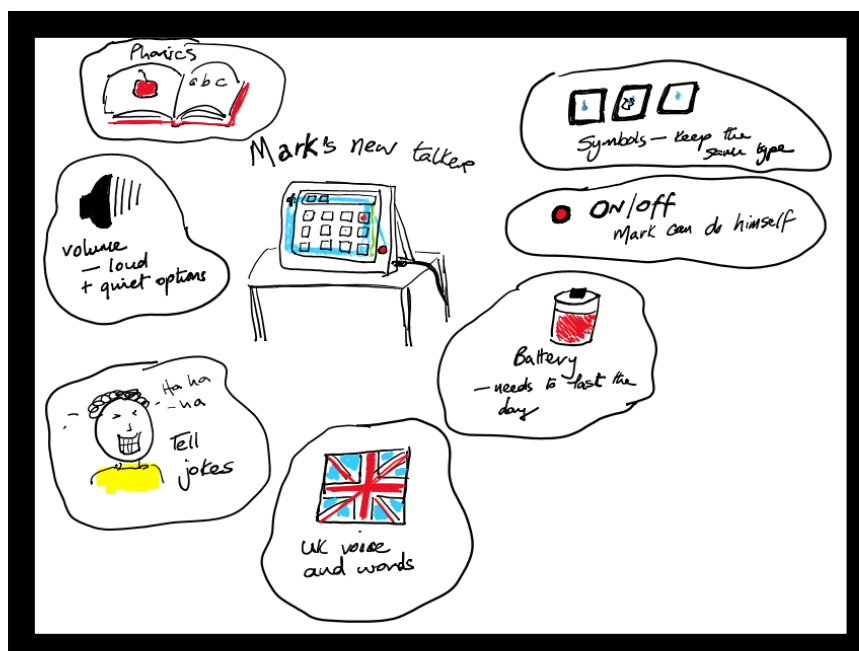
Mind maps are a way of making thought processes explicit for others to understand our own thinking, and when completed collectively provide a visual resource of factors contributing towards a decision making process. Within the area of communication aid assessment it is a way of ensuring that thought processes contributing to a final recommendation for a communication aid are made clear and transparent to all those who participate in the process.

The Mind Map Step 1

Agree with the participants of the assessment the importance of capturing how a communication aid decision is made and the information that is helpful to make the 'right' decision. The content of the mind map might be how the child communicates in different settings or about the child and family's aspirations for the future, or with who and where to model AAC use. If the child and their family have been sent resources before the assessment meeting, such as the *I-ASC's About Me* and the *AAC assessment leaflet*, then they will probably already have some thoughts they want to share.

Here are several examples of completed mind maps from current practice.

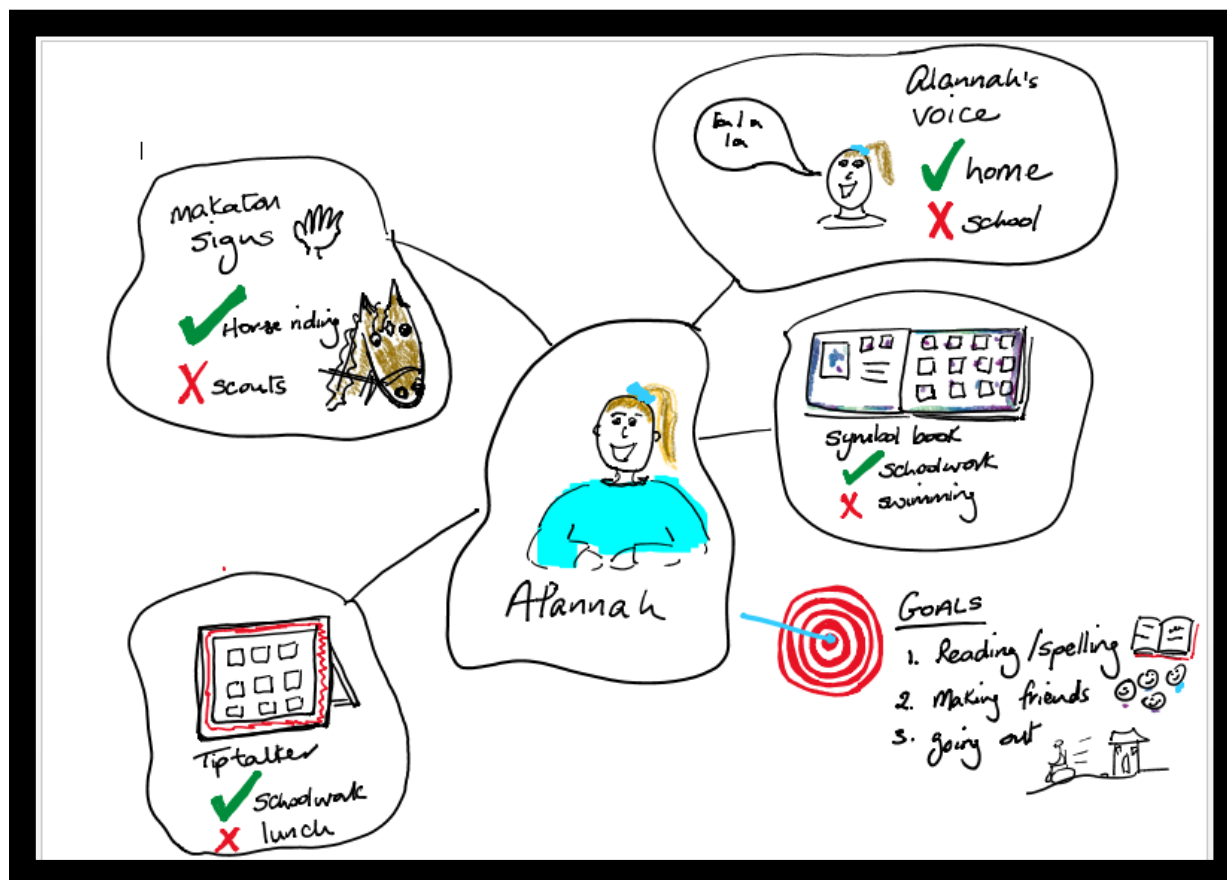
This first example looks at some of the **communication aid attributes** considered important in a particular assessment.





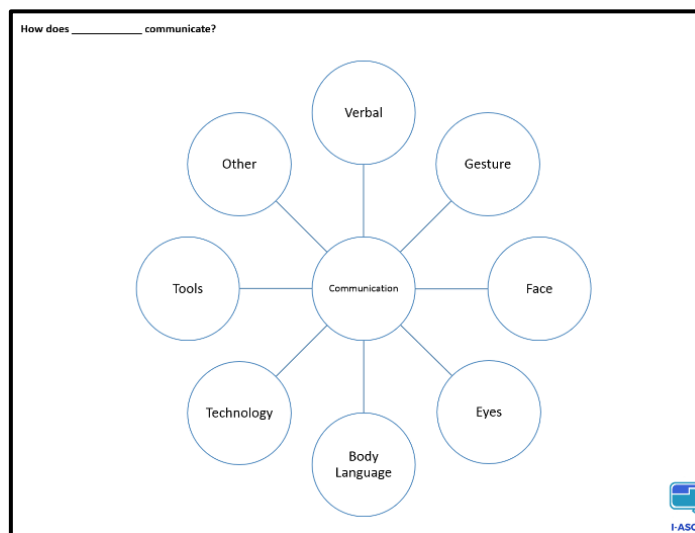
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The second example notes down which communication modalities the child wants to use in various locations and with different people.



The Mind Map Step 2

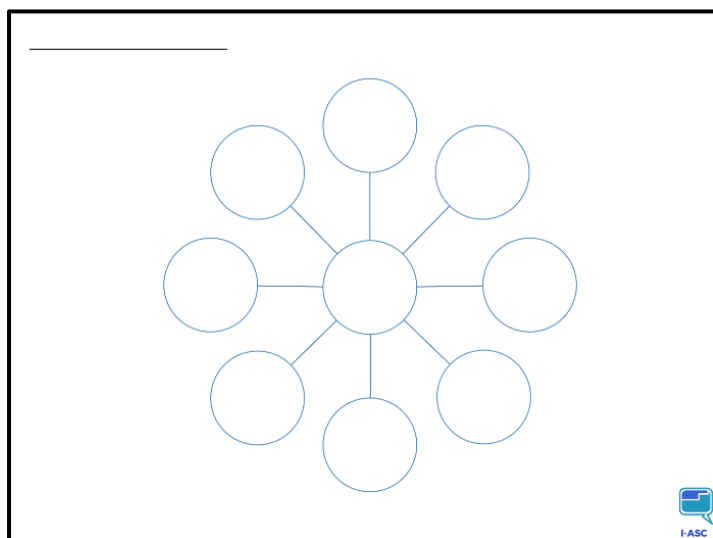
Once agreement is gained to visually record the discussions then one person should agree to complete the mind map(s). It might be useful to categorise discussions with a particular focus, a starting point could be to look at *child characteristics*, *access features*, *communication aid attributes* or *ways of working*, *transitions* and *available resources* from the *I-ASC explanatory model* and prioritise key areas for discussion.





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A *blank mind map* template can be found on the I-ASC website.



Unless there is a good reason try not to mix the content of the mind map, stick to one topic such as communication aspirations or how the young person communicates now. Throughout the assessment process the aim is to have all parties engaged and informed about how decisions are being made, and that everyone can see where their contribution is meaningfully captured.

The Mind Map Step 3

During the discussions, particularly when mind mapping is new to team members, it might be worth sense checking every so often where the points are being placed to see how they make sense for others. By gaining agreement throughout the process there will be a greater chance everyone will be happy with the final map.

In the meeting acknowledge the importance of all views, e.g., the child or family view is as important as that of a professional, and that of a teacher's perspective is just as key as that of a speech and language therapist.

The Mind Map Step 4

At the end of the discussion the mind map can be used to recap the points made and gain agreement to move forward. Because of space some points on the mind map may appear cryptic, so this is the opportunity to make sure everyone is happy with the points presented on the mind map. The overall aim of this tool is to support a collective understanding of the important components of the decision making process.

The Mind Map Step 5

Ensure actions, discussions and decisions from steps 1 to 4 are explicit for everyone involved in the process; take notes, recap at the end of the discussion, the mind map(s) may form part of the information pack sent out to the child, family/carer(s) and support team at the end of the meeting.