

What are Objects?

People with very limited understanding of language and/or sensory problems may find words, symbols or pictures very difficult. Sometimes using objects can help.

Objects can be anything, from a toothbrush to a musical instrument, which helps the person to understand what is happening around them. For example: what activity they are going to do next, or where they are going **or who is going to be working with them.**

Objects can be 'multi-sensory': i.e. they may have a distinct smell, feel or sound which helps the person to recognise the object.

Objects are chosen to be meaningful to that particular person. Usually they are something which the person comes into contact with in their daily life. They might not recognise the object straight away, but with support and practice they can learn to do this.

Objects are usually chosen by people who know the person very well. This is best done after careful observation to see what objects that person shows an interest in.

Each object is chosen to stand for something specific, in much the same way as a word, picture or symbol does. With consistent use, over time the person may come to associate that object with the thing it stands for.

You may hear people describe this as using *Objects of Reference*.

Why are Objects needed?

Objects are easier to understand than words and pictures, because they are part of real life. (i.e. a cup might stand for *drink*)

A spoken word is gone as soon as it has been said. But a person can hold an object for as long as they need to. This means they have more time to get the meaning from the object.

How are Objects used?

Objects can be used in many of the ways that speech, signing, symbols and photos can.

When choosing objects you need to think carefully about:

- Which objects will represent what?
- How big the object is – can it be easily carried around?
- Where the object will be – how will the person access it?
Can the object be easily replaced if it gets lost or broken?

The chosen objects can be used to help someone understand and remember what is happening around them. They might hold, touch, smell, or listen to the object and this helps the person.

Objects can *sometimes* be used by the person to communicate with other people. They might do this by choosing an object, by looking at it, or picking it up. They might give the object to someone else to tell them what they want.

The number of different objects that a person uses can be gradually increased. How *many* different objects they can use will depend on the person and should not be rushed.

More information about using objects:

ACE

<http://www.ace-centre.org.uk/html/resources/objectsref/resobja.html>

Call centre

<http://callcentre.education.ed.ac.uk/downloads/quickguides/aac/objects.pdf>

SENSE

<http://www.sense.org.uk/deafblindness/communication/objref.htm>

DfEE Pre-entry Curriculum (FE Colleges)

http://www.dfes.gov.uk/curriculum_pre-entry/casestudies/or/