



The Communication Trust
Every child understood

Speech, Language and Communication Progression Tool

Age 13-14

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Background

What are the Progression Tools?

This Tool is part of a set of Speech, Language and Communication Progression Tools designed to help identify how children and young people are progressing with their speech, language and communication skills at key ages.

We know some children and young people can have speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) that can impact on their ability to listen, understand and express themselves. We know also that a lack of these skills directly impacts on the ability to learn and progress at school. **In secondary schools, partly because of the more subtle changes we expect at this stage, it's even easier to mistake a lack of progress with speech, language and communication skills for something else.**

Young people with SLCN may be quiet, appear to lack confidence, struggle to make friends or seem confused or disengaged in lessons.

Alternatively, their difficulties might be seen in other ways, such as poor behaviour or difficulties with literacy.

This Progression Tool aims to provide a way of determining where young people's communication skills are in relation to their age and provides more information about how these vital skills are progressing.

The Progression Tools are not a diagnostic Tool and do not in any way replace the detailed speech, language and communication assessment carried out by a speech and language therapist that some young people will need.

However, they will give you information to help you decide whether young people would benefit from a targeted intervention or whether they need specialist assessment and support. They also enable you to give more detailed information as part of a speech and language therapy referral should this be necessary.

How were the Tools developed?

They were developed by specialists in speech, language and communication in collaboration with mainstream class teachers, teaching assistants, SENCOs and school leadership teams. The content of the Tools is based on The Communication Trust's *Universally Speaking* booklets. You can find out more about the booklets at www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/universallyspeaking.

The Tools have been tested out in a number of mainstream schools, on a range of young people. Teachers, speech and language therapists and support staff have used the Tool and given feedback. Feedback from all practitioners has been invaluable in shaping and improving this final Tool.

What do the Progression Tools look like?

There is a set of 9 Progression Tools, which highlights children and young people's language skills at the following key ages of development: 3, 4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10 and 11 in primary school, and 11-12, 13-14 and 16-18 in secondary school. These are the ages at which research has given us the clearest information about expected milestones.

It's suggested that the Progression Tool relevant to the student's age is used in the first instance but if that is proving too challenging for the child or young person the Tool for a younger student can be used instead.

Each Tool covers different aspects of speech, language and communication:

1. **Understanding of spoken language and verbal reasoning**
2. **Understanding and using vocabulary**
3. **Sentence structure and narrative**
4. **Social interaction**

You can decide to do all aspects or selected areas, depending on your concerns. However, it's suggested that going through all aspects of speech, language and communication will give more detailed information, possibly highlighting areas of concern that may otherwise be missed.

For each aspect of speech, language and communication there are two types of information gathered: one through direct questions with the student and one by capturing your own observations or knowledge of the student.

How can they be used?

The Tools can be used as part of a staged approach to help identify young people with language needs. Research has shown these young people are often under-identified or misidentified in schools as language difficulties can be difficult to spot.

Teachers' and support staff's knowledge of typical language development is important for knowing what to expect in spoken language skills. This is because understanding and using spoken language can have a direct impact on literacy, wider learning and interpersonal skills in a classroom and social context. Because spoken language, and from it, written language, has application across the whole curriculum, any teacher or member

of support staff would benefit from developing knowledge about what is expected at different stages in secondary.

The *Universally Speaking* booklets can be a good starting point to look at classes or cohorts as a whole to see how their language is progressing. The Progression Tools can be used as a step on from this to spend more time with individual students and determine in more detail their language strengths and needs.

Some schools have used the Tool across whole class groups to help them understand the level of speech, language and communication skills across year groups. Others have trialled them with specific groups of young people who have either gone on to have a targeted intervention or have been referred on to speech and language therapy.

Who should use them?

The Tools are designed to be used by non speech and language specialists, such as teachers, higher level teaching assistants (HTLA), learning mentors, tutors/Year Heads or others who regularly work with young people.

We would recommend careful reading of instructions and familiarisation with the Tool before using it directly with young people.

If in doubt, we would suggest seeking advice from a specialist, such as a speech and language therapist. If teachers do not use the Tools themselves, it is suggested that HTLA share the results with teachers and work together on next steps.

Using the Tool

The Tool is designed so that you are able to work through the question sections easily with each student. You can then complete the scoring section, working out the student's total scores afterwards, when you are able to reflect on their answers.

Repeating the Tool

The Tools can be repeated at a later date, allowing you to monitor progress. We would recommend waiting at least a term before repeating the Tool with the same student.

When repeating the Tool, you will need to photocopy the scoring and answer sheets for you to note down the student's answers. You can use the same summary table you used in the first instance, and you can plot the student's scores onto the profile chart, to monitor their progress.

Please note that the individual scores on the summary and profile chart should be used to gain the wider Red, Amber or Green rating. **It is this rating which is an indicator of whether students require further support.** Repeating the Tool can also show whether students have moved into a different category e.g. from Amber to Green following an intervention.

Explaining what's happening to the students

Secondary aged students will benefit from an explanation of why this Tool is being used with them. The following may be helpful:

“Understanding and remembering all the different words, instructions and explanations that you hear in class can be tricky.

Doing this exercise will help staff understand the things you find easy and the things that are harder for you – and by knowing this, we'll be able to support you better!

Sometimes, I'll write down what you say. This is just to help me remember your answers.

Please don't worry about any of the questions – it's not a test. Even if some questions are hard, just answer as best as you can. If you want to, we can chat through how you think you did at the end.”

Contents of the Tool

This reference booklet, containing:

- Background and other information
- Summary table
- Direct questions that are carried out with the student (for reference)
- Observations section (for reference)
- Scoring guidance
- Profile charts for individuals and groups (for reference)

In addition to the reference booklet, you have been provided with some scoring and answer sheets, which you can photocopy and write on for each young person you complete the Tool with. These include:

- Summary table (item 1)
- Direct questions that are carried out with the student (item 2)
- Observations section (item 3)
- Profile chart for individuals (item 4) and groups (item 5)

Practical steps to using the Tool

1. Decide which Tool to use (based on the student's age)
2. Make copies of the scoring and answer sheets which you will write on: Summary table (item 1), direct questions (item 2), observations section (item 3) and the profile chart (item 4).
3. Work through the direct questions with the student. Some items marked with a **®** can be audio recorded and written in later; for other questions, you need to write down or record what the student says
4. Carry out the observations/complete observations section based on your knowledge of the student
5. Use scoring guidance on page 26 to see how the student has done
6. Transfer scores to the summary table (item 1) and profile chart (item 4)

For **direct questions**, staff should talk to students on a one-to-one basis and note down their responses on the form. For some tasks in this Tool, it is particularly important that you record accurately what the student says. Typically developing older students will naturally be able to give longer answers than children in primary school and it can be difficult to capture exactly what the student says whilst chatting with them and making them feel at ease.

For tasks that are marked with a **®** symbol, it is therefore strongly recommended that you record what the student says and then listen back and write it into the answer box later.

There is information with each question to support administration of the Tool:

- Statements relating to what students should be able to do based on developmental norms for their age are at the beginning of each section in white text
- What adults need to say or ask the student is in **bold**
- Additional information or guidance for staff administering the Tool is in *italics*

The observations section asks more general questions about how the student communicates in other situations, such as in the classroom. This is to be completed by a member (or members) of staff who knows the student and who is able to make realistic judgements through observations or knowledge of the student, ideally across different contexts or lessons. You may wish to divide the Tool between staff - one person for the questions and one person for the observations.

The mixture of direct questions and observations ensures a more balanced and realistic judgement of the student's language skills.

Prompting

For some of the questions, you may find that the student needs additional support to answer correctly. For example, you may wish to repeat the question if this helps the student to provide a response. It is also acceptable to give them an example if they are struggling to answer the question.

If you do need to give the student any additional support (such as repeating the question) you should write this down in the score section next to the relevant question.

Scoring

- Guidance is given to work out a score for each question
- Scores are added together to give a total score for each aspect of language
- These totals can be summarised in the summary table and / or plotted on to the profile chart

Although examples are given to support marking and scoring, it is impossible to give every response a student might make. It is useful therefore to have a look at what they are expected to be able to do; this is stated at the beginning of each question. Use this, the guidance and the examples to help you score the answers.

It would be useful to read through the specific scoring guidelines starting on page 26 before you use the Tool.

Special note - The questions are based on what all young people should be able to do by the time they are 13-14 years old. It can be surprising for staff if young people don't do well or struggle to answer particular questions. The Tool is designed to help highlight the language students ARE (bold) able to understand and use. The Tool should lead staff to consider other examples or situations where the particular student might struggle.

Special note - Remember that all young people of this age should have at least this level of ability if they are at age appropriate levels. The questions have been carefully developed and tested to ensure they are at the right level for each specific age.

Timings

We suggest 30 minutes for the questions section and 30 minutes for observations - this can vary from student to student, but if the Tool is taking significantly longer then this might be an indicator that the student is struggling in 1 or more areas, and should be noted down.

The scoring section may take 30 minutes to an hour to complete, including marking the scores on the profile charts.

More advice

We have developed a 'How to use the Progression Tools' film which gives more practical advice on the scoring element of the Tools. Please go to www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/ptfilm

If you would like electronic versions of the scoring and answer sheets please e-mail enquiries@thecommunicationtrust.org.uk, stating the age of the Progression Tool you are using.

Scoring

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Step 1 | <p>Answers to direct questions can be recorded in two ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some items marked with a ® can be audio recorded and written in later ● Other items are briefer and you can jot the young person's answer down as they say it | <p>To be completed with the young person on a one-to-one basis</p> <p>Both types of response are scored later without the young person present</p> |
| <p>Special note: You should write down what the student says as accurately as possible. It is important not to add words, but to write down just the words they say. For example, if they say 'you havted to measured the water first', don't be tempted to write 'you have to have measured the water first'. Often when we know students well, we interpret what they mean. However, for this task, it is important to write just the words they say. It may be appropriate (and will help with chatting and keeping the student from getting worried or nervous) to record what the student says and write it on the form later.</p> | | |
| Step 2 | <p>Complete the observations questions (optional)</p> | <p>To be completed by a member of staff who knows the young person and who is able to make realistic judgements through observations or knowledge of the young person</p> |
| Step 3 | <p>Check out the specific scoring guidelines</p> <p>Once the items above are completed, consult the specific scoring guidelines to identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How to work out scores for these direct questions ● How to score the items where you write down their responses ● How to work out the final score for each area of language. See p26 for details | <p>To be completed after the questions (without the young person present)</p> |
| Step 4 | <p>Add up total scores for each aspect of language</p> | <p>To be completed after the questions (without the young person present)</p> |
| Step 5 | <p>Copy their total scores on to the summary table and the profile chart</p> | <p>To be completed after the questions (without the young person present)</p> |



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Questions

Progression Tool summary table

| Name of student | | | | |
|---|-------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Date of birth | | | Age | |
| Questions completed by | | | | |
| Observations completed by | | | | |
| Gender | | | | |
| First language | | | | |
| Score Summary | Date | | Date repeated | |
| | Questions | Observations | Questions | Observations |
| Total understanding of spoken language and verbal reasoning score | | | | |
| Total understanding and using vocabulary score | | | | |
| Total sentence structure and narrative score | | | | |
| Total social interaction score | | | | |