First-Letter Pointing

First-letter pointing is an assistive communication technique that can help others understand your speech. To use first-letter pointing, you will need an alphabet board. Any piece of paper with the letters of the alphabet written on it will do, but you may wish to use a board that includes some useful phrases as well.

As you speak, point to the first letter of each word you say. For example, “My [point to M] name [point to N] is [point to I] Bob [point to B].” You must say the word and point to the letter at the same time.

Pointing to a letter gives the listener a clue about the word you are saying, making it easier to understand. Using first-letter pointing also causes you to insert pauses between your words. This can also help a listener understand you, since your words will have clear boundaries instead of running together as often happens when we speak.

Tips for using first-letter pointing:

• When speaking with someone for the first time, point to “I’ll point to the first letter of each word I say” so they will understand what you’re doing.

• If someone still has a hard time understanding you, point to “Please repeat each word I say, so I know you understand.” That way you can identify specific words your listener doesn’t understand.

• If someone has trouble understanding just one word, point to “I’ll spell this word” and then spell it out letter by letter.

• If it is difficult for others to tell which finger you are pointing with, make sure to have instructions written on the alphabet board. For example, in the “I’ll point to the first letter of each word I say” box, add “using my index finger.”

• Make a few copies of the alphabet board. Keep one next to your bed, one in the TV room, one in the kitchen, or anywhere you might need it. You may wish to laminate them, or place them in clear sheet protectors.

• Keep a small version of the board folded up in your purse or wallet, so you always have one with you.

For more information, please contact our
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