

Table 8 – Communication Functioning

Introduction to Table 8

- Table 8 is to be used to assess the functional impact of a diagnosed condition affecting communication functions.
- The diagnosis of the condition causing the impairment must be made by an appropriately qualified medical practitioner.
- In this Table, communication may be verbal or in conjunction with alternative or augmentative communication systems (such as sign language, which may be a recognised sign language such as Auslan, electronic speech, communication symbols, writing or other non-verbal communication methods).
- There must be corroborating evidence of the person's impairment.
- Self-report of symptoms must be supported by corroborating medical evidence.
- Examples of corroborating evidence for the purposes of this Table include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a report from the person's treating doctor;
 - specialist assessment by a speech pathologist, neurologist or psychologist;
 - report from a medical specialist confirming diagnosis of conditions associated with communication impairment (such as stroke (cerebrovascular accident (CVA)), other acquired brain injury, head, neck or throat cancer, cerebral palsy, neurodegenerative conditions, or damage to the speech-related structures of the mouth, vocal cords or larynx);
 - Results of diagnostic tests (such as X-Rays or other imagery); results of functional assessments.
- If the person uses recognised sign language or other non-verbal communication method as a result of hearing loss only, the person's hearing and communication function should be assessed using Table 11.
- If the impairment affecting communication function is due to impairment in intellectual function, only Table 9 must be used.
- In this Table, **main language** means the language that the person most commonly uses.
- In this Table, **communication** or **communication functions** means receptive communication (understanding language) or expressive communication (producing speech).
- When determining whether a descriptor applies that involves a person performing an activity, the descriptor applies if that person can do the activity when they would be expected to do so and not only once or rarely.
- When assessing episodic or fluctuating impairments and conditions, a rating must be assigned which reflects the overall functional impact of those impairments, taking into account the severity, duration and frequency of the episodes or fluctuations as appropriate.
- Assistance means assistance from another person rather than any aids or equipment the person may use, unless specified otherwise.
- The examples used in descriptors are not an exhaustive list and are to be used only as a guide.

Points	Descriptors
0	<p><i>There is no or minimal functional impact on communication in the person's main language.</i></p> <p>(1) The person's speech is usually understood by those who speak the same language and has no difficulty understanding or engaging in meaningful conversation.</p>
5	<p><i>There is a mild functional impact on communication in the person's main language.</i></p> <p>(1) At least one of the following applies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the person has mild difficulty understanding complex words and long sentences such as a complex news article; or (b) the person has mild difficulty in producing speech and has mild difficulty with being understood due to content or speech production arising from, for example a stutter or stammer, or vocal cord, larynx damage.
10	<p><i>There is a moderate functional impact on communication in the person's main language</i></p> <p>(1) At least one of the following applies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the person: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) has moderate difficulty understanding day-to-day language, particularly where a sentence or instruction includes multiple steps or concepts such as 'Please take this book out to Jane at the front desk and ask her to give you some paper clips and bring them back in here'; or (ii) may need instructions repeated or broken down into shorter sentences; or (b) the person has moderate difficulty in producing speech, difficulty coordinating speech movements or damage to speech structures arising from, for example a stutter or stammer, or vocal cord, larynx damage, which makes speech effortful, slow or sometimes difficult for unfamiliar people to understand; or (c) the person uses alternative or augmentative communication such as sign language, technology that produces electronic speech, use of symbols to communicate and has moderate difficulty speaking clearly and may be partially reliant on a recognised sign language such as Auslan or signed English or other non-verbal communication methods

There is a **severe** functional impact on communication in the person's main language.

- (1) Either:
 - (a) the person has severe difficulty understanding day-to-day language in unfamiliar environments or relating to non-routine tasks, even where a sentence or instruction includes only a single step such as 'put the book next to the pencils' and needs instructions repeated or gestures or physical demonstration in order to understand; or
 - (b) at least one of the following applies:
 - (i) the person has severe difficulty in producing speech, difficulty coordinating speech movements or damage to speech structures, for example a stutter or stammer, or vocal cord, larynx damage which makes speech very effortful or very slow; or
 - (ii) the person's speech is difficult for strangers to understand; or
 - (iii) the person uses a limited vocabulary of words in speech; or
Example: fewer than 50 words;
 - (iv) the person's speed is clear but is not used appropriately, such as frequent echolalia - compulsively repeats words or what the other person says, frequently swears or uses abusive language as a result of a condition such as Tourette syndrome and has severe difficulty sustaining a normal conversation for even a few minutes; or
- (2) The person uses alternative or augmentative communication such as sign language, technology that produces electronic speech, use of symbols to communicate, use of a note taker to assist in communication; and
 - (a) the person has severe difficulty speaking clearly and is completely reliant on a recognised sign language such as Auslan or signed English; or
 - (b) the person needs to use an electronic communication device to communicate with others in places such as shops, workplace, education or training facility and cannot be understood without this device; or
 - (c) the person has severe difficulty speaking and uses handwriting or typing to communicate; or
 - (d) the person has severe difficulty speaking and uses the assistance of a note taker to communicate.

There is **extreme** functional impact on communication in the person's main language.

(1) Either:

(a) The person:

(i) has extreme difficulty understanding even simple day-day language in familiar environments; or

(ii) may understand only a few single words or simple phrases that are used on (iii) a regular basis such as 'drink' 'toilet', 'bed time', 'go in the car'; or needs additional gestures, pictures, symbols or physical demonstration in order to understand what is said; or

(b) at least one of the following applies:

(i) the person has extreme difficulty in producing any clear speech or is unable to speak at all; or

(ii) the person's speech is difficult to understand even for family members and others who have regular contact with the person; or

(iii) the person uses a limited vocabulary of words in speech; or

Example: fewer than 20 words.

(iv) the person is only able to indicate yes or no, pleasure or displeasure through facial expressions, head movements or hand or body gestures; or

(2) The person uses alternative or augmentative communication such as sign language, technology that produces electronic speech, use of symbols to communicate, use of a note taker to communicate; and

(a) the person uses a limited number of symbols such as Compics or pictures or photos to communicate basic needs and feelings; or

(b) the person needs to use an electronic communication device to communicate with others but has difficulty using this and is very slow in preparing communications; or

(c) the person is unable to speak or use an electronic communication device and uses a note taker to communicate with others.