

Building Sentences // Self-Help Strategies

Some students find it difficult to put their ideas into words. Using these self-help strategies will help you develop these skills:

- Give yourself time to process what has been said and plan your answer. What are the most important points you need to get across?
- Monitor whether other people have understood by watching their facial expressions and listening to requests to repeat what you have said.
- Repeat or rephrase the information that they have not grasped. A good way to practice this is to role play someone asking for directions but not understanding which way to go. Check which part they have understood and explain the rest again
- Don't worry if you have to stop and think, or start what you were saying again. Give yourself time by saying, 'I'm sorry, I've forgotten what I was saying...' or 'Let me start again...'
- Listen to the way other students and adults make points and express their ideas. If you think someone communicates well, model your sentences on theirs.
- Think of ways you can start sentences that you can use over and over again e.g. '*The point I'd like to make...*', '*I think because....*'
- If possible, discuss your answer with another student or support staff to pool ideas and practise expressing them before sharing with the class
- Use gesture to support your communication
- Record and refer to keyword lists arranged by topic as a prompt
- Use model answers and writing frames to structure your written work
- Use mind maps to brainstorm all the information you want to include and decide on the order you will present it in for a talk or essay
- If you find it difficult to record your ideas in writing, ask the teacher if you can use diagrams, mind maps, flowcharts or story boards.
- Take time editing your work. If possible, read it aloud to yourself. As well as spelling and punctuation check that the sentences make sense – have you missed any words out? Have you used the same tense throughout your work? Be especially careful of words that do not follow regular rules e.g. '*ran*' instead of '*runned*', '*mice*' instead of '*mouses*'. Could you change any of the vocabulary to make it more interesting or use a technical term?