

# COLOR-Coding Communication Displays

Color-coding black and white line drawings (e.g., Mayer Johnson picture communication symbols) allows the user and facilitator to locate symbols more easily. If color-coding is organized according to grammatical categories, the user has an added feature to assist in learning how to sequence symbols, and in turn, to support the development of sentence-building or syntax skills. Because shape is a salient clue, color-code the background, not the figure, so that the shape of the symbol will be more visible to the student.

Any color-coding system is acceptable, but keep color codes consistent across displays. **Tips:**

- If hand coloring, use transparent-read-through light shades of highlighters to provide good contrast between the background and the symbol.
- For paper displays, always make a copy of the symbol display before coloring it.
- If using older versions of BoardMaker, you may need to purchase the 'nontransparent' symbol set, so the background won't 'spill' into the symbol.

**Arranging Color-Coded Symbols:** Symbols are easier to locate if they are grouped in blocks of colors or grammatical categories. For example, a display should be organized as follows from the left side of the overlay to the right side:

MISCELLANEOUS	VERBS	DESCRIPTORS	PREPOSITIONS	NOUNS
I	like	green	for	trees.

Two widely used systems are the Mayer-Johnson color-coding system, and the Goossens', Crain, and Elder system. We are recommending the Goossens', et al system, because of the wide range of clinical materials available using that system.

## Goossens', Crain, & Elder Color-Coding System:

<b>VERBS</b>	words which tells action	OPEN, COME	(Pink)
<b>DESCRIPTORS</b>	adjectives and adverbs	PRETTY, SLOW	(Blue)
<b>PREPOSITIONS</b>	position words	IN, OFF	(Green)
<b>NOUNS</b>	person, place or thing	CAR, STRING, MARY	(Yellow)
<b>MISCELLANEOUS</b>			(Orange)
<b>WH- words</b>	questions	WHO, WHAT, HOW	
<b>Exclamations</b>	interjections, etc	UH OH, WOW	
<b>Negative Words</b>	negations	NO, DON'T	
<b>Pronouns</b>	personal, possessive	I, YOU	

See: Goossens', C., Crain, S., & Elder, P. (1992). *Engineering the Classroom Environment for Interactive Symbolic Communication*. Southeast Aug Comm Conference Publications, 2430 11th Avenue, N, Birmingham, AL 35234.

# Sample Color Coded Display

Print on legal paper in landscape mode.

Cooking Display - [adaptedstories.com](http://adaptedstories.com)

Level

Made with Boardmaker and the Picture Communication Symbols.  
Mary-Johnson Co. - P.O. Box 1878 Orange Beach, GA 32070 USA  
(912) 632-0284

<p>let me</p> 	<p>put in</p> 	<p>more</p> 	<p>great</p> 
<p>we need</p> 	<p>help</p> 	<p>stir</p> 	<p>gross</p> 

cut out

This color coded communication display shows several features:

- the background of each symbol is colored, allowing the shape of each symbol to 'pop'
- symbols are grouped according to part of speech
- a white background is used for words, so that the text is allowed to 'pop'

# COLOR-Coding Communication Cards

(photocopy, cut apart, laminate, and share with teachers, parents, and therapists!)

## Goossens', Crain, & Elder COLOR-Coding System:

<b>VERBS</b>	words which tells action	OPEN, COME	(Pink)
<b>DESCRIPTORS</b>	adjectives and adverbs	PRETTY, SLOW	(Blue)
<b>PREPOSITIONS</b>	position words	IN, OFF	(Green)
<b>NOUNS</b>	person, place or thing	CAR, HAT, MARY	(Yellow)
<b>MISCALLANEOUS</b>			(Orange)
<b>WH- words</b>	questions	WHO, WHAT, HOW	
<b>Exclamations</b>	interjections, etc	UH OH, WOW	
<b>Negative Words</b>	negations	NO, DON'T	
<b>Pronouns</b>	personal, possessive	I, YOU	

## Goossens', Crain, & Elder COLOR-Coding System:

<b>VERBS</b>	words which tells action	OPEN, COME	(Pink)
<b>DESCRIPTORS</b>	adjectives and adverbs	PRETTY, SLOW	(Blue)
<b>PREPOSITIONS</b>	position words	IN, OFF	(Green)
<b>NOUNS</b>	person, place or thing	CAR, HAT, MARY	(Yellow)
<b>MISCALLANEOUS</b>			(Orange)
<b>WH- words</b>	questions	WHO, WHAT, HOW	
<b>Exclamations</b>	interjections, etc	UH OH, WOW	
<b>Negative Words</b>	negations	NO, DON'T	
<b>Pronouns</b>	personal, possessive	I, YOU	

## Goossens', Crain, & Elder COLOR-Coding System:

<b>VERBS</b>	words which tells action	OPEN, COME	(Pink)
<b>DESCRIPTORS</b>	adjectives and adverbs	PRETTY, SLOW	(Blue)
<b>PREPOSITIONS</b>	position words	IN, OFF	(Green)
<b>NOUNS</b>	person, place or thing	CAR, HAT, MARY	(Yellow)
<b>MISCALLANEOUS</b>			(Orange)
<b>WH- words</b>	questions	WHO, WHAT, HOW	
<b>Exclamations</b>	interjections, etc	UH OH, WOW	
<b>Negative Words</b>	negations	NO, DON'T	
<b>Pronouns</b>	personal, possessive	I, YOU	