

## Talking Mats

### Purpose

Talking mats are a method of supporting pupils to share their views about how they feel about aspects such as the people they work with, the school day, lessons, equipment/resources or other aspects of their lives using symbols, photographs or pre-written words - depending on the age and cognitive ability of the child. Using talking mats is a way of school hearing the voice of pupils who find it hard to access and articulate their feelings, such as children with social communication difficulties.

### Talking Pictures

Talking mat

### Age range

Primary or Secondary aged pupils  
Child/Young People who are non-verbal or with SLT needs.

It is important to note pupils whose language understanding is less than a 3 – key word level will not be able to access this approach.

### Resources

- Two or three headings such as: no problem, little problem, big problem; yes, don't know, no; I like it, I don't know if I like it, I don't like it; happy, ok, sad. These headings will depend on the topic of the talking mat and the age and cognitive ability of pupil.
- Cards with individual pictures, symbols, photographs, or text based on the topic of the talking mat.

STARS team have resources you can access. [Talking Mats | STARS Team](#)

### Instructions for use:

First of all talk to the child/young person about the headings and their meanings. You may want to start with some practice cards e.g. like/don't like ice cream/chips/carrots before moving on to other areas. Hand the cards to the pupil one by one. The pupil then decides which heading the card will go underneath to express their opinion. Adults may wish to provide the pupil with reminders that they are to give their honest opinions and that there are no right/wrong choices. A photograph/copy of the mat is taken and shared with key adults as well as parents/carers as it provides a clear view of what the pupil likes/dislikes, can cope with or finds challenging. It is important to record any of the statements a pupil makes as they are making their decisions as this can be a great insight into reasons for their opinions. This information should then inform the personalised response (part of the graduated approach) in place to meet the pupil's needs.

One strength of using this approach is it enables adults to assess how a pupil is coping with situations, interventions or strategies implemented. It is important to note that talking mats can be conducted in silence with the adult handing out the cards one by one, if a pupil works best within this type of situation.

### Example:



Reading - 'because it's easy. I'm a really good reader. I like to read Horrid Henry and sometimes Harry Potter.'

Spelling - 'Problem because I really stress about it. This is because when I was in year 4 if you got below 4 out of 8 or below you missed your golden time...this is still on my mind.'

Grammar Hammer - 'When I first heard about grammar hammer I thought it sounded like a dangerous test. It's an easy test but I still need to learn how to use adverbials.'

Nurture room - 'Because it's amazing. You can do any activity in it. Also, I go at lunchtime with my friends.'

Library - 'I haven't been in the library for a while because I read my accelerated reader books over and over again. I find it difficult to find books that are my level so I end up reading books I've read before.'

Guided reading - 'This is the best because I get to sit next to my BFF xxxxxx. If there is a problem we work together to work it out.'

Maths - 'For some reason maths can be really difficult. Percentages and times tables are really complicated.'

Lunch - 'I like to be at the front of the line for dinner. I have a packed lunch. Two apple juices, ham sandwich, a packet of Quavers and 1 chocolate bar.'

Literacy - 'Because it's a little bit difficult. I don't know what a proper noun is or how to use a semi-colon.'

Home time - 'I like to rush like Sonic to get my pack up so I can go home. I get to play video games at home.'

Assembly - 'I like to sit and watch.'

Computer - 'It's the best thing ever because you can do anything on them. I like to make power points with xxxxxx.'

Topics - 'Sometimes in topic I am lazy and a little bit tired, so I don't always understand what Mr xxxxxxx is saying.'

PE - 'My favourite sport in PE is dodgeball in the MUGA. I know all the rules.'

Homework - 'Because I do not do homework some days. I play on my video games and always forget about my homework. My dad reminds me to do it.'