



Communication Function Classification System (CFCS)



Purpose

The **purpose** of the CFCS is to classify the **everyday communication performance** of an individual into one of five levels. The CFCS focuses on activity and participation levels as described in the World Health Organization's (WHO) International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (ICF).

User Instructions

A parent, caregiver, and/or a professional who is familiar with the person's communication selects the level of communication performance. Adults and adolescents may also classify their communication performance. The **overall effectiveness** of the communication performance **should be based on how they usually take part in everyday situations requiring communication**, rather than their best capacity. These everyday situations may occur in home, school, and the community.

Some communication may be difficult to classify if performance falls across more than one level. In those cases, choose the level that **most closely describes** the person's usual performance **in the most settings**. Do not consider the individual's perceived capacity, cognition, and/or motivation when selecting a level.

Definitions

Communication occurs when a **sender** transmits a message **and** a **receiver** understands the message. An **effective communicator** independently **alternates as a sender and a receiver** regardless of the demands of a conversation, including settings (e.g., community, school, work, home), conversational partners, and topics.

All methods of communication performance are considered in determining the CFCS level. These include the use of speech, gestures, behaviors, eye gaze, facial expressions, and augmentative and alternative communication (**AAC**). AAC systems include (but are not limited to) manual sign, pictures, communication boards, communication books, and talking devices -- sometimes called voice output communication aids (VOCAs) or speech generating devices (SGDs).

Distinctions between the levels are based on the performance of **sender and receiver roles**, the **pace of communication**, and the **type of conversational partner**. The following definitions should be kept in mind when using this classification system.

Effective senders and receivers shift quickly and easily between transmitting and understanding messages. To clarify or repair misunderstandings, the effective sender and receiver may use or request strategies such as repeating, rephrasing, simplifying, and/or expanding the message. To speed up communication exchanges, especially when using AAC, an effective sender may appropriately decide to use less grammatically correct messages by leaving out or shortening words with familiar communication partners.

A **comfortable pace** of communication refers to how quickly and easily the person can understand and convey messages. A comfortable pace occurs with few communication breakdowns and little wait time between communication turns.

Unfamiliar conversational partners are strangers or acquaintances who only occasionally communicate with the person. **Familiar conversational partners** such as relatives, caregivers, and friends may be able to communicate more effectively with the person because of previous knowledge and personal experiences.