



Talking Mats

There are many changes in the life of a Little Trooper. For those with additional needs gaining their thoughts and opinions as they go through these changes is important but can be challenging. 'Talking Mats' may prove a useful tool in supporting with this process.

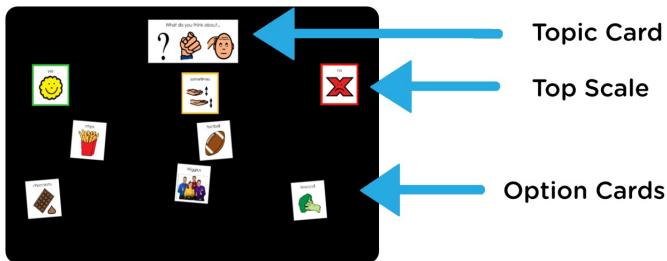
What is it?

'Talking Mats' is a communication framework for helping children with additional needs organise their thoughts and express their views about particular issues (talking mats 2018). They allow visual representation of these thoughts and views.

Who can it help?

'Talking Mats' can help school staff and parents wishing to gain the thoughts and views of;

- **Children with communication difficulties**
- **Children with learning difficulties**
- **Children that are visual learners.**



How does it work?

A mat (normally a cheap doormat) is divided into 3 sections;

1. **The TOP SCALE**
2. **The TOPIC**
3. **The OPTIONS**

The Top Scale is the scale under which the opinions can be placed. The scale can be chosen by the child completing the mat so that the vocabulary is meaningful for them e.g. super, ok and bad, or amazing, so-so and rubbish etc. The scale can be adapted for each topic being discussed. It is placed at the top of the mat hence its name!

The Topic is the subject being discussed. It is placed at the bottom of the mat in the centre. This allows all those involved in the process to remain focused on exactly what is being discussed.

Options are the actual choices within the topic that are going to be discussed. They are discussed and placed under the top scale that represents the child's view. The number of these will vary dependent on the topic under discussion and/or the level of the child.

The content of this activity sheet is meant as guidance only, sources have been noted where relevant. Although every reasonable effort is made to present current and accurate information, Little Troopers makes no guarantees of any kind and cannot be held liable for any outdated or incorrect information

Address: 4b 80 High Street, Egham, Surrey, TW20 9HE

Email: info@littletroopers.net

Little Troopers Registered charity no. (England and Wales) 1149258

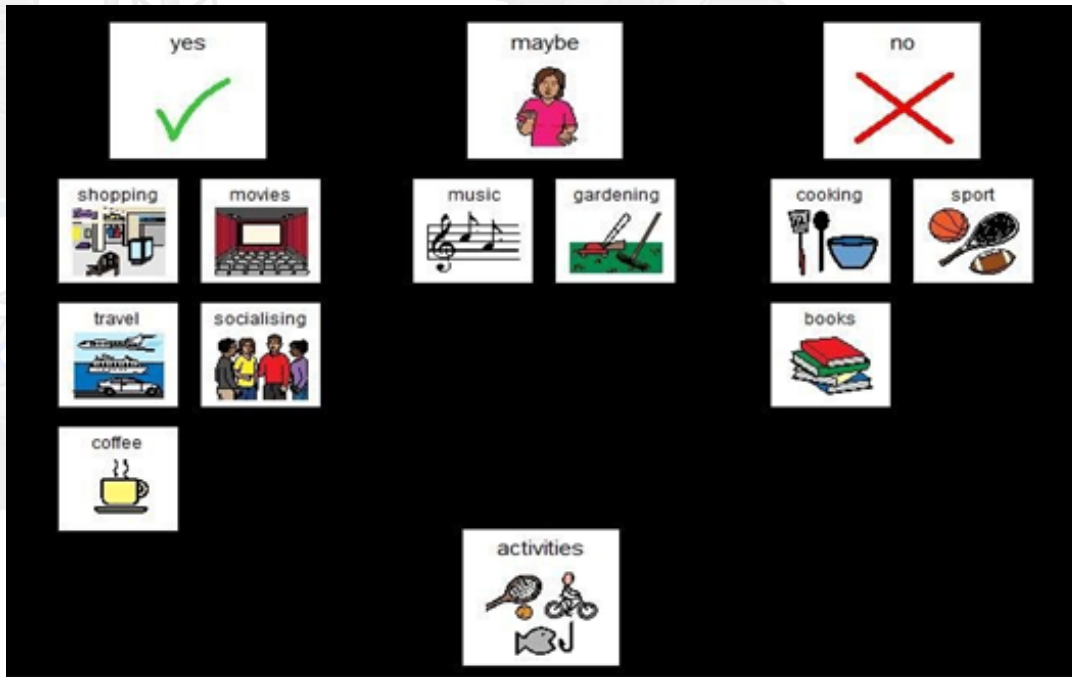
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Example of a 'Talking Mat'



Top scale.

Options.

Topic.

Activities I enjoy

Getting started.

Once the mat is set up with the top scale and the topic the child is given the options one at a time and asked to think about how they feel about each one. They can then place the symbol under the appropriate visual scale symbol to indicate how they feel about this. The number of items, the details and the topics will very dependent on the child's needs and level of abilities. It can often be helpful to start with a less challenging topics such a 'foods' before moving onto more emotive subjects.

Possible topics to discuss for talking mats

- There are lots of general topics that 'Talking Mats' are used for e.g. foods, activities, lessons, helpful strategies in class etc. Some topics that could be discussed with the help of 'Talking Mats' for Little Troopers may include;
- Daddy/Mummy going away, changing schools, moving house, staying with grandparents.
- The options can be presented in written words if the child is able to read or photos/symbols gathered from online.

For more information the websites below may prove helpful.

www.talkingmats.com

www.communicationmatters.org.uk/page/talking-mats

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Top Scale Symbols

Talking Mats



Great



OK



Rubbish



Happy



so so



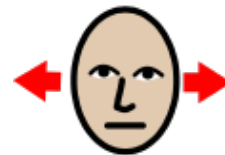
Sad



Yes



Maybe



No



Good



Not sure



Bad

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Changing school

Talking Mats

Before
changing
school

A stick figure is waving with one hand.

Saying
goodbye

A person is holding a camera up to their eye, taking a photo.

Taking
photos of my
school

A lowercase letter 'i' in a bold, black font.

Info about
the new
school

123
Tel. numbers
of friends

A pair of eyes looking forward.

A chance to
see the new
school

Two stylized faces are shown in profile, facing each other with speech bubbles, indicating conversation.

Time to
talk

A person's head is shown with a thought bubble containing a checkmark.

Know what
clubs there
are

An icon of a plate with a fork and knife, and a globe, representing a food menu.

See the new
food menu

A profile of a person's head with a megaphone, symbolizing an announcement or timetable.

See the
timetable

A person is holding a camera up to their eye, taking a photo.

Taking
photos of my
new school

A person's head is shown with a thought bubble containing a checkmark.

Sharing
what I know

A stick figure teacher stands next to a whiteboard displaying simple math and alphabet examples: $1+2=3$, $7+7=14$, and 'ABC'.

Meeting my
new teacher

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