

101+ Ideas for Using the BIGmack or Other Single Message Communication Devices

- Compiled by Barbara Solomonson SLP, MS CCC-SLP with help from others at different message boards and listserves.

1. The BIGmack can be used for games such as Chasey and Hide-and-Seek. Store the messages - "You can't catch me!" or "Ready or not here I come!"
2. The Step-by-Step is great for Duck, Duck, Goose
3. For young children, you can use messages to initiate physical contact such as: "bounce me", "tickle me", "rub my back", "brush my hair". (Obviously, you need to be conscious of whether they like this type of touch or not.)
4. Have a BIGmack by the door so people can tell you when they are leaving to go to the bathroom. E.g. "I will be right back", or "I need to use the bathroom" or whatever the teacher feels is most appropriate
5. Use the BIGmack at meals to request "more" or "finished" etc.
6. Use a book you've written with the child's name in it, record the name on the BIGmack and then every time it is mentioned in the story, the child can use the switch instead of the teacher reading it!
7. If you have a group with a few BIGmacks, you could spell out a phrase, such as Merry Christmas or Happy Birthday. Great for a concert or performance
8. Use the BIGmack or Step-by-Step to order at a restaurant
9. Tell mum and dad "I love you"
10. Ask for a hug
11. Say prayers
12. Call everyone to dinner
13. Sell items
14. I heard of a young girl who had a BIGmack attached to her horse and it said "giddyup" and the horse did just that!!!
15. I have a client who is clinically depressed and she has one that she uses with her friends. When friends come by and she's not in her dorm room, they leave a message with it. She says its the best therapy she gets to have "Hi, I'm thinking about you" messages from friends when she's not expecting them.
16. Turning on a switch adapted radio or cassette player
17. Giving a compliment to a friend
18. Singing Happy Birthday

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19. We have a voice output device in one of the bathroom stalls. The student is left in the stall for a bit and when she is finished she hits the voice output and it says "OH yohooooo, I'm finished". She is finally using it in an appropriate fashion. At home she has begun to flick the light switch indicating that she is done and needs assistance. This young lady is 20 years old.
20. I'm sure that this isn't too original, but we use the BIGmack in our preschool classes for story time. Each preschool unit is based on a piece of "literature" such as The Very Busy Spider, Brown Bear, Brown Bear, etc. During circle time when the story is read, the repetitive line such as "She was too busy spinning her web!" or "What did I see?" is programmed on the BIGmack. This way each child has an opportunity to be an active participant in helping to tell the story.
21. Another idea - again not at all original is to program the parent's (if the child is at home) or the teacher's name on the BIGmack with a request for them to come. For example: "Come here mum!" When the parent or teacher hears that they are being called, they run over and make a huge fuss over the child. Children learn very quickly the power of communicating through the BIGmack.
22. I use a lot of single message devices but they are not always a BIGmack. I also use some double message devices. Snack activities: uses 2 voice output devices to make a choice, then request more then have the option of more or all done, also could use "delicious" and "yucky". We also use 2 voice output each day for lunch choices and for afternoon break choices. It's also a good idea to program a message so that a child can stop an activity or indicate a negative preference.
23. I use a different single message device but one is placed outside the door and one is inside the door. One says, "Hi, how are you" and the other says "Bye, have a nice day".
24. I am not the originator of this idea but BIGmacks are also switches and can be used with a blow dryer to dry dishes or with a water pic to water plants or wash windows, and also start a vacuum.
25. Just one more use for the BIGmack. Sending a student to another classroom or the office with a message e.g. its time for my medicine, Mrs. Crawford needs the three-hole punch, etc.
26. I've seen BIGmack's posted outside doors to inform visually impaired individuals of the contents of the room.
27. Record the day or date on it during circle time so child can "answer" the question "what day is it today?" Or record the weather so the child can answer that question.
28. Record child's verbal output - even if it is just a sound. For example, one child is beginning to say "B_B_B_B_" for his name Bobby - I catch his verbal output and he plays it back when he wants to. He loves to hear himself - and it encourages more verbalisations!!
29. Uses for the BIGmack - ordering food, requesting shoe size (bowling), greeting bus driver
30. Telling what was done in therapy
31. Giving a direction in a group activity (put it in, pick it up, take a turn)
32. Indicate when finished, need more materials during work
33. I like using two BIGmacks, one red and one green, to play "Red Light, Green Light". This allows the AAC user to be the "leader" of these common children's game. You don't even need to add PCS symbols, as the colours speak for themselves! (Of course the traffic light symbols/text add that extra literacy piece.)
34. Record a word or phrase from a story and let the child respond to a question during the story using the BIGmack.

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35. One idea is to use the BIGmack for taking a break. Having it programmed to say "I need a break" could work nicely for verbal and non-verbal kids. It can help teach them to tell you when they are fatigued or getting frustrated.
36. Another use for the BIGmack is for an "exchange" notebook between preschool and the home. For example, send home a message such as "We had apples for a snack today." so that the parent becomes part of the process for using the device.
37. I've programmed the BIGmack to say, "I want that one," when making choices. For example, I'll have 3 pictures on a Velcro strip, and we'll work on making a story and the child will have to choose whether she wants a dog, a cat, or a bird in her story. I scan the pictures by shining a light or pointing to the pictures, and she chooses what she wants for the story by pushing on the BIGmack that says, "I want that one." We continue this method of selection for the rest of the story. It can be incorporated for many other activities involving choice making as well, and helps in early scanning development.
38. This isn't exactly an original idea either, but we use ours for our one non-verbal child to say good morning to everyone in his preschool class. He just loves it!!
39. We have placed BIGmacks in various locations in our school. On them we place special messages or a brief song related to the month's theme or season. Or, they may relate to a bulletin board. Or it may tell the lunch menu for the day. We pair pictures with the BIGmack whenever possible. The children watch for the "buttons" now and love to activate them. They have learned cause-and-effect and are now working on sequencing (through use of Step-by-Steps or 2 x BIGmacks). The children no longer just hit the button - they wait until the message or song is complete. It has been fun and staff have started to tune into augmentative communication much more, too (even some resistant ones)!
40. We've used the BIGmack during a language class at school (in the self-contained classroom). The BIGmack can be used to say their name, or the weather, or what is on the lunch menu for the day, etc.
41. I just started to use the BIGmack this year with my preschool class. I am sure my idea is not original, but I have been using the BIGmack when a child wants to request more swinging. We have a hook in our classroom so we can use a variety of swings. My guys have become pretty smart, they figured out that they can use their foot to reach out and push the button and don't have to get off the swing. Boy are they lazy!
42. Use it to have the child tell you to turn the page
43. Play tag (Used with a child in a wheelchair - wheeled her around - when we got up to the person she pressed it to say, "you're it", then we ran away.)
44. Tell jokes. (Programmed in a joke and then had the person tell it to different staff.)
45. Use the switch component for environmental control - turn on Christmas lights and say "Merry Christmas" at the same time, or turn on a lighted make-up mirror.
46. Introduce a song title at the Christmas Program
47. Ask another student to dance
48. Turn on an air popcorn popper
49. Turn on a blender
50. I use the BIGmack for just about all of Wetherby & Prizant's Communication Temptations i.e. to request "more" when a wind up toy stops, to request "open" after I have eaten an M&M in front of the child and have tightly closed the container without offering any to the child, etc.

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51. I did not use a BIGmack, but a different switch activated device (two-part communicator) for this activity. A BIGmack would have worked if we had one. A "kindergartner" uses the switch to recite his line in a Thanksgiving play. We wanted him to have a part like all the other children so we practised and recorded his line with the visual support of the Mayer-Johnson picture symbols that he is using quite regularly.
52. Idea: Have students announce activities as they occur in class. "Everybody line up", "snack time", "storytime", etc.
53. "I need to go out", BIGmack left on the floor by your door so the dogs can announce and not have a house breaking accident.
54. "I'm sorry that person is not available and none of us want to buy any thing you are selling" - message on a BIGmack that you can hit every time you get a telesales call
55. Large plate switch attached to a BIGmack. Switch left on seat of car. Remind significant other of what they need to pick up on the way home.
56. Record different tones on 4 different colour BIGmacks and play a game of Simon Says
57. At home, share information about upcoming events, the day`s activities or a special experience.
58. Give steps to an activity such as telling a recipe
59. Program songs, or segments of songs such as "Happy Birthday" or a special holiday song
60. Program emergency information for the user to communicate over the phone to emergency services dispatchers
61. Call the family pet
62. At school record short stories, parts of stories or key words/phrases to share at story time
63. Help conduct a spelling test or give maths problems to classmates
64. Students independently say "Here!" when attendance is taken
65. Deliver the morning announcements
66. Direct students in the lunchroom and on the playground
67. Help to solicit participation in the school fundraising activities
68. Recite lines in the school play or program
69. Give a report in a group presentation
70. At leisure announce basketball players as they run out onto the court
71. Name a classmate to take a turn
72. Participate in a political campaign "Vote for..."
73. Cheer for a favourite player at a sporting event
74. Become the "caller" at a square dance
75. Select and order food at a favourite restaurant
76. Give clues during a scavenger hunt
77. At work, greet customers at a department or grocery store
78. Deliver messages to co-worker

101+ Ideas for Using the BIGmack or Other Single Message Communication Devices

79. Inform customers about the in-store specials
80. Request more work
81. Initiate a conversation with friends and family
82. Program the daily schedule into user`s device, when one activity finished, the user can activate a sequential device to find out what to do next
83. Signal for attention
84. Give directions to care givers
85. During opening "circle time" (e.g. the child activates a message to sing his or her part in the greeting song)
86. At transition times (e.g. the child activates a recording of someone singing the cleanup song or of a voice saying, "Time to clean up!")
87. Whenever a request for continuation or turn taking is appropriate (e.g. the child plays a recording that says, "More please" or "My turn")
88. Any time the schedule dictates that a specific activity take place (e.g. in the morning the child plays a recording that says, "Take my coat off, please")
89. During any activity that requires a leader to announce movements to be performed by the other children (e.g. "Put your right foot in, put your right foot out," "Simon says clap your hands")
90. Any time an interjection during an activity is appropriate (e.g., "Wowee!" "Cool!")
91. Cheering (or booing) a favourite sports team on television or in person
92. Converse on the telephone by activating a single message - a nice way for beginning communicators to keep in touch with friends and relatives
93. Greeting (e.g., "Hi, how are you today?") or saying farewell (e.g., "Good-bye", "Good to see you," "Let`s get together soon")
94. Making single requests in predictable situations (e.g., "I`d like a cheeseburger and small fries, please")
95. Initiating conversations or introducing topic (e.g. "So, how was your weekend?")
96. Making introductions (e.g. "Hi, my name is George what`s yours?")
97. Ask a friend to play
98. Ask for help
99. Ask questions (What`s your name? What time is it? When can I play with it?)
100. Ask to do it again
101. Ask to read it again
102. Ask "what do you want to eat/drink?" at snack time
103. Call for an appointment
104. Comment on own new haircut, shirt, glasses, etc.
105. Draw attention (Look what I did)
106. For emergency message by telephone

101+ Ideas for Using the BIGmack or Other Single Message Communication Devices

107. Give directions such as "stir" in cooking class
108. Give directives (Show me how to do that)
109. Indicate the need for more work
110. Indicate weather and what to wear out to play
111. Indicate what is next on the daily schedule
112. Introduce family or friends
113. Issue invitation to a party, or to go out or for a visit
114. Make funny noises or sound effects during a story
115. Make interjections or funny noises in a song
116. Order a pizza over the phone
117. Personal information (name, address, phone number) to be carried with person
118. Say a Bible verse in Sunday School
119. Say grace
120. Say poems and rhymes
121. Select a story, video or game
122. Send a message home
123. Send a message to school or work
124. Share a secret with a friend
125. Share menu for lunch
126. Share the outcome of a game
127. Start a conversation (What did you do this weekend? What did you think of the game?). With a Step-by-Step you could have appropriate small talk for listening to the answer e.g. Really? Yeah? Oh!
128. Take a survey
129. Tease others
130. Tell about their Show and Tell item
131. Tell something about themselves (favourite TV show, colour, story, activity, etc.)
132. Tell what age at lunch, dinner, on outing, or at party.
133. Use exclamations or interjections (Yeah, uh, oh, You're silly)
134. Use for farewells (See you later. Have a good day.)
135. Use for greetings (How are you doing? You look great today.)
136. When switch connected to select item, say what the item is or make comment.