

## **Introduction**

The BIGMack is a single message voice output communication device enabling up to twenty seconds of sound to be recorded and replayed at the press of a switch. Its simplicity of design, durability and ease of access enable it to be an effective resource for the development of communication within a wide range of contexts.

To store/replay a message:

- Press the 'record' button and record the message in the microphone on the base of the device
- Replay the message by pressing the top of the BIGMack or by connecting a separate switch to the base

It also has the facility to connect a cable to simultaneously operate a battery-adapted device. Successful communication enables individuals to have control. However, the individual must have a method of communication and an environment that is conducive to the activity.

The BIGMack:

- Assists an individual to communicate a message
- Provides motivation

Other examples of simple voice output communication devices include:

- One-Step Communicator (same features as the BIGMack)
- Talking Buddy
- Chipper
- Sequencer
- Dec Aid

The length of the recording time for each message is significantly shorter and the access methods more complex by nature of the number of messages available. However, many of the following can be adapted for use with these devices.

## **Cause and Effect**

To encourage an individual to develop an awareness of the environment the BIGMack can be a particularly effective resource. The following messages offer the individual the opportunity to control others - a very motivating activity!!!! This can then be extended to encourage the individual to make choices by selecting to whom the instruction should be directed.

- Tickle me
- Blow a raspberry
- Pull a funny face
- Jump up and down

This can be incorporated into a group activity whereby individuals are:

- Controlling their peers
- Introducing switches to enable environmental control

The motivation to control another person is far greater than any distraction a switch may cause, encouraging them to become aware of the potential of a switch as a method of access.

Other activities encouraging understanding of cause and effect using the BIGMack include attaching it via the cable connection to a battery operated toy e.g. car, doll or animal and inserting a message such as:

- Neenahneenah
- I'm going to walk off the table
- Roarrrrr
- Knock the bricks down

Alternatively, it can be connected to a mains control unit with a fan, foot spa or food mixer and incorporating messages such as:

- I'm hot – cool me down
- Wash my feet
- FEED ME!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

## Reporting Messages

The BIGMack has proved to be a useful home/school diary where general messages can be delivered and relayed such as:

- "Last night I went to see my Grandma" / "I need to remember my swimming costume for tomorrow"
- "It's wet play today" / "Can I have the register please"

Significant school events such as the Nativity or Sports Day can involve the BIGMack user with messages such as:

- There's no room at the inn
- Ready, Steady, Go
- Hurry up
- Boo
- Come on you reds

By developing the peer group control idea, the BIGMack can be used to involve individuals in games such as:

- "Simon says...."
- 'Hide and seek'
- 'What's the time, Mr Wolf?'

## Turn Taking

As a way of involving pupils in reading or singing, the BIGMack can be used with a repeated story line or line from a song encouraging such skills as anticipating, turn taking, reaction timing. It is also easy to modify books, which do not have a repeated line by simply making one up that fits!!

This could be extended to incorporate sound effects to stories or plays, such as animal sounds or eerie noises at the appropriate point and used as a round-robin activity.

- Group activities, such as the register being taken can allow for a number of BIGMack users to be involved in appropriate turn taking activities – “Good morning Mrs Rourke”
- Several users could have different answers stored in the BIGMacks and answer appropriately to a range of questions:
  - Yes/No
  - It's got two/four legs
  - It feels hot/cold
- Several BIGMack users could take part in a memory game each recounting their own phrase in turn or their animal noise in the song "Old MacDonald had a farm"
  - With a oink oink here and a oink oink there

Consideration should be given to the location of the repeated phrase within the sentence. It is far easier for an individual to anticipate selecting the message when it is expected at the end of the sentence, as the reader can give the auditory and visual cues. Initiating a message is more difficult, and incorporating a message in the middle of a sentence is harder still.

## Personal Messages

- The BIGMack user can contribute to assemblies by recounting a significant achievement for that week
  - I walked three steps all by myself
  - I painted this picture with sponges in class today

The BIGMack can be used to:

- Encourage decision making by individuals
- Offer the opportunity to get someone's attention in a more appropriate way
- Employ an alternative method of communicating to get a message to another person
  - I would like some more dinner please
  - Would you change my position - I feel a bit uncomfortable
  - Can I have some help please, Mummy, Daddy

The BIGMack is:

- Extremely versatile as it is so easy to record in new messages which can be updated throughout the day
- It can be mounted on a universal switch mounting system or activated by a positioned switch
- It allows access via the easiest, most reliable voluntary movement

BIGMacks, One Step Communicators and Battery Device Adapters are available from a number of suppliers including Liberator, Inclusive Technology and SEMERC/Granada Learning.