



Social Security (Tables for the Assessment of Work-related Impairment for Disability Support Pension) Determination 2011

Table 8 – Communication Function

Introduction to Table 8

- Table 8 is to be used where the person has a permanent condition resulting in functional impairment affecting communication functions.
- The diagnosis of the condition must be made by an appropriately qualified medical practitioner.
- The person must be assessed on their independent communication abilities using any aids or equipment (assistive technology) that they have and usually use and without physical assistance from a support person.
- Self-report of symptoms alone is insufficient.
- There must be corroborating evidence of the person’s impairment.
- Examples of corroborating evidence for the purposes of this Table include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - a report from the person’s treating doctor;
 - a specialist assessment by a speech pathologist, neurologist or psychologist;
 - a report from a medical specialist confirming diagnosis of conditions associated with communication impairment (e.g. stroke (cerebrovascular accident (CVA)), other acquired brain injury, cerebral palsy, neurodegenerative conditions, damage to the speech-related structures of the mouth, vocal cords or larynx);
 - results of diagnostic tests (e.g. X-Rays or other imagery);
 - results of functional assessments.
- If the person uses recognised sign language or other non-verbal communication method as a result of hearing loss only, the person’s hearing and communication function should be assessed using Table 11.
- If the impairment affecting communication function is due to impairment in intellectual function, only Table 9 must be used.
- In this Table, **main language** means the language that the person most commonly uses.
- In this Table, **communication** or **communication functions** means receptive communication (understanding language) or expressive communication (producing speech).

Points	Descriptors
0	<p><i>There is no functional impact on communication in the person’s main language.</i></p> <p>(1) The person’s speech is usually understood by those who speak the same language and allows for meaningful conversation.</p>

5	<p><i>There is a mild functional impact on communication in the person's main language.</i></p> <p>(1) At least one of the following applies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the person has some difficulty understanding complex words and long sentences (e.g. a complex newspaper article); or (b) the person has mild difficulty in producing speech and has minor difficulty with being understood due to speech production or content.
10	<p><i>There is a moderate functional impact on communication in the person's main language.</i></p> <p>(1) At least one of the following applies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the person; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) has some difficulty understanding day to day language, particularly where a sentence or instruction includes multiple steps or concepts (e.g. 'Please take this book out to Jane at the front desk and ask her to give you some paper clips and bring them back in here'); or (ii) may need instructions repeated or broken down into shorter sentences; or (b) the person has moderate difficulty in producing speech (e.g. a stutter or stammer), difficulty coordinating speech movements or damage to speech structures (e.g. vocal cords, larynx) which makes speech effortful, slow or sometimes difficult for strangers to understand; or (c) the person uses alternative or augmentative communication (e.g. sign language, technology that produces electronic speech, use of symbols to communicate) and is unable to speak clearly and may be partially reliant on a recognised sign language (e.g. Auslan or signed English) or other non-verbal communication methods.

*There is a **severe** functional impact on communication in the person's main language.*

- (1) Either:
- (a) the person has severe difficulty understanding day to day language in unfamiliar environments or relating to non-routine tasks, even where a sentence or instruction includes only a single step (e.g. 'put the book next to the pencils') and needs instructions repeated or gestures or physical demonstration in order to understand; or
 - (b) at least one of the following applies:
 - (i) the person has severe difficulty in producing speech (e.g. a severe stutter or stammer), difficulty coordinating speech movements or damage to speech structures (e.g. vocal cords, larynx) which makes speech very effortful or very slow;
 - (ii) the person's speech is difficult for strangers to understand;
 - (iii) the person uses a limited vocabulary of words in speech (e.g. fewer than 50 words);
 - (iv) the person's speech is clear but is not used appropriately, (e.g. has frequent echolalia - compulsively repeats words or what the other person says), frequently swears or uses abusive language as a result of a condition (e.g. Tourette's syndrome) and is unable to sustain a normal conversation for even a few minutes; or
- (2) The person uses alternative or augmentative communication (e.g. sign language, technology that produces electronic speech, use of symbols to communicate, use of a note taker to assist in communication); and
- (a) the person is unable to speak clearly and is completely reliant on a recognised sign language (e.g. Auslan or signed English); or
 - (b) the person needs to use an electronic communication device to communicate with others in places such as shops, workplace, education or training facility and is unable to be understood without this device; or
 - (c) the person is unable to speak and uses handwriting or typing to communicate; or
 - (d) the person is unable to speak and uses the assistance of a note taker to communicate.

*There is **extreme** functional impact on communication in the person's main language.*

- (1) Either:
 - (a) the person:
 - (i) has extreme difficulty understanding even simple day to day language in familiar environments; or
 - (ii) may understand only a few single words or simple phrases that are used on a regular basis (e.g. 'drink', 'toilet', 'bed-time', 'go in the car'); or
 - (iii) needs additional gestures, pictures, symbols or physical demonstration in order to understand what is said; or
 - (b) at least one of the following applies;
 - (i) the person has extreme difficulty in producing any clear speech or is unable to speak at all;
 - (ii) the person's speech is difficult to understand even for family members and others who have regular contact with the person;
 - (iii) the person uses a limited vocabulary of words in speech (e.g. fewer than 20 words);
 - (iv) the person is only able to indicate yes or no, pleasure or displeasure through facial expressions, head movements or hand or body gestures; or
- (2) The person uses alternative or augmentative communication (e.g. sign language, technology that produces electronic speech, use of symbols to communicate, use of a note taker to communicate); and
 - (a) the person uses a limited number of symbols (e.g. Compics) or pictures or photos to communicate basic needs and feelings; or
 - (b) the person needs to use an electronic communication device to communicate with others but has difficulty using this and is very slow in preparing communications; or
 - (c) the person is unable to speak or use an electronic communication device and uses a note taker to communicate with others.