



### ECI Scoring Definitions

Coding procedures are designed to record communicative behavior as it occurs during the Early Communication Indicator (ECI) assessment. Coding of these specific key element behaviors includes Gestures (**G**), Vocalization (**V**), Single-Word Utterance (**W**), and Multiple-Word Utterances (**M**). When coding, the child does not have to demonstrate a clear communicative intent, although the behaviors coded typically serve a communicative function. However, the behavior must meet the specific observable criteria in the definitions.

"Partner" in these definitions refers to the person playing with the child while they administer the ECI assessment.

"Utterance" refers to a communication episode. An utterance may include a gesture, vocalization, single- or multiple-words or some combination of those elements. Utterances are separated by a pause or breath.

When coding, recorders should differentiate between engagement and communication. Engagement occurs when a child is interested in the materials and or events. Communication occurs when the child attempts to convey a message to the adult partner. Children may be very engaged with the materials and toys, but not communicating with the adult partner; these behaviors should not be coded as communication (e.g., the child reaches into the house to move a figure from one room to another, the child puts an animal figure on top of the blocks).

Children may communicate about events or persons outside the assessment situation, for example, a person comes into the room and the child comments about the person and points to him/her. These communication events should also be recorded.

Each communication utterance is marked with a tally in the appropriate cell on the coding form. Coding is separated for each minute. To account for the greater complexity of skill involved in using single- and multiple-words, utterances with single- and multiple words are weighted before being added to make a total weighted communication score. Each single-word utterance is given a weight of two (each tally is multiplied by two); each multiple-word utterance is given a weight of three (each tally is multiplied by three). If the child data are entered into the website's ECI Recording Sheet, these calculations will be made automatically.

**Definitions of Key Elements of Communication**

**Gesture (G)**

Gesture is a physical movement made by the child in an attempt to communicate with the partner.

An episode ends when there is a clear and distinct change in child's movement.

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| <p><b>Includes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• giving or showing object</li> <li>• pushing away or rejecting an object</li> <li>• reaching toward a partner or object the partner is holding</li> <li>• pointing toward an object or person</li> <li>• nodding or shaking head to indicate "yes" or "no", shrugging shoulders</li> <li>• gestures made in conjunction with vocalizations, single- or multiple-words</li> </ul> | <p><b>Excludes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reaching for toys the partner is not holding or is only holding to stabilize it</li> <li>• moving toys in a way that does not involve interaction with the partner</li> <li>• physical movements that appear to be coincidental</li> <li>• physical movement showing excitement or pleasure that is not in direct communication with the partner, e.g., waving arms</li> </ul> |
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**Vocalization (V)**

Vocalization is a non-word or unintelligible verbal utterance voiced by the child to a partner. Utterances that are coded as vocalizations are those that cannot be understood as single- or multiple words. When vocalizations co-occur in utterances where single- or multiple-words are understood, the vocalization(s) should not be recorded. Vocalizations are only recorded when they occur in an utterance consisting only of vocalizations, or gestures and vocalizations.

An utterance ends when there has been a clear break of at least one second without vocalizations (count to yourself: "one thousand one") or a breath.

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| <p><b>Includes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• laughing out loud</li> <li>• animal sounds, e.g., "moo," when looking at a cow</li> <li>• transportation/motor sounds, e.g., "vroom," when pushing a tractor</li> <li>• sounds such as "ah," "da," "eee," etc.</li> <li>• vocalizations that serve as fillers, such as "mm," or "huh"</li> </ul> | <p><b>Excludes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• crying</li> <li>• involuntary noises, e.g., hiccups</li> <li>• if a given utterance includes a recognizable word or word combinations, the utterance should be coded as a W or M</li> </ul> |
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**Single-Word Utterance (W)**

A single-word utterance is a single word voiced by the child that is understood. Each single word utterance is given a weight of 2 (each tally is multiplied by two). This calculation is done automatically through the website as child assessment data are entered into website. Otherwise, you will need to do the calculations on the coding form.

| Includes:   | Excludes:  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• continuous sequential repetition, e.g., "go, go, go" (code only one)</li> <li>• compound words, e.g., "mailbox," "necklace" (code only one)</li> <li>• ritualized duplications, e.g., "bye-bye," "uh-oh," "night-night" (code only one)</li> <li>• two part proper names, e.g., Big Bird, Mary Jane</li> <li>• sequentially describing or naming objects, e.g., "block, red, blue, girl" (tally for each word)</li> <li>• standard sign language, code as appropriate for single words</li> <li>• an utterance in which only one word is understandable</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• vocalizations that serve as fillers, such as "oh," "mm," or "huh"</li> <li>• sentences or a phrase combining different understandable words (code as M)</li> <li>• utterance in which no words are understood (code as V)</li> <li>• utterance in which 2 or more words are understood (code as M)</li> </ul> |

**Multiple-Word Utterance (M)**

A multiple-word utterance is a combination of two or more different words voiced by the child that are understood. In this case, an utterance consists of a sentence or multiple words that go together.

Do not separate "false start" or stuttering into another utterance (code as one). False starts are when a child starts to say something, but before finishing the sentence or thought, changes wording to another sentence. E.g., "I think this is . . . this looks like a dog." Code this as one multiple-word utterance.

Each multiple-word utterance is given a weight of 3 (each one is multiplied by three). This is done automatically through the website if child data are entered into the website. Otherwise, calculations should be made on the coding form.

| Includes:  | Excludes:  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• words should fit together in a meaningful way that approximates a phrase or sentence, e.g., big truck</li> <li>• does not need to be grammatically correct, e.g., "me go to store"</li> <li>• does not need to have adult meaning, "cow rides tractor"</li> <li>• standard sign language, code as appropriate for multiple-word utterances</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• unless coder can state exactly what child said, code as V</li> <li>• if no words are understood then code as V</li> <li>• utterance in which only one word is understood (code as W)</li> <li>• utterance in which no words are understood (code as V)</li> </ul> |