

# Personal Communication Passports, Photo Story Apps, and Visual Scenes

## Apps for iPad, iPod Touch , and iPhone

This paper covers a few key Apps. New Apps will no doubt keep coming out, keep checking the CALLApps site to see our favourites: <http://www.callscotland.org.uk/Resources/Apps/>

'Photo Story' is the terminology used in the very useful [AppsforAAC](http://www.appsforaac.net/) resource, see <http://www.appsforaac.net/>), although a more accurate term might be 'Visual Story'. That is, any App that provides a framework allowing you to build any kind of personalised 'story', supported by pictures. That means something that allows you to:

- edit and customise to suit
- insert personalised images of any sort (including photos - but not just photos – also, potentially symbols , cartoons, whatever)
- insert text of variable length
- have the option of speaking the story out loud

Particularly interesting are stories that, when played back, can support people with communication support needs. That could cover a whole range of things, including:

- Personal Communication Passport
- Social Stories
- Conversation Prompt book
- Personal Learning Plan and/or Record of Achievement
- All About Me book (for transitions)
- Talking Photo Album

The pages of picture story books can also be used as steps in a schedule, either proactively or as a sequence of instructions for carrying out a task of any sort. They can be used as part of a language program to teach narrative skills.

*But what we are NOT talking about, is a full scale communication book or a sign dictionary (you'd be better with an App that plays videos of signs - although you COULD take photos of people making a sign, which would be good for idiosyncratic signs and arguably slightly better than a line drawing?)*

## **CALL SCOTLAND COMMUNICATION PASSPORTS APP**

**AVAILABLE SOON – 2011**

**If you wish to be notified of the release of the CALL Passports App, please sign up on the website <http://www.communicationpassports.org.uk/App/>**

The CALL Scotland Passports App is coming soon! It should be a practical way to draft, alter or update a Passport quickly (especially in the latest devices, which incorporate a camera) - even 'on the hoof' while sitting in a meeting or home visit. It is a practical way of making sure that a copy of the Passport is available even when the person is out of their usual base, in unexpected circumstances. Equally, for social stories, it can be used when you are 'out and about' with a service user, to prepare them for new places or situations.

Pricing is not yet set. The CALL App is likely to be cheaper than most of the other Apps described below.

The CALL Passport App is designed to be as easy as possible to use. It is simple and does not include a lot of features (but if you spot something it really needs, please tell us and we will try to add / fix it). It runs in either landscape or portrait orientation, but is best in portrait (to allow for plenty text, without the need for scrolling). You can



The Passport is presented in the form of 'Home' page and then an 'index' of pages. New pages can be created, edited and deleted as required, to create a little on-screen Passport 'booklet'. Pages can be 'turned' by tapping the next page arrow or by 'flicking'.

Each page contains its own text, and images, as desired. You can choose from a limited range of page layout templates (1 or two photos, text blocks laid out differently). You can change the background and text colour and size, and add an optional border. You can record in and play back speech (or music etc.).

The first version will NOT support imported sound files, or video, however.



The key difference between the CALL App and the other Apps described below is that the CALL one is specially designed with Passports in mind. Unlike the others, it will be possible to use more than one picture per page, and as much (or as little) text as required. (Only 5 lines allowed altogether, in Pictello.)

Up to 30 different Passports ('Users') can be stored, and it is simple to change User, so a therapist or tutor can easily hold and edit Master copies.

## Other Apps

Other apps are worth highlighting as useful for creating Passport-like materials (though they were not designed with this in mind, specifically). These are all fairly similar in price (under £15) which is still pretty cheap (in spite of recent large price rise!) and simple to use:

- **Pictello**                      **£ 13.49**
- **Stories2Learn**                **£ 9.99**
- **My Pictures Talk**              **£ 2.99**

These are more or less iPad/iPod versions of a Talking Photo Album (or, similar to the Inclusive Technology PC software 'SwitchItMaker'). Basically, you create your own little personalized talking book, for any kind of story, e.g. weekend news, My Holiday, etc.. Typically, photos are typically put into a slideshow - either operated manually or automatically - with audio to go with it. Time will tell which prove most popular.

No doubt more new Apps will come out very soon! Keep an eye on the Passports website and the CALL blog for new arrivals:

[www.communicationpassports.org.uk](http://www.communicationpassports.org.uk)

[www.callscotland.org.uk/Blog/](http://www.callscotland.org.uk/Blog/)

## PICTELLO

Available from [www.iTunes.co.uk](http://www.iTunes.co.uk) (App Store). Cost: £13.49

Latest version, at September 2011, is 1.3 Requires iOS 4.0 or later.

Pictello is available for iPad/iPod touch and for iPhone. It was produced by the developers of Proloquo2Go (BETT 2011 Special Needs winner) which establishes it as having an excellent pedigree. Pictello is way to create talking photo albums and talking books. Children could use it to tell 'News'.



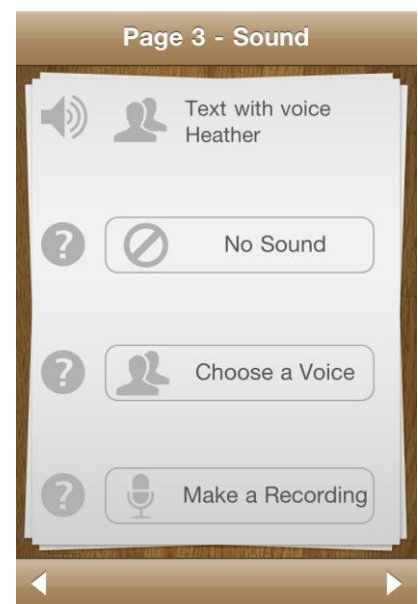
Each page in a Pictello Story can contain a picture, a single line of text at the top as a kind of 'title' and up to four lines of text at the bottom under the picture. Using the Pictello Settings, you can choose an automatic 'Slideshow' (you choose the duration of page display) or to turn the pages yourself, manually using a 'swipe' or 'flick'. There is an easy visual story creation 'Wizard' that steps you through the process, and 'Advanced Editor' that gives full control of all the editing capabilities.

Each page can have speech attached - either a recorded spoken message (or other sound) or a synthetic voice. The current version includes American English male and female voices (child's voice available for free download). You can download British voices free (only through WiFi). In Pictello Settings, you can adjust the speech rate and add unusual pronunciation exceptions.

Once the Pictello App is downloaded to your iPad, you can edit and play stories without needing an active Internet connection. However, once created, Pictello Stories can be shared using iTunes File Sharing or via WiFi with other Pictello users through a free account on the Pictello Sharing Server on the internet. This would be a good way to share important family events with distant family members or friends. It could also, potentially, be very useful for storing, transferring & accessing client information materials if urgently needed, eg. in a transition situation.

Pictello is good because it offers a wide range of settings, while still remaining pretty simple to use. There is good supportive tutorial information available on the AssistiveWare web site <http://www.assistiveware.com/pictello.php> including wee tutorials that you can download and print out, if required.

- [Reading a Pictello Story](#)
- [Create a Story with Pictello Wizard](#)
- [Edit a Story with Pictello Wizard](#)
- [Organize Stories in Pictello](#)
- [Create a Story with Pictello Expert](#)
- [Changing Pictello's Voices](#)
- [Export to Pictello Sharing Server](#)
- [Backup Pictello Library to iTunes](#)
- [Restore Pictello Library from backup on iTunes](#)



## STORIES2LEARN

Available from [www.iTunes.co.uk](http://www.iTunes.co.uk) (App Store). Cost: £9.99 Latest version is 1.1.1 (January 2011) iOS 3.1.2 or later

Stories2Learn can also be used for Passports, Social Stories, and more. Stories2Learn is much more basic than Pictello. It does much the same thing, but with far fewer options and settings.

Text is quite small and no choices of font or backgrounds or colours etc. You can only have a maximum of three lines visible, but it will let you scroll down through an additional two or three lines. All stories are presented in landscape mode. You turn the pages by tapping the back or forward arrow – no option to swipe or set to automatic slide show.



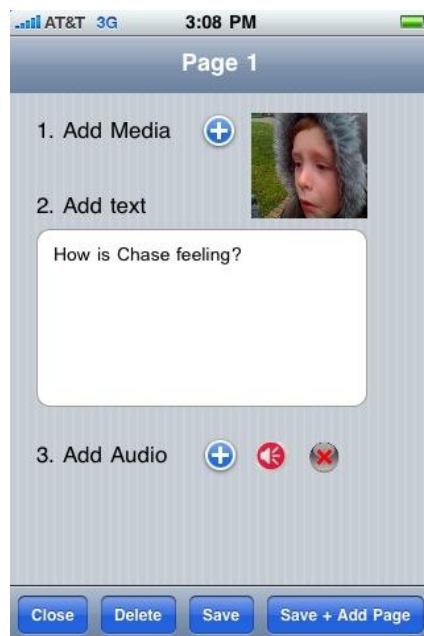
My Stories



Add Stories



Edit Stories



It takes recorded messages only – no option of synthetic speech. This is fine if your device has a built-in microphone, but for older iPods, you will need to attach an external mike (and you need special type of mike for an iPod, not any old mike). To hear the audio, you tap the picture on the page. Even in an iPad with built-in mike, I had problems with just getting basic recordings to work and to 'Preview'.

I also had problems with the 'Save' buttons (no feedback); to be sure you've saved safely (you'll eventually see the button going darker) you often have to tap repeatedly and wait for longer than usual.

This App is a bit clunky in how it adapts between portrait and landscape modes. All editing is done in portrait and all stories are in landscape. Not a huge problem as you can always turn the screen, but just noticeably less slick than some other Apps.

On the plus side, if these basic problems can be overcome – at least for written stories - simple is often good and once you've got the hang of this, it's quick to use.

More information about Stories2Learn can be found at iTunes or at <http://www.look2learn.com/look2learn/Home.html>

There are no tutorials or support materials. There's a nice little video clip showing a young child demonstrating a Social Story made in Stories2Learn, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zRb3GguSRvY>

## My Pictures Talk £2.99

Version 3.2 September 2011 Requires iOS 3.2 or later

This App has a pretty basic design, allowing creation of About Me photo albums, social stories and 'News' stories. It's not a complex storybook framework, but basically just a series of single pages grouped under a title – but page sequences can be used as a kind of story. Pages are turned by flicking left or right.

For users of the latest models of iPod & iPad, it now enables use of video clips as well as photos. The latest version also allows for video 'trimming' and file size scaling. And you can post videos to FaceBook. All this makes this cheap and cheerful little App pretty interesting and good value.

Using iPhone 3GS or iPhone 4, iPod Touch 4th generation or iPad 2, video can be taken on the fly from within the application. Or video can be inserted from the camera roll, or loaded through iTunes syncing. It is possible to email a page or to send it to FaceBook as a status update (haven't tried this yet).

More information in iTunes or from [www.grembe.com](http://www.grembe.com) This developer is worth watching – looks like they may incorporate Symbol Stix symbols in future.

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Finally, there are other Apps that offer variations on the same theme.

## TapSpeak Sequence £20.99 Version 1.5 Requires iOS 4.2 or later

This App is bit dearer. It is designed and set up to operate more or less like a 'Step by Step' communication aid; i.e. you can set up a series of messages linked together one screen after the other, that can be activated in sequence until it loops back round to the beginning again. It is part of a series of Apps (separately priced) that also includes **TapSpeak Button** (a sort of BIGmack on an iPod) and **TapSpeak Choice** (Linked talking symbol communication board App). This, and the ability to import symbol sets (eg. PCS symbols) and – new – Bluetooth switch support, might make it attractive for some users who wish to maintain consistency of interface at a very basic level.

Another feature of the TapSpeak series is the slightly unusual range of access options. Messages can be activated with a touch (no touch release needed) or a tap (touch and release). Taps can be configured to require that a user lift his/her finger off the screen in a specified time but doesn't move the finger more than a specified distance. This is promoted as helping develop valuable motor skills. More information from iTunes or [http://conleysolutions.com/wordpress/?page\\_id=250](http://conleysolutions.com/wordpress/?page_id=250)

**TapSpeak Sequence offers recorded messages only – there is no facility to display written text – which will seriously limit its usefulness for Passports and/or Social Stories**

To see a little video clip of a wee girl using TapSpeak Sequence, see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMHM6e-iJg>



## Use of Visual Scenes for Communication

Scene & Heard £34.99 v. 1.2 iOS 3.2 or later



Scene & Heard seems a promising and quite exciting new App. It was designed by **tboxapps** (a branch of Therapy Box - a UK AAC company specializing in Apple iPod systems) and has only recently re-appeared on the App store having been revised from its first version, reportedly now more stable.

This App will be of interest to parents / families and professionals, for use with a wide range of people, of any age, who have communication support needs. This App may be a bit dearer than some others, but the nature of what it offers seems pretty unique. It includes access to a large number of Widgit symbols.

It is a context-based language/communication tool designed to provide personalised interactive pictures; that is – you can add several actions to each of your photos. Scenes can be stand-alone, or linked in a slideshow, or flip book format. Scene and Heard lets you:

- take or import a photo (can edit and crop photos)
- allocate 'hotspots' on the photo, then add 'Scene Actions' e.g. allocate a Widgit symbol & text, also add recorded audio message or video clip to each hotspot.
- schedule your scene to play at a certain time. For example, if you always go for a snack break at 10 am, the iPad will bring your 'snack scene' and messages up automatically at that time.
- email your scene to somebody else

For more information, see [http://www.therapy-box.co.uk/scene\\_and\\_heard.aspx](http://www.therapy-box.co.uk/scene_and_heard.aspx) where there is an excellent little video that will take you through all of the features and functions of the App. There is also a freely downloadable very comprehensive User Guide there.

The user can use interactive visual scenes in various ways, bridging the gap between stories and communication aids. For example:

- as a kind of social story – to go through what he/she is expecting to see/hear/do, and rehearse behaviours or activities/ replay familiar scenes in order to calm anxiety etc.
- To record and store favourite pics and information (to retell as News, or a story or simply to rehearse and repeat the language)
- To communicate new information to others

Visual scenes, which are meaning-based may be more accessible and more effective than the more conventional 'topic-based' grid layout for very young children or for developmentally young / more severely cognitively impaired users (and also perhaps for adults with complex language impairments (eg stroke)). This is because it reflects the order in which young children acquire language, and also places a lower cognitive load on the user (a familiar concrete scene is easier for the user to connect with than an abstract list of similar words).