



# AAC: Augmentative and Alternative Communication

## What is AAC?

- AAC is an acronym for Augmentative and Alternative Communication.
- It is any method other than speech that provides supplemental and/or alternate modes of communication.

## What types of AAC are there?

- No-tech: does not require external tools (e.g., ASL, gestures, etc.)
- Low-tech: tools do not require batteries (e.g., picture exchange, communication board)
- Mid-tech: tools require batteries; communication output is limited (e.g., GoTalk, BIGmack)
- High-tech: known as speech-generating devices; tools require batteries and offer larger, robust vocabulary (e.g., TouchTalk, LAMP, Proloquo2Go)

## Who should use AAC?

- Anyone who is unable to produce speech.
- Anyone who has a difficult time being understood verbally.
- Anyone who needs a temporary or permanent means of communication that is not verbal.

## Who should I consider AAC?

- Everyone should be given a chance to communicate by any means possible.
- Not having the ability to communicate verbally does not mean there is a lack of desire to communicate.
- Use of AAC has shown to promote speech development.
- Use of AAC has shown to promote the development of language overall, including literacy.

## Who can I get an AAC tool?

- No-tech options such as ASL can be learned through YouTube videos and online/in-person courses.
- Low-tech options can be downloaded from websites, purchased, or created.
- Mid-tech options are available for purchase from manufacturing companies.
- High-tech options are available for purchase from manufacturing companies.
- For insurance approval/funding, a trial or SETT process is typically required. Speech therapists should be consulted for AAC trials and implementation.

## How do I help someone learn to use AAC?

- Familiarize yourself and all team members with the AAC method and model language with it. Have family and friends model to promote use.
- Make the tool/device available at all times (e.g., eating, dressing, playing).
- Focus on core words (i.e., the approximately 200 words most often used - see this link) when modeling and when eliciting communication.
- Use prompting hierarchy to help the individual become proficient (e.g., full physical assistance, expectant pause).
- Provide frequent opportunities (e.g., requesting, answering questions) daily to practice using the AAC tool/device.
- Use wait time. Wait longer than you feel you should in order to allow independent communication.
- Praise all communication attempts.