



Types of AAC

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) refers to other methods of communication people may use when they have difficulty speaking. These methods may supplement what speech they do use or or may become the primary form of communication in the absence of speech.

There are many different types of AAC. There are unaided methods which do not require any additional items or equipment such as facial expressions, gestures and signing. Aided communication does require additional items and can be divided again into low technology (no batteries/power required) and high technology.

UNAIDED AAC

Body movements, facial expressions and gestures

Body movements and facial expressions include frowning, smiling and simple actions such as reaching. Gestures include natural actions such as waving, shaking hands, and pointing. Gestures are interpreted differently according to the situation in which they are used. For example, waving may be interpreted to mean 'hi' or 'bye' or may be used to gain someone's attention.

A communication passport can be a really useful way of recording and sharing this information when a child uses a lot of this type of communication. See the *Find Out More* box at the end of this information sheet for more information about communication passports.

Signs

Key Word Sign (formerly known as Makaton) is a widely used system that promotes communication. It uses manual

signs (i.e. your hands) with speech. Key Word Sign uses signs for just the key words in sentences to convey meaning. For example, in the sentence "I feel hungry" only the words *I* and *hungry* would be signed.

Key Word Sign is not a language like Auslan - which is the language of the Australian Deaf Community. Auslan is a whole different language with its own grammar rules. Key Word Sign uses Auslan signs but with speech and follows spoken English grammar. Key word signs may help adults and children who need more than speech to communicate – by making it easier to express themselves and be understood by others, by supporting their understanding of what others say to them, and by helping to develop their own communication skills.

"The AAC devices and strategies are a tool, a means to an end – language and communication skills – not the end." (*Romski, 2005, pg. 182*)



Please **wait** while I get you some **more** paper.

AIDED AAC

Objects / Object Symbols

Objects are usually used to support a child's understanding and in choice-making. For example, the teacher says "Now it is storytime." whilst holding up a book, or a caregiver holds up the juice bottle and a tin of milo and asks "What do you want?" the child can then indicate by pointing or looking at the one they want. This allows all children to make choices and have some control in their lives whatever their communication level

Object Symbols are items used to represent larger objects, events or activities. For example, keys can be used to indicate that it is time to go in the car or a small piece of towel may represent going swimming. They are predominantly used with children with sensory impairments.

Photographs

Photographs can be used to represent objects and activities and are usually used in a similar way as objects/object symbols. They are less 'real' than objects, but not as abstract as picture symbols.

Picture symbol boards and books

A communication board is a single sheet that contains the picture symbols of the everyday language the child needs or it may contain language specific to an activity (such as cooking or bathtime). A communication book is a way of organising more vocabulary for a person who uses AAC. Vocabulary can be organised in different ways, but there is generally an index page at the beginning of the

book and tabs on the edges of the pages, so the owner of the communication book and his listener can quickly move to other topics/pages.

Communication Devices

Communication devices (also known as voice output communication aids [VOCAs] or speech-generating devices [SGDs]) are items of equipment that generate spoken words using synthesised speech (artificial voice) or digitised speech (recorded human voice). There are a range of different communication devices of varying complexity and they change constantly as technology advances. Information sheet 3.1 has more detail about communication devices.

All types of AAC should be valued.

Ideally children will use a range of these AAC methods to mirror the diverse ways in which we all communicate. The use of multiple communication methods is vastly more effective than the use of a single method and ensures the child communicates successfully with all people in all environments.

For example, a child may have a communication device, but will also have a communication book for when the device breaks down or when in positions that make it difficult to access her device (eg. lying in bed). Furthermore, a child who can successfully use her eye gaze to indicate she wants a drink should not then be forced to use her aided AAC system to request drinks.









References

Romski, M. (2005). Augmentative communication and early intervention: Myths and realities. *Infants and Young Children, 18* (3), 174-185.

FIND OUT MORE

Types of AAC... http://www.novita.org.au/library/Factsheet-AAC_types.pdf

Communication passports...

http://www.communicationpassports.org.uk/Home/ http://www.scope.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdfs/Communication/

Scope communication passport.pdf

Signing...

http://www.newcastle.edu.au/research-centre/special-education/key-word-sign-australia/ http://www.bilby.net/Sign/AboutSignLanguage.asp

Object symbols...

http://www.northcottcats.com.au/tutorials/pdfs/communication_ideas/nontechnology_ideas/object_symbols.pdf http://www.ace-centre.org.uk/index.cfm?pageid=3CDC028A-3048-7290-

FE7DEA7A0060EF46

Communication boards and books...

http://www.scope.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdfs/Communication/

Scope_AAC3_nuts_and_bolts.pdf

Chat-Now (CD and Manual) from Scope Victoria (2007)

Developing and Using a Communication Book by Clare Latham (2005)

ACE Centre Advisory Trust—Oxford UK

Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD) Communication Books: Direct Access Templates CD Resource by Gayle Porter (2007)

Cerebral Palsy Education Centre - Melbourne, Australia

Communication devices... See Section 3.

This handout is part of an information package, funded by a NGCS grant, to assist local teams in supporting children who require augmentative and alternative communication - particularly communication devices. Augmentative and alternative communication, or AAC, refers to other methods of communication people may use when they have difficulty speaking. These methods may supplement what speech they do use or may become the primary form of communication in the absence of speech.

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