

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

What is AAC?


Augmentative when used to supplement existing speech and
Alternative when used in place of speech that is absent or not functional.

Who could benefit from AAC?

Any individual whose gestural, speech and/or written communication is temporarily or permanently unable to meet all of their communication needs.

Example of AAC in use: Timmy uses gestures (e.g. *giving* his cup to request milk) and word approximations (e.g. 'o' for open). He relies on teachers and his parents to interpret his body movements and anticipate his needs. Because Timmy does communicate that he wants more to drink by bringing his empty cup to adults when he wants more, Timmy's speech-language pathologist (SLP) began teaching him to use picture symbols such as, a picture of his favorite drink "milk" to request it throughout the day.

What does AAC look

No-tech	Low-Tech	High-Tech
Gestures Signs Body Language	Pictures Objects Photos Writing 	Speech Generating device AAC software that enables dynamic symbol/language representation

How can I help my child learn to use AAC?

Speak with your child's Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) regarding the appropriate next steps. If needed, here are some talking points to think about:

My child is unable to communicate a specific need/want during the day. They may at times use a challenging behavior to get this need met.

- Share information about how and why the child is communicating during daily routines.
- Describe interventions that have been used and share information about the effectiveness.

My child rarely initiates communication and/or is unable to respond to communication attempts by me or their peers throughout the day.

- Help the SLP identify items/activities your child really enjoys
- Create a plan with the SLP to teach your child to request the item/activity by using AAC

My child uses verbal speech, but is frequently unintelligible and/or becomes frustrated. We need something to help us repair communication breakdowns, but I do not want him to stop using verbal speech.

- Discuss all of your concerns with the SLP and learn about the positive impact of AAC on verbal speech.
- Develop a plan with the SLP that will help the child learn to use AAC to augment his verbal speech.

There are many reasons why a child may not initiate and/or respond to communication attempts throughout the day such as; their first language being other than English, they may not know how to respond or want to respond. Speak to your child's SLP, teacher and/or IEP team members to determine if AAC is an appropriate next step for your child.

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2018). *Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)*. Available from www.asha.org

