

Skill Building Tutorial

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)



True or False

- **True or false:** If a child uses AAC, they will not learn to talk
- **True or false:** Individuals must have a certain set of skills to benefit from AAC
- **True or false:** Individuals must be a certain chronological age to benefit from AAC
- **True or false:** Challenging behavior will never be improved when an individual is provided with an AAC system
- **True or false:** For an individual to have communication competence, instruction in expression of needs and wants is not enough
- **True or false:** AAC should not be a last resort in communication intervention



What is Communication and what is AAC?

Communication

- “any act by which one person gives to or receives from another person information about that person’s needs, desires, perceptions, knowledge, or affective states” (National Joint Committee)

AAC

- An approach that uses manual signs, communication boards with symbols, and computerized devices that speak and incorporate the individual’s full communication abilities.



What does AAC provide?

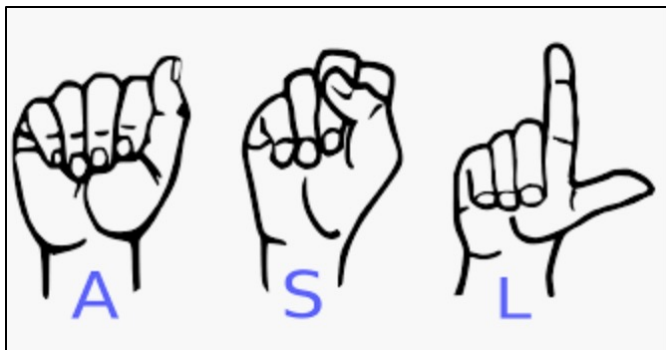
- The role(s) an AAC system plays will vary depending on an individual's needs.
- These roles may include:
 - augmenting existing natural speech,
 - providing a primary output mode for communication,
 - providing an input and an output mode for language and communication and
 - serving as a language intervention strategy
 - The most common and well-known role is to provide an **output mode for communication.**



General types of AAC

Unaided

- Unaided forms of communication consist of nonverbal means
- Use of body
- Gestures
- Facial expressions
- American Sign Language



Aided

- Use of a tool or equipment that is external to the person
- Communication board with symbols/ pictures
- a computer that “speaks” for its user (also known as a “speech-generating” device) via either synthetically produced speech or recorded natural (digitized) speech.

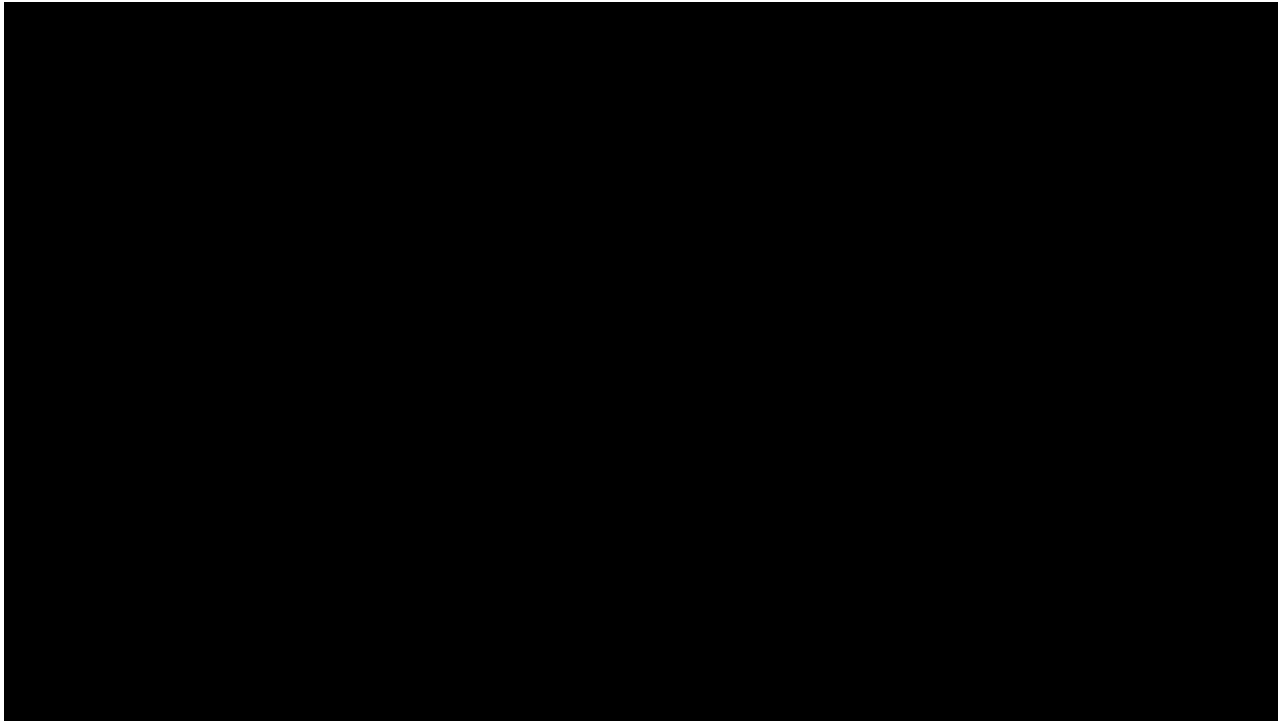
Aided types of AAC

- **Low tech:** Picture cards (PECs)
- **Mid tech:** Electronic, play back digitized human recorded speech (BIGmack)
- **High tech:** Electronic, digitized or synthesized generating speech (Tobii Dynavox)

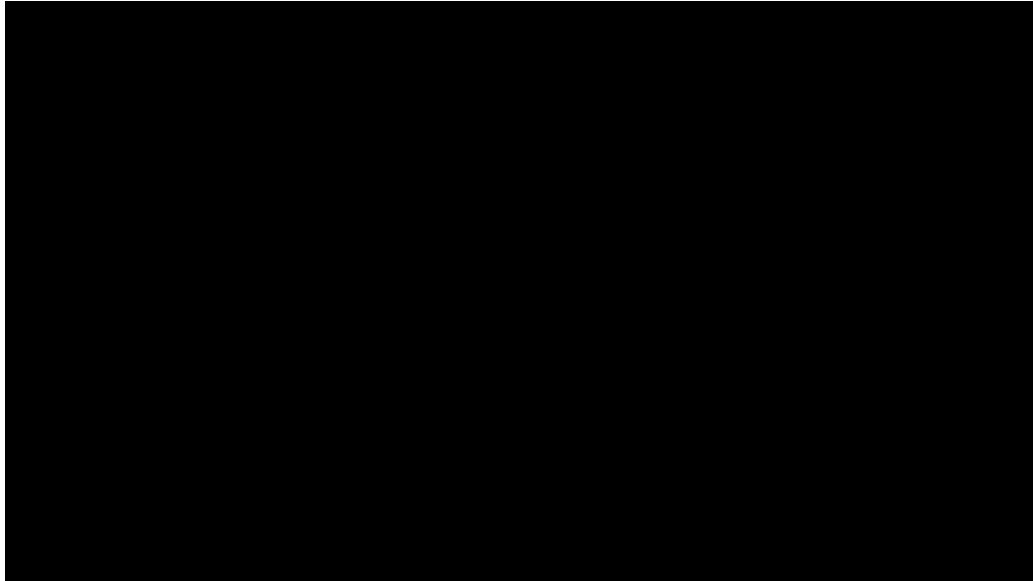


Low Tech AAC

- **Advantages:** Low cost, easy to take with you, durable
- **Disadvantages:** Limited messages, have to get a partner's attention first



Mid Tech AAC



- **Advantages:** Can create "just in time" messages, can include their voice or caregiver's, relatively low cost, recruit attention and social interaction
- **Disadvantages:** Less intelligible, limited memory capacity in device, doesn't allow text to speech



High Tech AAC

Advantages

- Computer-based, can interface with different devices
- “over the counter” AAC (proloquo2go)
- Highly customizable (visual scene vs. grid)
- Email or written output
- Vocabulary storage
- Environmental controls
- Communicate from a distance

Disadvantages

- Highly customizable
- May require sets of skills (discrimination, navigation)
- Cost
- Computer sounding voice



How to decide which mode to use?



- Strengths
- Needs
- Communication partners
- Access issues
- Cost
- Feasibility



Augmentative Communication and Early Intervention Myths and Realities

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Table 1. Myths about AAC use

Myth 1	AAC is a “last resort” in speech-language intervention.
Myth 2	AAC hinders or stops further speech development.
Myth 3	Children must have a certain set of skills to be able to benefit from AAC.
Myth 4	Speech-generating AAC devices are only for children with intact cognition.
Myth 5	Children have to be a certain age to be able to benefit from AAC.
Myth 6	There is a representational hierarchy of symbols from objects to written words (traditional orthography).



What does the research say?

- Children who received naturalistic modeling and prompting to use a picture-based communication system **increased vocalizations** (Romski, Sevcik, Reumann, & Pat, 1989)
- In a two-year study using speech-generating devices, over half of the participants **increased** proportions of **intelligible spoken words**. (Romski & Sevcik, 1996)
- 50 out of 69 participants in an AAC intervention showed an **increased level of speech production** following treatment (Miller, Light, & Schlosser, 2000)
- The number of spoken words children produced per session was higher in treatment group **using speech-generating devices** than the treatment group that focused on spoken language alone. (Romski et al., 2010)



How do we teach people to use AAC?



Model



Prompt



When they request, show how to request using the AAC



Make the AAC always available



Make it motivating



How do we teach people to use AAC?



Consistently respond to AAC



Functional communication training



Set the occasion to use AAC (practice!)



Embed it throughout the day or routines



Include peers, friends, other residents or family



Summary-General Rules in Implementing Communicative Replacement



Don't continue to reinforce the challenging behavior



Try to minimize the probability that a challenging behavior is emitted prior to the emission of a socially acceptable communicative alternative



If possible, select a communicative alternative that is already part of the learner's existing communicative repertoire



Determine how discriminable the use of the new communicative alternative needs to be



Consider the natural maintaining contingencies offered by the natural environment



Validating with compassion

1

Give verbal responses to show you are listening.

2

Be aware of your body language.

3

Stay present in the conversation and in the moment.





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