

**WHAT IS AAC?
AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE
COMMUNICATION (AAC)**

WHAT IS AAC?

- AAC is **A**ugmentative and **A**lternative **C**ommunication. AAC includes all forms of communication other than oral speech (i.e. gestures, symbols, pictures, writing).
- The chosen mode of communication (low-tech, high-tech, no-tech) is the **USER'S VOICE!**

AAC IS USED ACROSS ALL
SETTINGS FOR EVERY
COMMUNICATIVE
FUNCTION!

Settings

School

Home

Community

Everywhere!

Functions

Greeting

Requesting/Protesting

Commenting

Asking/Answering
Questions

EXPOSURE IS KEY!

Our students learn how to use AAC through exposure and modeling from the communication partner.
That's you!

- Recommendations:
 - Model 1-2 words *more* than the student's current abilities. Similar to verbally expanding messages.
 - “Want ball” -> “Want *red* ball” or “*kick ball up high*”
 - Model grammar
 - Model at a SLOW RATE
 - Narrate and Think Out Loud as you navigate device



BY 18 MONTHS
babies have heard
4,380 HOURS
OF SPOKEN
LANGUAGE
and we don't expect them
to be fluent speakers
YET

If AAC learners only see symbols modeled for
communication twice weekly for 20-30 minutes, it will take
84 YEARS
for them to have the same exposure to aided language
as an 18 month old has to spoken language.

statistic from Jane Korsten - QIAT Listserv 2011
photo by Rachael Langley - AAC Specialist

Types of AAC

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graph TD; A[Types of AAC] --> B[No Tech]; A --> C[Low Tech]; A --> D[Mid Tech]; A --> E[High Tech];
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No Tech

Low Tech

Mid Tech

High Tech

NO TO LOW TECH

No Tech

- Does not require a device or tool for communication
- Examples include:
 - Gestures (pointing, looking, head nods)
 - Hand signs (hand sign for more)
 - Facial Expressions
 - Vocalizations (sounds, grunting)
 - Verbalizations (words, sentences)
 - Body language



Low Tech

- Requires a personalized device or communication system that is not battery powered
- Can be used to communicate by pointing to item/picture or by handing items/pictures to someone (PECS)
- Typically includes:
 - Physical objects
 - Pictures (PECS or PODD)
 - Written words
 - Communication boards/books
- Low tech communication devices require that individuals who work with the student personalize it and continually add items based on student's needs



MID TECH

- Static Display
- Requires some power source (batteries)
 - Be prepared to take inventory of batteries & ALWAYS have them on hand. You don't want the child to "lose" their voice for the day.
- Requires programming to put what you want on
- Varied image capacities (field of 1-30)
- Provide voice message when image or symbol is pressed
 - Can be single-message voice output device (Big Mac)
 - Static display voice output (multiple images)
 - Important to tailor voice to age/gender of child
 - E.g. don't want a man's voice for a Middle school aged girl
 - E.g. don't want a girl's voice for a high school aged boy

EXAMPLES

- Alpha Talker
- TechSpeak
- QuickTalker
- Switch adapted games
- Big Mac – switch with verbal output
- Go Talk



HIGH TECH

- Dynamic display
- Synthesized voice output
 - Male or Female – increasing naturalness
- Larger vocabulary available
- Can often take pictures to personalize device
- Language and sentence building
- Can store commonly used phrases or messages.
- Vocabulary organization can be different from device to device which may effect device recommendation
- Can also be referred to as Speech Generating **Devices** (SGDs) or Voice Output Communication Aids (VOCAs).



REFERENCES

- Autism Speaks
 - <https://www.autismspeaks.org/worksheet/assistive-technology-communication-roadmap>
- American Speech-Language Hearing Association
 - <https://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/aac/>
- Practical AAC
 - <https://practicalaac.org>