easterseals Crossroads

Assistive Technology for Speech Impairments

An augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device is a tablet or laptop that helps someone with a speech or language impairment to communicate. The term AAC is often used interchangeably with terms like speech-generating device (SGD) or assistive communication device. There are also a number of AAC apps that help people communicate with those around them.

COMMUNICATION METHODS WITH AAC

Symbol or Picture-Based Communication
• This approach is used mostly for individuals learning or recovering language.
• Symbols are shown inside "buttons" that have words or phrases for message building.
• Symbols can be from picture systems such as Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) or others such as N2Y.
• Actual pictures of people or things can also be incorporated.

Text-Based Communication
• This approach is used mostly for individuals with fully developed language skills.
• "Buttons" that have words or phrases for message building can be selected.
• A keyboard with Word Prediction buttons can expedite message generation.
• Whole messages can be planned out and categorized.

COMMON AAC FEATURES
• **Word Prediction:** Reduces the number of keystrokes when typing; Begin spelling the desired word, then choose the whole word from the list; Can be context sensitive; Number of words can vary
• **Abbreviation Expansion:** Allows for the storage of phrases or sentences with a code; Requires the code not to be an actual word; Sometimes a special character can begin the code

ACCESSORIES TO CONSIDER
• **Stands and Mounts**: Something to hold the device while it is being used; Keeps it steady and lets hands do other things; May need to mount to a wheelchair
• **Cases:** Protection for device; Easier use when ambulatory
• **Speakers:** Bluetooth, wearable; Built-into case that provides protection as well; Plugged in, wired
• **Keyboards:** Bluetooth; Can make typing easier than onscreen keyboard

APPS FOR AAC
• **TouchChat:** Dynamic communication solution with easy-to-customize features and a wide range of vocabularies, languages and voices
• **Sono Flex:** Easy-to-use AAC vocabulary app that turns symbols into clear speech
• **Snap Core First:** Based on core words, carefully placed and ordered for easier recall
• **Proloquo2Go:** Simple yet powerful AAC tool featuring natural-sounding voices, including real children's voices
• **Proloquo4Text:** Text-to-speech app for those who can't rely on their voice; laid out on a single screen to reduce the effort of typing
• **Verbally:** AAC app with comprehensive assisted speech solutions for the iPad
• **Assistive Express:** Designed to be simple and efficient, with Word Prediction and adaptive learning
• **Speech Assistant AAC:** Text-to-speech app allowing the creation of categories and phrases, which are placed on buttons
• **Alexicom AAC:** App lets you use your iPhone, iPad or iPod Touch as an AAC device to communicate with text, images and natural-sounding voices
• **Livox:** Card-based alternative communication software enabling non-verbal individuals to communicate
• **LetMeTalk:** AAC talker app enabling you to line up images in a meaningful way to read as a sentence
• **Lingraphica – SmallTalk Conversational Phrases:** Provides a library of pictures you can tap that speak out loud, including common words and phrases

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