

Alternative and Augmentative Communication



What is Alternative and Augmentative Communication?

Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) refers to systems and devices that aid communication for people with speech or language problems.

Basically, AAC means all of the ways that someone communicates besides talking.

Augmentative means to add to someone's speech. **Alternative** means to be used instead of speech.

People with a range of intellectual disabilities, some specific learning disorders (dysphasia), but also autism and more can benefit from using some form of AAC in their everyday life and educational environment.



Different types of AAC

There are a lot of different types of AAC.

They are usually divided into two categories; **Unaided AAC** and **Aided AAC**.

Unaided AAC

Gestures,
Facial expressions,
Body language,
Writing and
drawing,
Sign language.

Aided AAC

Low tech

Symbol boards,
Choice cards,
Communication books,
Spelling words by pointing to
letters,
Pointing to photos, pictures,
or written words.

High tech

Keyboards and alphabet charts,
Speech-generating devices or
communication devices
AAC apps on mobile devices.



Benefits of AAC

Richer, more
frequent social
interactions

Improved
physical and
mental health

Greater
participation in
their family lives
and communities

More
employment and
volunteer
opportunities

Increased autonomy
and decision-making
power over their own
life

Improved
information sharing
with health
professionals

Promotes
social
inclusion

Stronger
friendships and
deeper
relationships



Symbol system

Symbols are verbal or visual representations of concepts and ideas. Aided AAC methods use visual symbols in the form of graphics such as a picture or object. A symbol can be anything that represents something else. It can be a photo, a line drawing, a word, or even an emoji.

When a person uses symbols, they can talk about things not present. Symbols represent objects, actions, feelings, and other concepts. Glued together by grammar, these form **language**.

Symbols can be useful for expressing longer messages and are often quick and easy to recognise.



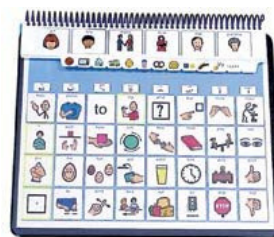
Type of Symbol Systems

Symbols can be presented in various ways including charts, boards, communication books and on individual cards. These can be produced by drawing the symbols, photocopying or using a computer program to print out charts.

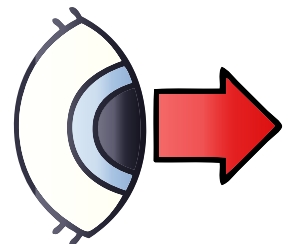
Communication boards



Flip book



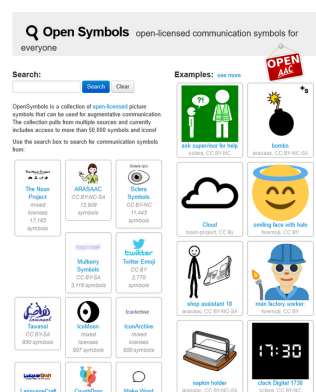
Eye-gaze or eye-pointing



Free resource bank of AAC symbols

<https://www.opensymbols.org/>

Speech Generating Device



Resources

Resources to make your own AAC symbols:

<https://praacticalaac.org/praactical/free-resources-for-making-aac-and-visual-supports/>

AAC community:

<https://aaccommunity.net/ccs/symbols/>

<https://literacyforallinstruction.ca/symbol-based-communication/>