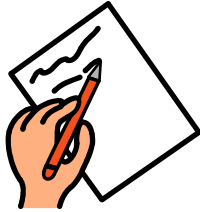
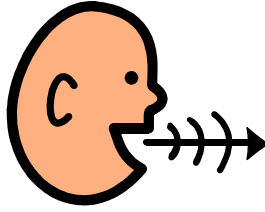


What Is Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and Who Can Use It?



Writing a note.



Pointing when giving directions.



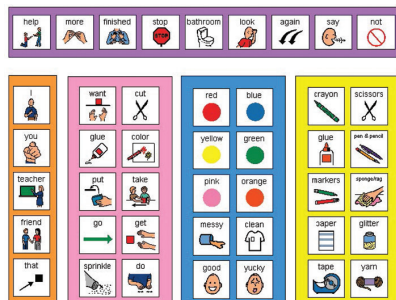
Waving to a friend who is across the room.

In all of these examples, people are communicating without speaking. They are communicating using augmentative and alternative communication (AAC). Basically, AAC is any method of communication that is used in addition to or instead of speech. Augmentative means “in addition to.” Alternative means “instead of.” All people, even those who speak, use different forms of AAC every day. These forms include gestures, words pictures, facial expression, body language, writing and drawing.

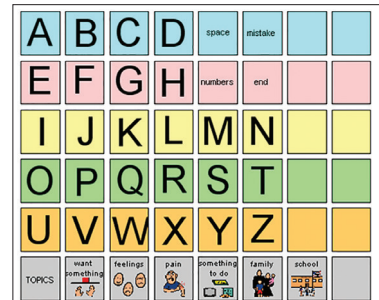
When an individual has significant difficulties with communication in one or more environments, use of AAC tools and techniques becomes even more important. In addition to non-verbal communication like gestures and facial expression, individuals should also use the following types of AAC:

Low-Tech AAC

- Communication books, boards and symbols
- Varying number of messages can be represented by objects, photos, line drawings, written words or letters



Communication Boards with PCS Symbols



AEIOU alphabet board

High technology AAC

- Devices that require a charge and have voice output (digitized or synthesized)
- Varying number of messages can be represented by objects, photos, line drawings, written words or letters



Who can use AAC?

Based on our initial definition of AAC as something all of us use in our day-to-day lives, we know that AAC is something that can be used by every person in every environment—home, work, school, community. AAC is of benefit regardless of age, communication or cognitive ability level. It provides a means of expressing wants, needs, and ideas decreasing frustration and isolation. Having a way to communicate can help build communication and language skills, increase interaction with family and friends and participation in school, community events and work.

When an individual has difficulty successfully communicating in one or more environments, some form of AAC should be provided to meet their needs. The specific AAC tools and techniques should be identified through an augmentative communication evaluation. Check with your Speech-Language Pathologist or find one through www.slplocator.com.

Questions to ask when considering AAC:

- Does the individual have difficulty expressing their wants, needs or thoughts in one or more environments?
- Do you or others need to have background knowledge or ask multiple questions to understand what that person is saying?
- Does the individual become frustrated or give up when attempting to communicate?
- Does the individual understand more than they are able to express?

If you answered “yes” to one or more of these questions, discuss AAC with a Speech-Language Pathologist.

Courtesy of the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago. Revised June 2014, DynaVox.

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