

# Where to Start with AAC {Webinar}

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## Overview

- When does a child need AAC?
  - When to consider introducing it
  - What are the pre-requisites for AAC use?
- How to select an appropriate AAC system for a child
  - Options available
  - What to consider when selecting
  - Resources to help with selection
- How to introduce the system to the child
  - How to introduce in the classroom or at home (naturally)
  - How to teach the child specific uses of the system
- How to track progress
  - How to set goals for AAC use
  - How to collect data and assess effectiveness of AAC use

## When does a Child Need AAC?

When his/her speech output is not adequate to communicate everything that the child wants/needs to communicate

Things to consider:

- Child's frustration levels
- Adult frustration levels
- Access to school curriculum:
  - Participation in classroom activities
  - Ability to demonstrate knowledge to teachers
- Access to home and community environment:
  - Ability to interact appropriately with family and peers
  - Independence in developmentally-appropriate daily activities

## Are there Pre-Requisites for AAC Use?



## Common AAC Prerequisite Myths:

These are commonly used as excuses why AAC devices should not be attempted with children but these are WRONG:

- The child must understand cause and effect (AAC teaches cause and effect quite effectively)
- The child must understand that a picture represents an object (again, AAC teaches this)
- Child must have good enough motor skills for AAC
- Child must understand enough language for AAC use (babies don't have great language before they are introduced to speech)
- Child must be interested in communicating (even acting out can be shaped into intentional communication)



More: <http://www.speechandlanguagekids.com/what-are-the-prerequisites-for-using-an-aac-device-augmentativealternative-communication/>

## How to Select an AAC System

Options for AAC devices, methods, and systems

- Gestures/Body Language
- Sign Language
- Object Symbols (objects glued to cards)
- Picture Boards
- Picture Exchange
- Written Messages (paper or typed)
- Single Button Voice-Output Devices
- Multi-Button Voice-Output Devices
- Dynamic-Display Voice-Output Devices

## Considerations When Selecting AAC Systems

- Child's mobility and physical limitations
- Family preferences and limitations
- Number of different desired communication partners
- Child's cognitive level
- Child's visual and attention skills
- Likelihood of long-term AAC use
- Child/Family's means of acquiring devices
- What the child will be using it for
- How well the child does when using the systems during trials or therapy
- Past success or failures with AAC systems

## Resources to Help with AAC Selection

- AAC Evaluation Teams in your Area
- ASHA's Resources:  
<http://www.asha.org/slp/clinical/aac/>

## How to Introduce the System

Make it as natural as possible. Think of it as similar to how you would encourage a late talker to talk.

1. Get Familiar with the Child's System
2. Model AAC Use Around the Child
3. Encourage the Child When he Attempts to Use it and Provide Differential Reinforcement
4. Have the Device Present at All Times
5. Set Up Opportunities for the Child to Use the AAC Device (in the classroom, at home, in speech, etc.)
6. Train Other Adults on How to Set Up Opportunities and Provide Differential Reinforcement

More info: <http://www.speechandlanguagekids.com/help-child-use-aac-home-classroom-hint-easier-think/>

## More In-Depth Training

Some systems require additional training beyond just modeling (especially more sophisticated devices). Here are some things to think about:

- Children may need to be shown where to find certain areas of their device, such as the keyboard, personal information, system settings, etc.
- Teach children how to use the editing tools to correct their message, such as delete buttons and changing grammatical markers
- Some systems may need options for "I don't have a button for that" or "please add/fix something".
- You may need to do specific training or games to teach a child how to use adapted means of accessing their device (eye gaze, head switches, scanning, etc.)

## Tracking Progress: Setting Goals

To write a goal for AAC use, think about what goal you would set for the child if he was using speech instead of the device/system. Write goals for what the child will communicate, not for specific AAC use.

Examples:

### Good Goals:

- Child will use single words to request foods during snack time, using spoken words, sign language, or an AAC device.
- Child will answer "who" questions by indicating the correct person using spoken words, sign language, or an AAC device.
- Child will create three-word utterances using an "I want..." carrier phrase through use of spoken words, sign language, or an AAC device.

### Not-So-Good Goals:

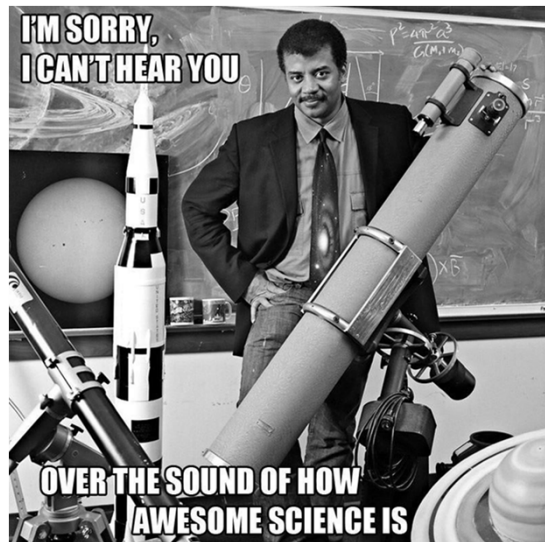
- Child will push buttons on his AAC device to request.
- Child will use his AAC device during circle time.
- Child will answer yes/no questions using his AAC device.
- Child will find buttons on his AAC device when requested by the therapist.
- Child will hand a picture to the therapist during PECS training.

## Tracking Progress: Making Goals Measurable

Here are a few ways to measure AAC goals:

- % of attempts: Track each time the child tries to accomplish a goal (like get something) and mark correct if the child uses language of some kind (ex: Child will use language to request during snack on 80% of attempts – Reaching, grabbing, crying, and grunting count as incorrect while using words, signs, or AAC count as correct)
- # of times in \_\_\_ minutes: Track how many times the child accomplishes the goal during a certain number of minutes (ex: Child will use language to request during snack at least 5 times in 5 minutes – Only AAC or spoken words count as correct)

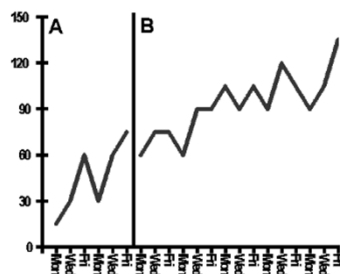
## Caution: Science Ahead



## Tracking Progress: Keeping Data

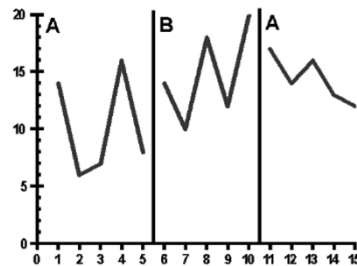
Once you have a strong goal, measure it using one of the following methods:

- AB Research Design: Take baseline data on the skill before introducing AAC, then introduce AAC and continue to take data on the same skill (ex:



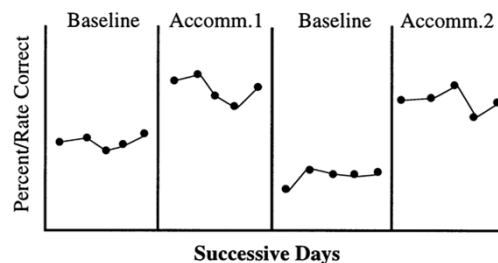
## Tracking Progress: Keeping Data, Continued

- ABA Design: Take baseline data on the skill before introducing AAC, then introduce AAC and continue to take data. Then, stop presenting the AAC (take it away) and measure baseline again.



## Tracking Progress: Keeping Data, Continued

- Multi-Element ABAB Design: Baseline data is collected on the goal before AAC is introduced. AAC Type 1 is introduced and data is collected on the goal. Then, AAC Type 1 is removed and baseline is collected again. Finally, AAC Type 2 is introduced and data is collected on the goal. The two AAC types are compared. (Make sure to give plenty of time with each for the child to pick up on it)





## How to Obtain Continuing Education Credit

- If you need continuing education credit for this presentation, please email Carrie at [Carrie@SpeechAndLanguageKids.com](mailto:Carrie@SpeechAndLanguageKids.com) to receive a copy of the continuing education certification letter.
- You will receive 1 Certification Maintenance Hour (CMH) for attending live, which is like a CEU but I can't report it to ASHA so you'll need to keep track of this form and report it yourself.

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