

Practical AAC:
A Guide to Developing Functional Communication Skills
Guide Excerpts

Introduction

This guide was created to provide guidance for therapists, teachers, parents and other caregivers working with individuals in need of communication assistance. It is written in simple step by step terms learned through years of experience. It has been purposely written in this way to serve the needs of anyone wishing to foster proper initial augmentative communication device use in individuals with communication deficits. It provides practical procedures, goals, techniques, and activities to build a foundation for more complex communication skills. This guide will provide instruction from single message activation all the way to phrase building. It should be noted that this guide does not encompass all communication aspects; each section is merely a guide for fostering beginning device use and increasing communication.

Each Section of the guide follows a simple format which includes:

Part 1: A chart which identifies the targeted developmental language skills, corresponding augmentative communication skills which will be address for that section, a “Current Level of Performance” check list of skills that the individual must possess before beginning the section and a suggested goal/objective for the current section.

Example:

	0-3 months	4-9 months
Cognitive Performance Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Displays startle response Visually tracks Auditorily tracks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produces vocalizations Looks at familiar objects when named
Language Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listens, stops when others enter room or talk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emerging object permanence Makes movement or indicates desire for reoccurrence
AAC Continuum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attends or reacts to output With assistance activates device 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independently activates device and attends to action Explores use of two devices

Part 2: “Set Up” instructions which explain what objects, device, communication overlays, changes in the environment etc. which need to be made before the session is begun. It also includes a detailed activity description which explains exactly how the activity should be presented and carried out.

Set Up

Equipment and Materials Needed:

- One Partner Plus Communication device
- Several high interest toys or items
- Symbol referent:
 - Digital and/or picture symbols of all high interest materials gathered
 - Pre-made activity symbols located at the end of this section.

Environment

- Place predetermined highly motivating object in view but out of reach.
- Place corresponding symbol of the object on the device.
- Record the name of the object on the device.
- Test the device to make certain the message is playing correctly and the volume is set appropriately.
- Sit across from the individual with enough space for high interest objects to be just out of reach.
- Place device on the table in front of the individual.
- Be prepared with additional high interest objects and corresponding symbols to keep interest of the individuals.

Teaching Method/Procedure

- Physical prompt in the form of “hand over hand” activation and modeling. To encourage communication initiation in individuals, use limited to no verbal cuing prior to their activation of the device.

Part 3: A “What if Section” which list common issues that might occur during the introduction of specific skills and/or activities.


Example:

What if...?

- the individual becomes very upset or agitated by the altered activity?
 - Follow the prompt hierarchy in number 8. Try to move through the prompting levels before the individual reaches frustration level.

- Choose a different activity. The activity or object altered may be to dear or important to the individual for them to tolerate its manipulation.
- after several attempts the individual does not activate the help message independently:
 - Use peer modeling.
 - Change the activity to something more meaningful.

Part 4: Charting forms customized for each stage to help keep track of progress.



Charting Form

Name: _____ Beginning Date: _____
 Location: _____ Date Mastered: _____

Use this section to document Preferred Object (PO) used

PO1: _____ PO2: _____ PO3: _____
 PO4: _____ PO5: _____ PO6: _____

Date	Objective/Goal Activity	PO	Notes
		PO 1	
		PO 2	
		PO 3	
		PO 4	
		PO 5	
		PO 6	
		Prompt:	
	1. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. <input type="checkbox"/> 3. <input type="checkbox"/> 4. <input type="checkbox"/> 5. <input type="checkbox"/> 6. <input type="checkbox"/> 7. <input type="checkbox"/>	Daily%	
	8. <input type="checkbox"/> 9. <input type="checkbox"/> 10. <input type="checkbox"/> 11. <input type="checkbox"/> 12. <input type="checkbox"/> 13. <input type="checkbox"/> 14. <input type="checkbox"/>		
	15. <input type="checkbox"/> 16. <input type="checkbox"/> 17. <input type="checkbox"/> 18. <input type="checkbox"/> 19. <input type="checkbox"/> 20. <input type="checkbox"/> 21. <input type="checkbox"/>		
Date	Objective/Goal Activity	PO	Notes
		PO 1	
		PO 2	
		PO 3	
		PO 4	
		PO 5	
		PO 6	
		Prompt:	
	1. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. <input type="checkbox"/> 3. <input type="checkbox"/> 4. <input type="checkbox"/> 5. <input type="checkbox"/> 6. <input type="checkbox"/> 7. <input type="checkbox"/>	Daily%	
	8. <input type="checkbox"/> 9. <input type="checkbox"/> 10. <input type="checkbox"/> 11. <input type="checkbox"/> 12. <input type="checkbox"/> 13. <input type="checkbox"/> 14. <input type="checkbox"/>		
	15. <input type="checkbox"/> 16. <input type="checkbox"/> 17. <input type="checkbox"/> 18. <input type="checkbox"/> 19. <input type="checkbox"/> 20. <input type="checkbox"/> 21. <input type="checkbox"/>		
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	8. <input type="checkbox"/> 9. <input type="checkbox"/> 10. <input type="checkbox"/> 11. <input type="checkbox"/> 12. <input type="checkbox"/> 13. <input type="checkbox"/> 14. <input type="checkbox"/>		
	15. <input type="checkbox"/> 16. <input type="checkbox"/> 17. <input type="checkbox"/> 18. <input type="checkbox"/> 19. <input type="checkbox"/> 20. <input type="checkbox"/> 21. <input type="checkbox"/>		

Part 5: Pre-made activities for each AMDi communication device, created specifically to address goals for each stage in a fun and engaging way.

