

AAC Fundamentals Training: There are few foundational skills necessary to support an individual's use of AAC. These skills help us create moments where AAC can be used and help us to support AAC use and growth in those moments.

1. CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

In order to be able to communicate effectively using AAC, we need to have opportunities to do so. There is a lot that we can do to create opportunities for communication. The questions we ask, the statements we make, the language we use, and the ways in which we organize and arrange the environment can create opportunities for communication. Technically:

Creating opportunities for communication refers to how we set-up the environment and/or interact with an item of interest to encourage an individual to use AAC.

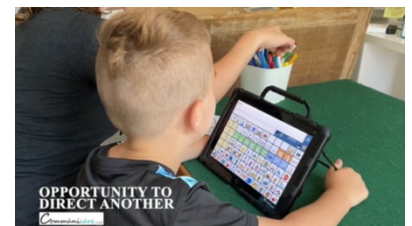
Communicative Function: Requesting a preferred item

Asking for something we want or need is a common communicative function. We can support an individual's use of AAC and create an opportunity to request by adjusting the environment. For example, we could have multiple items available and ask which they want. Or, we could also have an item out of reach so that the individual needs to communicate in order to get the item.



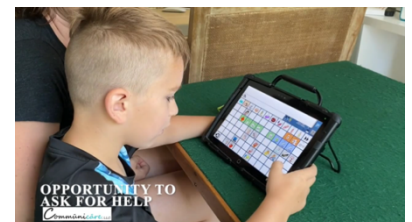
Communicative Function: Directing another's actions

Asking someone to do something, also known as directing another's action, is another important communicative function. It is a communicative function that empowers individuals to have a little more control over their environment. We can use an item and have the individual tell us what to do with it, or we can adjust an activity so that the individual tells us how to act.



Communicative Function: Requesting help

Being able to ask for help is a critical skill that should be practiced. We can create an obstacle that requires an individual to ask for help to be able to get it (i.e., putting something out of reach or putting it in a container). This may feel unfair, but again we need to create safe opportunities where an individual can practice asking for help.



Communicative Function: Commenting

Being able to comment is an important way of being able to be "in the moment." We help this by commenting ourselves (using AAC whenever possible) and responding to how the individual is communicating. Commenting is different from requesting, directing, or expecting a response from the individual.



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2. AAC MODELING

AAC modeling is a critical communication partner strategy. Just like verbal communicators, individuals using AAC need to see other people using AAC. They need examples of how to use AAC in the ways that are expected, and they need to see that their way of communicating (using AAC) is a respected way of communicating (and that they are not the only person using AAC). Technically:

AAC modeling is the communication partner's act of using AAC (touching words/phrases on an AAC system), while also talking to the individual.

It is important to note that AAC modeling can be just one or two words and doesn't need to be exactly the same as what is said verbally.

It is also important to note that AAC modeling should happen without expecting the individual to say or use AAC in response. It is simply your use of AAC while talking to someone.



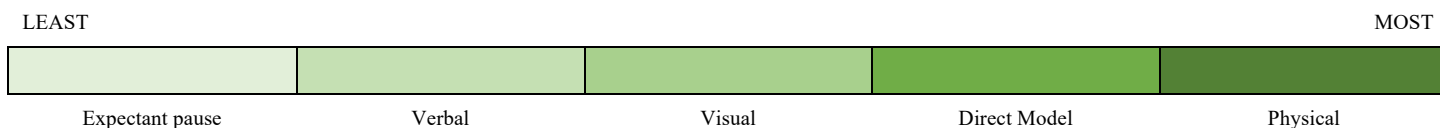
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3. PROMPTING

Prompting is important when we try to teach a skill and get an individual using AAC to use their system for a specific purpose. There are different levels or intensity of prompts and we use different types depending on the individual and whether or not they are familiar with the skill being addressed. Technically:

Prompting is the act of trying to make someone do something. A prompting hierarchy is a systematic way of providing prompts to help an individual learn new skills or practice a skill they already know.

A *most-to-least* prompting hierarchy is used when teaching an individual a new skill. We want them to be successful, so we are going to help them find or select the target word/phrase. A *least-to-most* prompting hierarchy is used when practicing or using a skill that is already learned. We know that the individual knows how to find or select the word/phrase and we are going to give them time to do so. An example of a prompting hierarchy is:



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4. LANGUAGE EXPANSION

Language expansion is another important communication partner strategy. Just like verbal communicators, individuals using AAC need to see other people using AAC in more advanced ways. This is what helps them build their skills. As the communication partner, we use their AAC to add to and build on what they said. Technically:

Language expansion is our response to an individual's use of AAC to make that utterance longer and/or more linguistically complex.

Language expansion can mean adding words to make a phrase longer (*dog* “is white”) or repeating a word in a more complex way (*run* “running”). Like modeling, language expansion is our response and the individual should not necessarily be expected to copy what we did.

