



# Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

## AAC stands for “Augmentative and Alternative Communication”

You may have seen someone write in a notebook to answer a question. Maybe you have seen people using sign language or other gestures. You may have seen someone push buttons on a computer that speaks for them. These are all forms of augmentative and alternative communication, or AAC.

AAC includes all of the ways we share our ideas and feelings without talking. We all use forms of AAC every day. You use AAC when you use facial expressions or gestures instead of talking. You use AAC when you write a note and pass it to a friend or coworker. We may not realize how often we communicate without talking.

People with severe speech or language problems may need AAC to help them communicate. Some may use it all of the time. Others may say some words but use AAC for longer sentences or with people they don't know well. AAC can help in school, at work, and when talking with friends and family.

## Types of AAC

Do you or your loved one have difficulty talking? There are options that might help. There are two main types of AAC—unaided systems and aided systems. You may use one or both types. Most people who use AAC use a combination of AAC types to communicate.

### Unaided Systems

You do not need anything but your own body to use unaided systems. These include gestures, body language, facial expressions, and sign language.

### Aided Systems

An aided system uses some sort of tool or device. There are two types of aided systems—basic and high-tech. A pen and paper is a basic aided system. Pointing to letters, words, or pictures on a board is a basic aided system. Touching letters or pictures on a computer screen that speaks for you is a high-tech aided system. Some of these speech-generating devices, or SGDs, can speak in different languages. There are also several different communication apps for iPads and tablets that can be used by an individual to generate speech to communicate.

### Accessing the technology

Individuals needing an AAC system such as a speech generating device or communication app on an iPad may also need a different way of activating what they want to say because of physical limitations. There are many different types of switches available to allow an individual to access their communication system with different parts of their bodies or with limited movement of a single body part. There are also many “accessibility settings” available within devices and iPads to allow a switch user more efficient access to their pictures, letters, words and/or sentences.

**Specialized Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) assessments are available at the Achievement Centers for Children. For more information, please contact Trish Sanders at 216-292-9700 ext. 297.**