



Augmentative and Alternative Communication

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is a different way of communicating that is used when: a person is unable to speak, they are difficult to understand, or they find it difficult to understand other people.

There are two main types of AAC: aided and unaided AAC.

Aided AAC is when something else is used to assist communication such as;

- Picture boards or books
- Spelling boards
- Speech devices
- Computers, mobile phones or tablets.

Unaided AAC refers to communication that happens when the person uses their body to communicate. Examples include: using body language, gestures and signing.

AAC is important because people who cannot speak can find it hard to get information, make friends, learn new things, get a job, stay safe, or express feelings; opinions and ideas. AAC systems can be customised to suit the individual's communication needs.

Who needs AAC?

If a person is not able to speak they may need to use different types of AAC systems to communicate. One AAC system or strategy may not be sufficient to meet all of their needs, all of the time. A person may need a different system in different places such as at home, at school, or in the community.

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Who uses an AAC?

People experiencing difficulty with communication due to medical or developmental disorders for example: cerebral palsy, intellectual disabilities, those who have had a stroke, diseases such as Parkinson's and Motor Neurone Disease. AAC may also be used by those who have problems with their mouth and throat due to cancer or an accident.

Sometimes AAC devices may be used for a short amount of time. Other times AAC devices are used as the permanent method for a person to communicate.

Does AAC stop (or prevent) children from learning how to speak?

Not all. In fact, AAC devices can help children learn how to speak.



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AACs include some electronic devices, such as speech generating devices that provide the word for the child to copy.

Using signing can encourage simple attempts at saying words.

Linking words and pictures together has been found to help develop the child's understanding/comprehension.

Using AACs

People need proper training to use an AAC device

People need to practise at all times, in all places and with all people.

Communication needs may change over time, and therefore AAC will need to change along with the user.



For more information on speech pathology, visit the [Trinh Foundation website](http://trinhfoundation.org):

<http://trinhfoundation.org>

Contact details for Vietnamese trained speech therapists are provided on the [Trinh Foundation Australia website](http://trinhfoundation.org).

A speech therapist can help by...

- Assessing a person's communication needs
- Giving advice on what AAC systems to use in different situations
- Help you try AAC
- Help you choose AAC
- Set up your AAC