

Types of AAC

Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) refers to other methods of communication people may use when they have difficulty speaking. These methods may supplement what speech they do use or may become the primary form of communication in the absence of speech.

There are many different types of AAC. There are unaided methods which do not require any additional items or equipment such as facial expressions, gestures and signing. Aided communication does require additional items and can be divided again into low technology (no batteries/power required) and high technology.

UNAIDED AAC

Body movements, facial expressions and gestures

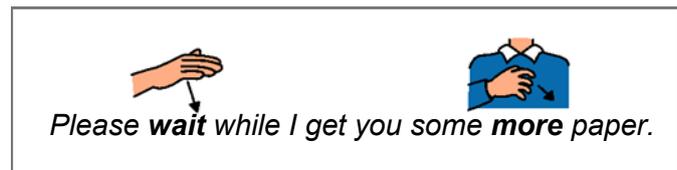
Body movements and facial expressions include frowning, smiling and simple actions such as reaching. Gestures include natural actions such as waving, shaking hands, and pointing. Gestures are interpreted differently according to the situation in which they are used. For example, waving may be interpreted to mean 'hi' or 'bye' or may be used to gain someone's attention.



A communication passport can be a really useful way of recording and sharing this information when a child uses a lot of this type of communication. See the *Find Out More* box at the end of this information sheet for more information about communication passports.

Signs

Key Word Sign (formerly known as Makaton) is a widely used system that promotes communication. It uses manual signs (i.e. your hands) with speech. Key Word Sign uses signs for just the key words in sentences to convey meaning. For example, in the sentence "I feel hungry" only the words *I* and *hungry* would be signed.



Key Word Sign is not a language like Auslan - which is the language of the Australian Deaf Community. Auslan is a whole different language with its own grammar rules. Key Word Sign uses Auslan signs but with speech and follows spoken English grammar. Key word signs may help adults and children who need more than speech to communicate – by making it easier to express themselves and be understood by others, by supporting their understanding of what others say to them, and by helping to develop their own communication skills.

“The AAC devices and strategies are a tool, a means to an end – language and communication skills – not the end.”
(Ronski, 2005, pg. 182)

References

Romski, M. (2005). Augmentative communication and early intervention: Myths and realities. *Infants and Young Children*, 18 (3), 174-185.

FIND OUT MORE

Types of AAC...

http://www.novita.org.au/library/Factsheet-AAC_types.pdf

Communication passports...

<http://www.communicationpassports.org.uk/Home/>

http://www.scope.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdfs/Communication/Scope_communication_passport.pdf

Signing...

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/research-centre/special-education/key-word-sign-australia/>

<http://www.bilby.net/Sign/AboutSignLanguage.asp>

Object symbols...

http://www.northcottcats.com.au/tutorials/pdfs/communication_ideas/non-technology_ideas/object_symbols.pdf

<http://www.ace-centre.org.uk/index.cfm?pageid=3CDC028A-3048-7290-FE7DEA7A0060EF46>

Communication boards and books...

http://www.scope.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdfs/Communication/Scope_AAC3_nuts_and_bolts.pdf

Chat-Now (CD and Manual) from Scope Victoria (2007)

Developing and Using a Communication Book by Clare Latham (2005)

ACE Centre Advisory Trust—Oxford UK

Pragmatic Organisation Dynamic Display (PODD) Communication Books: Direct Access Templates CD Resource by Gayle Porter (2007)

Cerebral Palsy Education Centre - Melbourne, Australia

Communication devices...

See Section 3.

This handout is part of an information package, funded by a NGCS grant, to assist local teams in supporting children who require augmentative and alternative communication - particularly communication devices. Augmentative and alternative communication, or AAC, refers to other methods of communication people may use when they have difficulty speaking. These methods may supplement what speech they do use or may become the primary form of communication in the absence of speech.

This handout may be reproduced for teaching purposes/use with clients.

© Rocky Bay 2010 **Positive AACtion Information Kit for AAC Teams**