

TYPES OF AAC

<https://communicationmatters.org.uk/what-is-aac/types-of-aac/>

AAC is used to mean many different ways to help someone communicate. It could be simple things like pointing, signing, writing or drawing. It could also be using a special device like a machine that 'speaks' words for you.

Using objects

Some people use objects as a way of communicating.

If you are using objects to communicate with someone, think about how the object will make sense to the person.

Sometimes there is more than one way to communicate with an object. You can touch some objects, but you can also smell them.

The object may have a particular meaning to the person. Two different people may have different meanings for the same object.

You shouldn't use objects made of things the person doesn't like.

A child can have a picture in their brain of an object if they can handle it.

You can use a small version of the object. For example, you could use a toy car to mean going out.

VOCAs (Voice output communication aids)

A VOCA is a device that 'speaks' words. There are many different types of VOCA:

- **A single message VOCA.** This speaks a recorded message when it is pressed. You can record a new message over the old one
- **A message sequencer SOCA.** This has a few different messages. Every time you press the button, it 'speaks' a different message. It will go through all the messages and start again
- **Overlay VOCAs.** This is where there are pictures over a screen. You press on the pictures and the voice 'speaks' the message
- **Dynamic Screen VOCAs.** This is where there are different screens with different pictures. The person can move through the screens so they can find and press the button they want

Your local AAC Assessment service will help you to get the right AAC for you. It is important that the person is able to use the AAC properly.

If you need a VOCA they will help you think about:

- Whether the VOCA should be fixed to the wheelchair. It may be easier to hold it
- Will you use the VOCA by:
 - Pressing buttons
 - Switches
 - Something like a mouse
 - Eye or head movement
- Will you use spelling or symbols
- What sorts of words will you want on the VOCA?

Using signing to communicate

We all use body language and gestures to communicate:

- **Body language.** This is the way we sit or fold our arms
- **Gesture.** This might be nodding our heads or giving a 'thumbs up'. Many deaf people use British Sign Language (BSL)

With AAC speakers, we recommend using speech at the same time as signing. Signing helps people to understand what is being said.

Here are some ways of signing that are common in Britain.

Makaton

Makaton is designed to be used with speech. The signs are based on British Sign Language.

Makaton was originally designed to help people with learning disabilities to understand spoken language and to provide a means of basic self-expression.

The Makaton Charity

Email: info@makaton.org

Website: www.makaton.org

Signalong

This system helps children and adults with learning disabilities or autism.

Signing is used at the same time as spoken English.

Signalong signs are based on British Sign Language.

Signalong

Email: info@signalong.org.uk

Website: www.signalong.org.uk

Paget Gorman Signed Speech

This teaches English language to children who are deaf or have a certain language problem.

It is used at the same time as spoken English.

Signers use every part of a spoken communication, in the exact same word order.

Paget Gorman

Website: www.pagetgorman.org

Amer-Ind

This set of signs is based on the hand shapes used by native Americans to communicate with other tribes.

The system uses key words only. It does not follow the word order of any spoken language.

Some people find it particularly useful as an AAC system.

Finger Spelling

This is where you use your hand to represent letters.

Symbols

Symbols are used a lot in everyday life. For example: road signs.

People with communication difficulties may use symbols to understand what people are saying.

Some sets of symbols are used often to help people to communicate:

- **Picture Communication Symbols (PCS)** – This is a set of about 5,000 different symbols in 44 different languages. goboardmaker.com
- **Widgit Symbols** – This is a set of about 12,000 symbols in 17 different languages. www.widgit.com
- **SymbolStix** – This is a set of about 12,000 symbols. www.n2y.com/symbolstix-prime
- **Blissymbols** - www.blissymbols.co.uk

Ways of using symbols

There are different ways to use symbols to help people communicate:

- [Communication books](#) have pages of symbols

- [Communication charts](#) are like communication books but the symbols are on one board or sheet
- [Communication cards](#) are pages of symbols on a card
- [Picture Exchange Communication System \(PECS\)](#) . You can give a picture to someone else. This is a way of telling the person what you want
- [E-Tran Frames](#). This is where the person uses eye gaze to point a word or symbol on a plastic sheet
- [Communication passports](#) are booklets with important information about the person. They can show the passport to people so that people know how to help them
- [Talking Mats](#) are mats to which you can attach pictures to express thoughts and opinions