

Communicating with AAC

Teach communication skills during real-life activities

The best teaching moments occur during real-life, meaningful activities that provide naturally occurring reinforcing outcomes. Meaningful activities may include: book reading, playing games, food preparation, bedtime routines, shopping, meal time, arts and crafts, pet care, car trips, chores, etc.

Review vocabulary prior to activities

Prior to engaging in a new activity with your child/student, review the vocabulary that will be used. Point to each symbol and talk about what it means. Don't expect your child to understand all of the symbols right away. By reviewing the symbols' meanings ahead of time, you are preparing your child to better understand the vocabulary.

Model how to use the symbols (Aided Language Stimulation)

Model the use of communication symbols during meaningful activities. Modeling or showing how to use the symbols is an effective teaching strategy. Show your child how you would use symbols to communicate. For example: ask your child - or another family member - to give you your favorite food after you point to the corresponding symbol(s) and verbally express your request. By experiencing others communicating with AAC your child/student will be exposed to appropriate models and learn that it is OK to communicate using AAC.

Script your routines

Script the communication exchange ahead of time to maximize teaching opportunities: write out what you plan to say to your child while you illustrate your words by pointing to symbols. For example, if you were planning a bubble blowing activity you may start by saying, "blow bubbles" while you point to the symbols for 'blow' and 'bubbles.' After several repetitions of 'blow bubbles', you may want to say, "pop!" while pointing to the symbol for 'pop.' Next you could say, "Blow, bubbles, up" while you point to the symbols for 'blow,' 'bubbles,' and 'up.' Don't feel that the activity must go exactly as you have planned it. Your child may be highly motivated by popping bubbles and thus, you may stay on that part of the script longer than expected. Follow your child's lead and teach things that are motivating to your child. Your child will have more fun and you'll have much greater success in teaching communication skills.

Use least-to-most intrusive prompting – Do not do extra talking!

1. Ask a natural question.
2. Wait Expectantly – a dramatic delay with focused attention on the child.
3. Point – use a gesture to remind child that it is his turn.
4. Model correct use.
Provide physical help – hand UNDER hand only to give child the idea – but only initially.

Engage your child by following his/her lead

Create communication opportunities by planning gentle sabotage and temptations