

Getting started with AAC and Core Words

Information for family members and staff

Here are some ideas to help you get started with Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and to think about building on Core Words from the beginning.

Before you begin, set the right foundations - create a positive communication environment. This means:

Assume competence:
trust that the person
can do this.

Focus on use and not
testing a person's
ability. Don't ask
them to "find the...."

Respond to all modes
of communication,
don't push for one or
another.

Give extra time. Try
to count to 5 in your
head before
speaking again.

Our key strategy to teach communication via AAC is modelling. You do this by touching the symbols that match what you are saying as you talk to and engage with a person.

Try to model language that reflects what's happening in the "here and now". You don't need to model everything you say, just the fringe and core words that are meaningful.

For example: a trip to the shops

- as you get ready to leave home you can model "let's go!"
- as you arrive at a shop you could model "we are here", "go in"
- as you choose items you could model "I like this", "what do you like?"
- as you pay you could model "find my purse"
- as you leave you could model "let's go!" again

Remember – modelling doesn't require a response or an attempt to imitate by the user.

Mistakes are ok! Don't hide them. It's good for new learners to see that everyone can make mistakes.

Good activities to get started with will be those that are of most interest to the user. Perhaps a favourite book? Or maybe a game? Or visiting a favourite place?

Whatever you start with, try to identify some useful phrases you know will be relevant for your topic and model them as you read, play or visit.

You can watch a video demonstrating the use of modelling with AAC here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=fIFNMky22-U

