

Communicating with Autism

A beginner's guide to AAC

What is AAC?

While autistic children often face communication challenges, it's not unusual for them to find their voice when they discover high-tech AAC. For many, it will be the first time they've been able to share wants, needs and feelings in a way others can understand. A recent independent study found that high-tech AAC solutions nearly double quality of life for the people who use them, while easing stress for their caregivers.¹

Short for augmentative and alternative communication, AAC is any form of communication besides natural speech. Sign language, facial expressions and speech generating devices are all forms of AAC. Autistic kids often respond to high-tech AAC, because it makes communication both visual and interactive.

Parents sometimes worry that a high-tech communication solution will prevent their child from developing speech. Research indicates the opposite is true. Using a high-tech AAC device often encourages other forms of communication, including natural speech.

Learning AAC does take practice, not only for the communicator, but also for their care team. It helps to ensure everyone who supports your child, including their teachers, feels comfortable with their solution. Let's get started.

1. Augur. *Exploring the Benefits of Assistive Communication*. 2024.

The AAC Journey

The AAC Journey consists of five phases. If you haven't already teamed up with a speech therapist, you'll want to find one to recommend solutions, as well as a Tobii Dynavox professional who can guide you throughout the process.



Evaluation

Discuss & assess your child's communication needs and goals with a speech therapist.



Recommendation

Discover and try AAC devices and apps with the support of a Tobii Dynavox Solutions Consultant.



Funding

Apply for financial coverage for your child's solution with the support of your speech therapist and Tobii Dynavox.



Setup

Personalize your child's AAC solution in collaboration with your Solutions Consultant.



Support

Adapt the solution to meet your child's goals as they develop over time.

Evaluation

You know your child better than anyone. As part of an AAC evaluation, a speech therapist will want to interview you about their communication at home, school, and anywhere else they spend time. Your child's speech therapist will also encourage them to explore different forms of AAC--from printed communication boards to high-tech devices—to find what works best for them.



DAGG-3

Short for Dynamic AAC Goals Grid, DAGG-3 is an assessment tool that helps your speech therapist track your child's progress over time, while easing collaboration among your child's care team.

PCS

Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) are simple, colorful visual representations of words and phrases. By making language visual, PCS help autistic kids build vocabulary and develop a richer understanding of the world. The PCS library consists of 85,000 symbols and counting.

We really focus on the uniqueness of every child and understand that they might not fit a perfect box.

– Amanda, Speech Therapist

Recommendation

Following your child's AAC evaluation, your speech therapist will make a recommendation to a physician who can write a prescription for the solution that works best for them.

Find the best solution



Light-tech AAC

You and your child can start learning Picture Communication Symbols (PCS) right away. You'll find printed communication boards that mirror different vocabulary collections (called "pagesets") on our website. Having the same symbols in both light-tech and high-tech formats can boost language learning for your child.

Speech generating apps

TD Snap is a symbol-based communication app that makes language visual and interactive. Different vocabulary collections (pagesets) within the app address different communication styles and needs. Your child's speech therapist can even create custom pages based on their interests. Many symbols also include diversity options to represent your child's family and friends.



Touch devices

When it comes to touch devices, we offer a variety of customizable solutions designed with autistic kids in mind. Both TD Navio and TD I-110 are purpose-built & durable, giving kids the freedom to bring their device virtually anywhere they want to go. The devices include a protective case to shield the device in active and messy environments.

Brock became a lot more outgoing after getting his device. He loves being able to tell us what he wants without confusion.

– Brianna, Brock’s mom



Mobility, comfort & safety

There are a few key AAC features and accessories that can help your child use their device in different ways. TD Navio’s adjustable leg makes it possible to position the device at any angle. A padded shoulder strap makes it comfortable to carry any device from place to place.

Depending on your child’s fine motor skills, their speech therapist might recommend keyguards, which create a barrier around each key to prevent accidental presses.

If your child has physical disabilities, you may want to ask your speech therapist about alternate access methods, such as an eye gaze device, head mouse or switch.

Voice customization

Your child will have the option to choose a digital voice to pair with their device. You’ll hear this voice speaking the words your child selects within TD Snap. The app includes a library of synthetic voices, representing different ethnicities, ages and genders. Tobii Dynavox also supports voice donation, where a sibling or friend can digitize their voice for your child to use with their communication solution.

Funding

Considered durable medical equipment, communication solutions are generally covered through insurance or funding, depending on where your family lives. While different regions have different options, your child's speech therapist and Tobii Dynavox will help you determine the best one for you. You can manage your child's application with ease through the eFunding site.

Setup

Once your child's device arrives, their speech therapist will work with a Tobii Dynavox Solutions Consultant to customize TD Snap to their communication style, needs and interests.

Customize your child's solution



A variety of pagesets

A pageset is a collection of symbols organized to support a particular approach to communication. Within the TD Snap communication app, you'll find a variety of pagesets. Many young autistic communicators begin with Core First. Based on the most frequently used words in your language, Core First Learning provides a logical starting point on your child's path to literacy.

Boardmaker

Designed for special education classrooms, the Boardmaker app offers printable games, books and other materials, all of which use PCS. You can also create visual schedules and achievement charts to use with your child at home.



Support

As your child progresses with AAC, their needs and goals will likely change. Your TD Solutions Consultant will work with you and your speech therapist to ensure their solution continues to reflect the communicator they want to become.



The benefit of using a company like Tobii Dynavox is having an ecosystem of support.



— Erin, TD Solutions Consultant

Tech support

A team of knowledgeable AAC experts is here to help via phone or online chat—whichever is most comfortable for you.

Reliable warranty

If your child's device gets damaged, Tobii Dynavox devices come with an industry-leading 5-year warranty which covers accidents to ensure peace of mind.

Learning Hub

You can rely on the Learning Hub to deepen your knowledge of AAC at any point during your child's communication journey. Pick up new tips any time with our live or on-demand courses.

MyTobiiDynavox

A cloud-based resource for backing up and managing TD Snap, MyTobiiDynavox makes it easy to share your child's communication profile with their care team and ensure consistency across platforms.



Ready to start exploring AAC with your child?

Connect with a Solutions Consultant near you.



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