

Communicating with ALS

A beginner's guide to AAC

What is AAC?

If you're reading this guide because you've recently been diagnosed with ALS, please know you're not alone. The ALS community is a remarkable network of resilient humans who continually find ways to create hope.

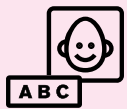
A recent independent study found that AAC nearly doubles quality of life for people with communication challenges.¹ Short for Augmentative and Alternative Communication, AAC is any form of communication besides natural speech. As ALS can affect the muscles that control speech, people sometimes use AAC devices to talk to friends and family, discuss health concerns with their doctors, and stay connected to the world around them.

Learning AAC does take practice. Starting early is the best way to ensure your solution supports what's most important to you about communication. 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 your journey.

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

The AAC Journey

The AAC Journey consists of five phases. Your speech therapist or a Tobii Dynavox professional will be at your side through each one.



Evaluation

Assess your communication needs and goals with a speech therapist.



Recommendation

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



Funding

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



Setup

Personalize your AAC solution in collaboration with your Solutions Consultant.



Support

Adapt your solution to meet your changing needs and preferences with your Solutions Consultant.

Evaluation

Getting comfortable with AAC early helps to ease stress later on. You'll want to schedule an AAC evaluation as soon as you feel ready. During the appointment, you'll work with a speech therapist to assess your communication abilities, needs and preferences, with the goal of developing a long-term plan. Make sure to connect with a Tobii Dynavox Solutions Consultant for expert guidance on AAC technology.



Preserve your verbal identity

ALS can lead to weakness in the muscles that control speech, causing some patients to strain to get their words out.

Voice preservation technology lets you create a synthetic version of your voice before this happens. If your voice feels strong and clear, make a digital copy as soon as possible. Even if you don't end up pairing it with a device, you at least want to have the option.

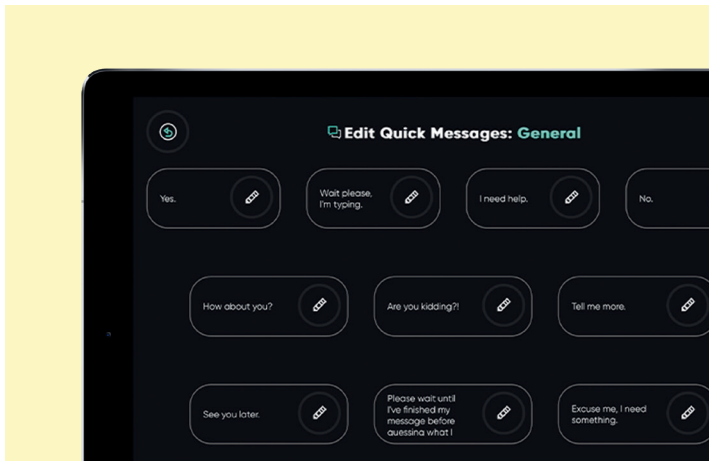
**My access to all the tools I need is now
just a glance away.**

– Monique, United States

Recommendation

Following your AAC evaluation, you'll begin testing out different communication apps and devices to find the combination that works best for you. Remember, the earlier you start learning AAC, the more time you'll have to ensure your solution reflects your identity.

Explore apps & devices



Speech generating apps

If you decide to use a speech generating device, you'll want to try an app that lets you convert text into speech, such as TD Talk. Learning TD Talk will allow you to start banking the language that makes up your unique verbal identity. The app works across different devices, so you can preserve that identity without having to learn a new interface if your solution changes over time.

Touch-based devices

People with ALS who can use their hands sometimes rely on touch-based solutions like TD Navio to communicate. Users can access stored phrases or create new sentences within their chosen communication app.



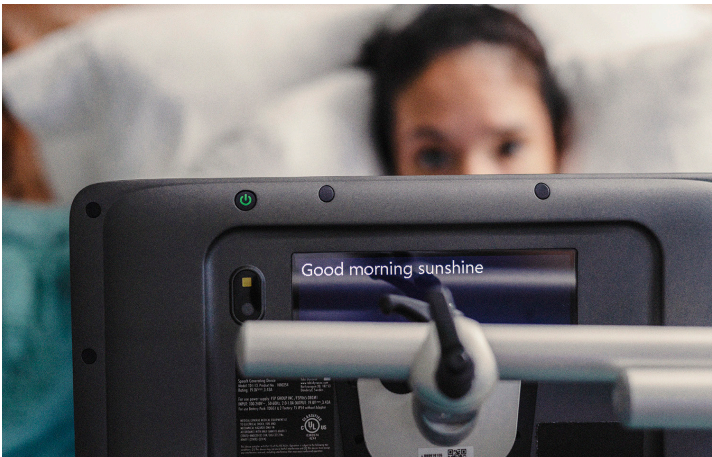
Eye gaze devices

People who can't use their hands might rely on an eye gaze speech generating device to communicate. Devices like TD I-Series and TD Pilot let you speak with a digital voice by looking at the words you want to say within your chosen communication app.

My [communication device] is my window to the world. My life would be boring without it.

– Marco, Germany

Navigate from anywhere



Wake up ready

Wake on gaze is a function that lets you turn on a device using only your eyes. Many people with ALS find it comforting to be able to communicate with a companion or caretaker in the middle of the night.

Stay connected

Whether you like to read the news, search random questions, email, or online shop, AAC makes it easy to access your favorite corners of the Internet. An eye gaze app like TD Browse lets you search, scroll, and click around with the movement of your eyes. Similarly, TD Phone allows you to make & receive phone calls and send & receive text messages from your device.



Communicate wherever

Device mounts give you the flexibility to use your communication solution wherever you go. Equipping your wheelchair with a mount will allow you to communicate as you move about your day. Wheelchair mounts also make it easier to communicate in public places. To use your device in your bed or favorite chair, ensure your solution includes a rolling floor mount that will allow you to position it at many different angles.

Funding

Communication solutions are generally covered through insurance or funding, depending on where you live. While different regions have different options, your speech therapist and Tobii Dynavox will help you determine the best one for you. You can manage your application with ease through our eFunding site.

Setup

Once your device arrives, you'll be ready to explore the many personalization options available to you. Whatever you like to do, there's likely an app that can help you do it.




Enhance your solution


Whether you love getting lost in a favorite album, binging your favorite show or keeping up with friends on social media, you can access the entertainment apps that keep you connected through your communication device. You'll also find apps that allow you to use smart home technology such as lighting and temperature controls.

Support

As ALS progresses, you will likely experience changes in your ability to communicate. To ensure ongoing success with AAC, continue working with Tobii Dynavox to ensure your solution supports your needs and preferences.



It can feel like learning a new language: intimidating and awkward at first. But if you stick with it, it pays off. I think my life is so much more fulfilling because I can still express myself.



— Allistair, United States

Tech support

Don't hesitate to contact 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 device gets damaged, Tobii Dynavox devices come with an industry-leading 5-year warranty to ensure peace of mind.

Learning resources

You can pick up new tips any time with our live or on-demand courses, which range from a few minutes to more in-depth learning, depending on your schedule.



Ready to start exploring AAC devices and software?

Connect with a Solutions Consultant near you.

