

What is augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)?

All persons, regardless of the extent or severity of their disabilities, have a basic right to affect, through communication, the conditions of their own existence.

- American Speech and Hearing Association

Communication is a vital part of life. Often, people with speech and/or motor disabilities are left in silence because they do not have the tools needed to communicate and participate in the world around them. This is where AAC comes in.

What is augmentative and alternative communication (AAC)?

Augmentative (in addition to) and Alternative (instead of) Communication (AAC) is:

- Any method (device, system, or technique) that helps a person with significant communication challenges communicate more effectively.

Examples include:

- A student uses his or her communication device to answer a question in class.
- Someone points to a picture of food on the menu at a restaurant.
- At home, an adult uses an AAC device to call his or her doctor.

Think about it this way, all people, even those who can speak, use different ways to communicate. We might use gestures, pointing, facial expressions, body language, and writing “instead of” speech and “in addition to” speech.

Examples include:

- At work, you might use a computer to send an email.
- At home, you might use your voice in addition to a hand signal to get someone’s attention.
- In a meeting, you might use a facial expression to tell a friend that you are bored.

Remember: Communication isn’t just speech! It’s the process of giving and receiving information between people and can be achieved in many different ways.