

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOUR CHILD GETS AN AAC SYSTEM



AAC LEARNING TAKES TIME

LEARNING AAC IS LIKE LEARNING A SECOND LANGUAGE

Learning a new language can take years in a supported environment.

Your child's use of the system will likely grow over time, not all at once.

“My son’s AAC journey is way more challenging than I ever imagined. It takes so much time and patience and a lot of practice. Focus on your progress even if it seems very slow and on some days you might feel like it doesn’t even exist. Even putting two words together like ‘eat eggs’ has the power you never thought. It might change a whole day.”



SPEECH THERAPY CAN HELP

FIND AN AAC SPECIALIST

Your child will probably need support from professionals who specialize in AAC to learn to use the system effectively.

“Finding a speech therapist who knows how to properly use AAC devices is very important. I thought every SLP was trained how to use AAC but that’s not true at all.”



HAVE A BACKUP

HAVE A BACKUP SYSTEM AND ACTION PLAN

The system will break sometimes. Make sure to have a backup system and an action plan for getting the device fixed quickly.

EVERYONE NEEDS TO LEARN THE NEW LANGUAGE

LEARNING AAC REQUIRES SUPPORT FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Learning a the new language of AAC means that everyone is going to need to learn the new language and how to model its use at home, at school, and in the community.

“You really have to start learning AAC along the way with your child and at first you are the main AAC user. Ask for help and find a great AAC coach not only for your child, but mostly for yourself. You need to become the best teacher and example for your child.”



YOU MAY NEED TO CHANGE COMMUNICATION HABITS

SOME HABITS LIMIT CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

When a child has difficulty communicating, it's common to fall into habits like picking the topic of conversation, talking more, or telling your child to say certain words. However, when a child gets a speech generating device, supporting AAC use often means pausing more to allow your child a turn to talk and other shifts to support communication.

“You discover many habits of yours while communicating and you need to work on them really hard. Still to this day I have to remind myself every day....counting in my head, giving my child a chance to tell me.”



CUSTOMIZE THE SYSTEM

MEANINGFUL & MOTIVATING WORDS ARE KEY

Most AAC devices come with pre-programmed vocabularies. While we do want to preserve the organization of these vocabularies, we absolutely want to add words for family members and friends as well preferred foods, toys, TV shows, and more (to logical locations on the device).

