

Ideas for Practicing AAC and Communication with Your Child

Modeling/Aided Language Stimulation

This strategy is about showing your child how to use his/her AAC device by teaching the meaning of the symbols and modeling language. Don't worry! You don't need to be an expert in AAC, just be willing to learn and try this out. Your child is learning with you. There is great advantage in sharing the experience of learning something new together.

Start with one word a day. Need help deciding which word to focus on first? Check out the chart in the *Read Together* section of this document. Begin with week 1 and pick 1 word. Find it on your child's device. Everytime you say the word out loud, touch it on the AAC device at the same time. Practice by saying it or a short phrase with the word in it (e.g., like, like it, not like, just like you, I like that, do you like this, etc.) See how many times you can say the word you select in different situations across the day. Remember to keep models short, but complete.

Each time you say the word, touch it on the AAC device. This shows your child how to find the word and demonstrates how to use it appropriately in communication. If your child does not like you to touch his/her AAC device, use a low tech overlay that matches the system he/she uses. Make sure to get your child's attention while you model it. If using a low tech overlay, say the word aloud as you point to it.

Remember, modeling is just that - it's showing how you did something. Don't expect that they will repeat what you modeled right away. It takes time to learn something new. We often say "*Inspire, Don't Require*" when it comes to modeling. This is a reminder that it's not about compliance, but rather a process of learning to communicate.

No fancy lesson plan needed for modeling. You can do it anywhere, anytime, with anyone, in any situation. Bring your child's AAC device wherever you go and model the word as it relates to what you are doing with your child.

Additional Resources for Modeling

1. Aided Language Stimulation Explained Video by Chris Bugaj (HIGHLY RECOMMEND watching this video as you get started with modeling)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fIFNMky22-U>
2. ICAN Talk Clinic AACtion Points - The AAC Institute
<http://www.icantalkclinic.com/aaction-points/aided-language-stimulation1>
3. PrAACtical AAC Blog by Carol Zangari
<https://practicalaac.org/tag/modeling/>

Read Together

Make a habit of reading to your child and letting your child read to you every day. Even if he/she is a non-reader, your child can describe the photos in the book to you to tell the story in his/her own words. While reading books together, focus on these first 40 words - modeling them on the AAC device, saying them with emphasis while reading, modeling their use in sentences, retelling the story with these words, etc.

Week	Core Vocabulary Words to Address
1	I, like, not, want
2	help, it, more, different
3	who, she, you, he
4	where, up, on it
5	me, make, get, look
6	what, need, are, is
7	some, put, all, this
8	don't, that, go, do
9	when, finished, can, here
10	open, turn, stop, over

Table from Project-Core.com

Try Reading Wordless Books

- Children can make up dialog between characters
- You make up the story, there is no “right” or “wrong” way to read it
- Struggling readers can feel confident in reading a book
- Great for all ages and in any language
- Learning to notice small nonverball cues can help children make inferences and develop social-emotional skills
- Targets for Wordless books: story telling, vocabulary building, comparing/contrasting, describing/sequencing events, answering simple to complex questions, make inferences and predictions

Before starting a book, take a picture walk. Go through the pages in the book and talk about what you see and vocabulary from the story. This sets the stage for the story.

Let your child lead - Don't feel pressure to tell the story. See what your child comes up with. If they need help, start by telling your child what you are thinking. (e.g., "Uh oh, the door is open. I bet he's going to come out of his cage.") Then follow up with "What do you think will happen?"

Additional Resources on Wordless Books

1. Reading Rockets
<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/sharing-wordless-picture-books>
2. Scholastic
<https://www.scholastic.com/parents/books-and-reading/raise-a-reader-blog/reading-without-words-why-and-how-wordless-books.html>
3. Common Sense Media
<https://www.commonsensemedia.org/lists/wonderful-wordless-books>

Recasting

This strategy works to add or correct information without interfering with the natural flow of communication. It's another form of modeling. A recast is a response to what a child says in which the adult/communication partner repeat some or all of the child's words and adds new information while maintaining the basic meaning expressed by the child. It aims to teach/correct grammar or meaning of words. Think of it as the adult repeating the corrected form of language.

1. How to use Recasts:
 - a. use them frequently in your communication with your child
 - b. emphasize (e.g., with a slightly louder volume) and then pause just after you add the corrected/new information
 - c. Do NOT make the child repeat - this may happen naturally though

Sample Recasts:

Child communicates	Communication Partner/Parent response
"want"	"You want more milk."
"He walk in"	"Yes, he walked in"
"Boy are playing"	"The boy is playing ball."

Additional Resources on Recasts and AAC

1. ICAN TALK Clinic - the AAC Institute
http://www.icantalkclinic.com/uploads/2/4/1/0/24107263/131118_recasts_aac_resource.pdf
2. PrAACTical AAC Blog - by Carol Zangari
<https://practicalaac.org/strategy/recasting-a-language-facilitation-strategy/>

More Ideas...

Give full attention to your child when he/she starts to communicate with you. Establish your child's attention prior to communicating with him/her.

Encourage, praise and acknowledge all of your child's attempts to communicate. Show that you understand his/her communication by completing what he/she asked of you, if appropriate.

Accept and validate ALL attempts to use their AAC device. Repeat back their word plus one more in a phrase or sentence to expand it and give it meaning. An example might be if they say "sleep", to then act out "sleeping" and exaggerate with snoring and yawning and then waking up. Pause and wait for them to say "sleep" again...or something else! Let your child take the lead.

Pause and wait after speaking to your child. This gives your child a chance to continue the conversation, learn to take appropriate turns in conversation, and time to respond.

Play "Simon Says" with the AAC device. Practicing finding and using verbs is important for building core vocabulary. This context also is supportive of practicing 2 word sentences and directing someone else's actions (e.g., Mommy run/sit/go/stop/turn/eat/drink/sleep/etc.)

Select easy-to-follow, familiar stories for young children. A child will ask you to read the same story over and over. Use this as an opportunity to ask different questions about what is happening, wonder aloud ("I'm wondering what the main character is thinking here...?") to work on metacognition, make a new connection (text to real word, text to text), or place emphasis on a different aspect of the story each time it is shared.

Have your child listen to a sentence or paragraph you read and retell what you've just read in his or her own words. This is a great time to practice using core vocabulary, or high frequency common words, and modeling on the AAC device.

Encourage any play that is interactive with a sibling, other children, grandparent, cousin, anyone! Building blocks, acting out books, cooking, playdoh, music, pretend play with animals, dolls, babies are all good choices. A child's first pretend play is copying what you do - cooking, cleaning, etc. Encourage the communication partner to model the words on the child's AAC device.

Daily routines are a great time to work on language skills because they use familiar actions and words. Routines provide a context for repeated practice and help give structure to day.

Here are some examples of how you can incorporate core vocabulary into your daily routines.

<http://www.project-core.com/use-the-universal-core-classroom-poster/>

Sing to your child! Children learn through rhythm, rhyme, and repetition. Songs promote vocal play, imitation, attention, listening and communication. For example: "The Itsy Bitsy Spider," "Twinkle, Twinkle little star" or "The Wheels on the bus." Once they know the song, pause and let them fill in an upcoming word. Or have them be the "DJ" and tell you when to "go/more/turn on" or "stop/turn off" with the music.

Additional Resources

Project Core - The Center for Literacy and Disability Study at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill <http://www.project-core.com/>

Modeling the Universal Core <http://www.project-core.com/quick-reference/>

Dynamic Learning Maps - Core Vocabulary First 40

<https://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds/files/2018/09/dlm-core-vocabulary-40.pdf>

PrAACtical AAC Bog - Carol Zangari <https://praacticalaac.org/>

<https://praacticalaac.org/praactical/praactical-resources-dealing-with-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

The Center for AAC and Autism

<https://www.aacandautism.com/lamp/using-an-aac-device-at-home>

Prentke Romich Company (PRC) <https://www.prentrom.com/caregivers>

<https://www.prentrom.com/assets/uploads/PRC-literacy-planner-02202020.pdf>

For additional support and information, please connect with your child's school-based speech-language pathologist (SLP).