

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

Many individuals have communication impairments or experience limitations in speech, language, reading and writing as a result of acquired disabilities, congenital disabilities, or neurological differences such as neurodegenerative diseases, cerebral palsy, stroke, patients in critical care settings, or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). A Speech Pathologist can assist individuals with communication impairments, and their family and friends, to find ways to improve communication.

Communication is an essential human need, with primary functions of communication including expression of wants and needs by requesting and being direct, protesting/saying something is wrong, commenting, sharing information, giving opinions, asking questions, starting conversations, social closeness, and etiquette. If an individual does not have any means to achieve these communication functions, this is where the use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) can be used to supplement existing speech, used as an alternative where speech is absent or not functional, or temporary when used by patients in critical care settings.

AAC is a broad term for a group of methods such as symbols, selection techniques and strategies, that support the use of functional and effective communication to help individuals express their thoughts, feelings, ideas, wants, and needs.

Different AAC Types

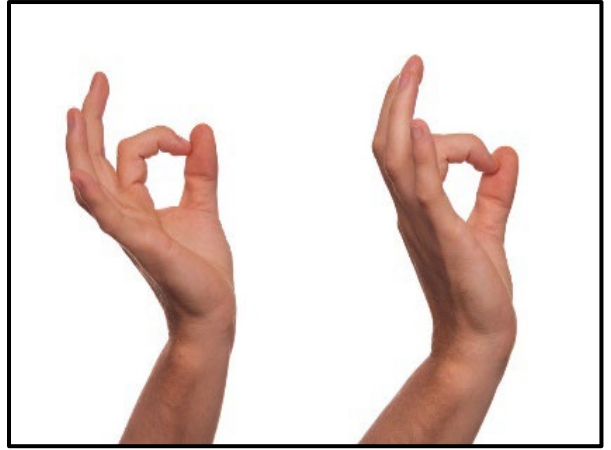
There are a large range of different types of AAC, which may be either unaided or aided systems. Aided AAC systems may further be categorised into either high or low technology systems. These systems may be integrated with an individual's use of body language and abilities to convey messages. See page 2 for different AAC types.

Individuals may use one form of AAC alone or utilise a combination of unaided AAC, low-tech aided AAC, and/or high-tech aided AAC forms. People who use AAC should always have access to their communication tools or devices.

Unaided AAC

Incorporates communication strategies that do not require external resources to the individual. Unaided forms require some degree of motor control.

Some examples of unaided AAC include facial expression, body language, gestures, and sign language.



Aided AAC

Aided AAC involves external resources which are used to assist the individual's communication. Aided AAC can be either a low technology system (low-tech) or a high technology system (high-tech).



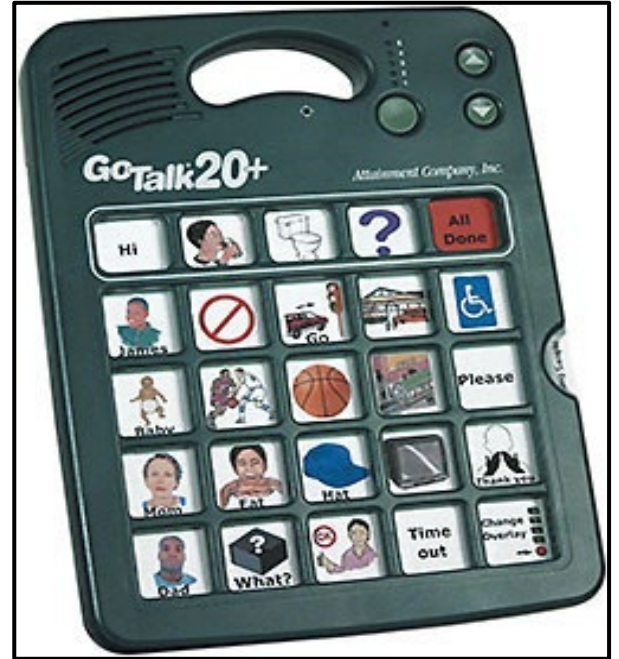
Low-tech Systems/High-tech Systems

Low-tech systems are resources that aid in communication which are not battery powered or non-electronic. In some cases, low-tech systems are less expensive and may be constructed with hands-on materials at home. Low-tech systems may sometimes be more durable and easier to use in environments where high-tech devices are unable to be used (for example in the shower or swimming). Common examples of low-tech systems include object symbols, communication boards, pictures/photographs, visual schedules, PODD Books and eye gaze spelling boards.



High-tech Systems:

Examples of high-tech systems include speech output devices, desktop computers and mobile technologies. High-tech AAC systems can be presented on static or dynamic displays. On static display devices, the language is organised into a grid format and may allow for recorded speech to be stored within the device which is then activated by pushing the corresponding button. Dynamic display devices differ in that page links are used to navigate and select symbols/words, as the main page leads to access to various other pages.



More information

For further information, or advice, about any item contained in this information sheet, please contact Independent Living Centre Tasmania Inc.(ILCT):

- Call 1300 452 827 to speak to a health professional.
- Visit our website www.ilct.com.au or email info@ilct.com.au.
- ILCT visits communities around Tasmania. Contact ILCT to find out when we will be in your area.

ILCT provides Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, Speech Pathology, and Allied Health Assistant services, on a fee-for-service basis. Our team delivers comprehensive assessments and support that may include assistive technology, home modifications, communication aids, and other tailored interventions to enhance independence and quality of life.

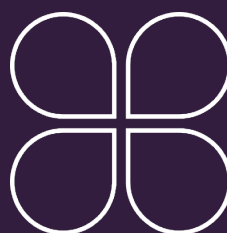
ILCT specifically provides supports to those aged over 18, who are Tasmanian residents and are of any culturally-diverse background. ILCT are a registered provider under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

Independent Living Centre Tas Inc. (ILCT) acknowledges the generous support of the Tasmanian Government – Department of Health through the Home and Community Care (HACC) Program, and the Australian Government – Department of Health and Aged Care through the My Aged Care – Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP). Their ongoing contributions enable the continued provision of these information sheets and our information services.

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