



Partner Skills: Modelling AAC

Speaking AAC to teach AAC

What is AAC?

- AAC is short for: Augmentative and Alternative Communication
- Augmentative Communication:
Strategies used at the same time as speech
Can make communication clearer or more specific
- Alternative Communication:
Strategies used to help if speech is difficult or unavailable
- Lots of people use different forms of AAC throughout their day

Unaided AAC

- AAC strategies that use the body and face
- Examples include gesture, manual signs, and facial expression

Aided AAC

- AAC strategies that are external to an individual
- Can be electronic or non-electronic
- There are hundreds of types of aided AAC
- Examples include dedicated software and apps, photo books, picture symbol books, keyboards, cards...

What is 'Modelling' with AAC?

- Using AAC strategies (aided and unaided) to highlight speech and messages using a form the individual might later use
- Modelling is a way to teach AAC, not test it

Why do we model AAC?

- Modelling aided and unaided AAC strategies gives individuals an example of how they might communicate later
- It creates an environment where using AAC is a 'normal' way of communicating
- Modelling is **not** done to 'get' someone to say a particular message



Consent



- Always get consent before using someone else's aided system. This could look like: a nod, a smile, no negative response...
- Respect a person's right to refuse a request. Do not assume that a "yes" yesterday is a "yes" today
- Be ready with an alternative copy of someone's system in case they say no

Communication Partner Skills: Modelling AAC

Teaching AAC by using AAC to express your own messages

Step 1

Be prepared

- Get to know how to say at least a few words using the AAC system
- Have another copy of the system to use or practice with
- Get to know the individual, how they communicate, and how they use their AAC system

Step 2

Observe the individual

- What are they interested in right now?
- What activities are they engaged by?

Step 3

Initiate that something is about to be said by modelling the way the individual would initiate. One way to do this could be to raise your hand and say: "I have something to say!"



Step 4

Ask before using someone's system or use a different copy

Step 5

Say the message. Point to/press words on the AAC system at the same time

Step 6

Wait.

Show the individual they have the floor. Give them space to participate if they want to

There is no requirement for them to do so

What to model?

As many different types of language functions as possible. www.assistiveware.com/learn-aac/consider-communication-functions

Changes to word structures can also be modelled, e.g., ways to add plurals or tenses (-ed & -ing). www.assistiveware.com/learn-aac/teach-grammar

How much?

Try to model one level above what the individual is currently doing now

If they are using single words, model two-word combinations

Complete sentence can be used when speaking, even if only key words are modelled

When?

Any time. As often as is possible. Any time the opportunity to talk comes up

Who?

Everyone, even the individual's peers, should be given the opportunity to use AAC to communicate. Conversations around consent are important to have with everyone

Improving modelling skills:

- Get another copy of an individual's aided system (or at least part of it):
 - Free copy of an app
 - Paper copy of at least the first page
- Start by modelling a few words at a time until confidence improves