



# A Guide to AAC: Common Questions

Assistive technology is a piece of equipment, device or system that provides people with practical solutions to everyday life activities. You can search our National Equipment Database [www.askned.com.au](http://www.askned.com.au) to view a range of products online.

**Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) refers to any system, device or technique (e.g. signing or pictures) that improves the ability of a person with a communication impairment to communicate effectively.**

## **Does AAC hinder or stop further speech development?**

Research tells us AAC does not interfere with but facilitates speech development. The introduction of AAC devices has not been associated with a loss of speech skills.

AAC assists in improving the success of a child's communication through increased interaction and initiation. When an adult uses speech along with their child's AAC system, it can be most successful in developing speech comprehension & production. Language skills also develop through the use of AAC. In addition, the use of signing and visual supports can enhance comprehension skills.

Children who use speech and AAC will always choose to use speech first if they are able to, as it is the quickest and easiest way to get their message across.

Using AAC does not mean you are giving up on speech development. You will continue to work on speech development alongside AAC to ensure your child has an effective way to communicate with everyone around them.

## **Is AAC a last resort?**

It is a common misconception that AAC should only be used as a last resort. It is this belief that can cause AAC interventions to be introduced too late. It can be very difficult for professionals to predict when a child may develop "easy to understand" or functional speech. So, while therapy may continue to focus on developing speech skills, it is unfair to leave a child with little or no means to communicate effectively.

Early use of AAC can promote language development and have a positive effect on speech, cognitive skills and social communication. Using AAC will provide your child with more opportunities to interact and usually reduces their frustration.

## **What age should we start using AAC?**

AAC intervention can start at any time. There are no cognitive or other prerequisite skills required for a child to start using AAC.

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## Are voice output devices better than low-tech communication aids?

Choosing the right communication aid will depend on the needs of the individual. Some users may find low-tech systems such as communication books and boards more appropriate. They can be simple, reliable and used in any environment.

High tech communication devices provide users with a voice of their own. They can be useful to gain attention and to interact across distances.

It is not necessary to choose between high- and low-tech communication aids as these systems can be used either together or separately within different situations.

## Indigo delivers information and training on augmentative and alternative communication equipment for people of all ages.

Indigo's team consists of Occupational Therapists and Speech Pathologists, who assist people in choosing from the wide range of AAC technology options available.

Having a consultation can enhance knowledge and confidence in selecting the best technology options with suitable features to meet individual needs.

Consultation can be done by phone, by email, by appointment in person or by videoconference.



Indigo has a large range of equipment on display and products available to trial. Our experienced health professionals can provide strategies and advice on the right product for you.

Please contact us using the details below for further information or to book an appointment. Appointments can be conducted by phone, email, face-to-face or video call.

Did you know Indigo also offer a range of other services? Please ask us when you call, or visit [www.indigosolutions.org.au](http://www.indigosolutions.org.au)