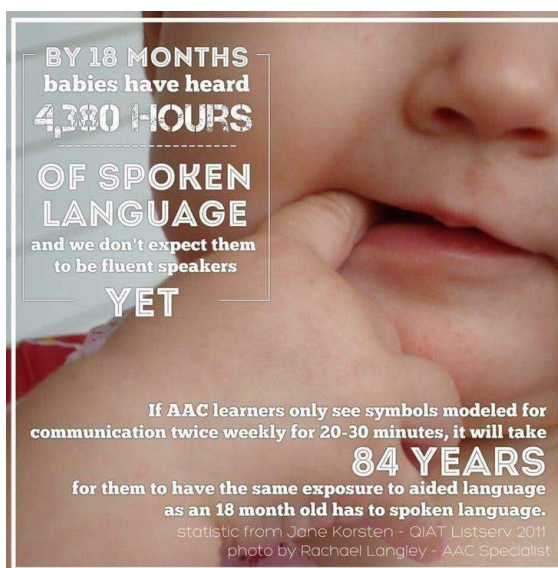


Aided Language Stimulation – Top Tips for Communication Partners.

Did you know?



It may be simple math, but these numbers are truly confronting! It shows us how crucial it is for AAC users to be surrounded by communication partners who are confident to model language to them on their AAC system. This means that family members, friends, teachers, therapists, carers - everyone, speaking and modelling language using their AAC system, all the time! This is known as *aided language stimulation (ALS)*.

What does the research say?

- ALS Increases symbol comprehension and use (Drager et al,2006; Harris and Reichle, 2004)
- It provides models for appropriate language and use (Cafiero, 1998)
- It gives users a model for how AAC can be used and for what purposes (Ronski and Sevcik, 1996)
- It is an effective method for teaching grammar, sentence structure and vocabulary (Lund, 2004)
- It Improves utterance length and complexity (Bruno and Trembath, 2006)

These results were also reported in a systematic review of the literature, conducted by Samuel C. Sennott, Janice C. Light, and David McNaughton (2016). The authors found that aided language stimulation lead to improvements in all areas of communication,

including increased turn taking, increased understanding and use of vocabulary, increased sentence length and use of grammatical morphemes.

You can use different strategies to model language to an AAC user...

1. **'Self-talk'** - speak about what you are doing in the moment whilst pointing to the symbols on the users' AAC system. You can model the complete sentence, or just the key words in your sentence.
2. **'Recasting'** – Respond to the AAC user, by repeating their phrase back to them on their AAC system, without errors.



For example:

User: "I willn't go"

Communication Partner: "You won't go?"

3. **'Expansion'** – Respond to the AAC user, by repeating their phrase back to them, with a few extra words and/or more complex grammar added.

For example:

User: "Doggy eat."

Communication Partner: "Yes, the doggy is eating grass."

[Watch Gail Van Tatenhove use these strategies with an AAC user.](#)

Top tips for communication partners

1. **Presume potential.**
Expect that the user can learn and will benefit from AAC and aided language modelling.
2. **Always make the AAC system available!**
If it's a high tech device, make sure it's charged, out of their bag and with them wherever they go! Accessories such as shoulder strap or cross body bags may assist some users to carry the device with them.
3. **WAIT!**
It's very easy to keep on talking, but make sure you pause after you speak and model and wait for the user to respond.
4. **Learn the language in their AAC system.**



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Each low tech and high tech AAC system will have its own symbols, pages and layout. To begin with, you may want to learn the location of a small number of core words, along with favourite nouns (people, places, items) and practice finding them in the system. Set yourself the goal of learning 5 new words each week. Some systems may have a 'word finder' feature, which shows you the location specific words. If you're not sure what core words are, there are some examples on the [AAC Language Lab](#).

5. Make a plan.

Think about the types of words/phrases you will model with the user ahead of time. You can use this [handout](#) help you plan this out. You may want to write out a script for yourself, to think about the types of core words/word combinations you could model. You can use this AAC script. Here is an example of an [AAC script](#).

6. Model a variety of words.

There are lots of different words you can model. Not only words to request ('want it', 'more') but to reject ('don't want'), protest ('stop it!') to comment ('good', 'Oh no!'), describe (e.g. 'The big, green apple'), to greet ('hey!') or to ask a questions (e.g. 'who', 'what', 'where').

7. Respond to all communication attempts.

When you're speaking with the AAC user, observe their facial expressions, vocalisations, gestures or words generated on their AAC system. We need to acknowledge any cues given and treat these as intentional forms of communication. If you're unsure what they're trying to say, you might say something like "I can see you're looking at the _____, does this mean you want _____" or "I'm not sure you're trying to tell me. Do you mean this?" and find the word on their AAC system.

8. Use open ended questions

Allow the user to 'show what they know' and take the lead. For example, instead of asking, "Did you have a good day?", consider asking "Tell me about your day".

For more tips and helpful resources, visit the links below.

- [Communication partner 'Dos and Don'ts'](#)
- [Aided Language Stimulation Explained](#)
- [How We Do It: S'MORRES and Partner Augmented Input with Dr. Jill Senner & Matthew Baud](#)



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- [Training Communication Partners by Simplifying the Task of Modeling- Gretchen Storm, MS, CCC-SLP](#)
- Journal Article ' AAC Modelling Intervention Research Review. Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities' Sennott, S. C., Light, J. C., McNaughton, D. (2016). AAC Modelling Intervention Research Review. Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 41(2), 101-115. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282398591_AAC_Modeling_with_the_iPad_during_Shared_Storybook_Reading_Pilot_Study