

Completing an NDIS AT Assessment Form for AAC Prescription

Tips & Suggestions from the Liberator Team

The current NDIS Assistive Technology “General Assessment Template” is available from this website:

<https://ndis.gov.au/providers/at/assessing-at.html#template>

Be sure to check you are using the latest version of the form.

Know your audience

- The person reading the report may not be a Speech Pathologist or Allied Health Professional. The document should be aimed at someone who does not have allied health knowledge.
- Avoid using jargon, acronyms or abbreviations. If they are being used be sure to specify them.
- Where possible, provide specific examples of successes or challenges that demonstrate the client’s needs. This can help the reader to get a better picture of why the prescribed AT is reasonable and necessary.
- The AT Assessment form will be written differently to a regular therapy report or clinical recommendation, which is usually strengths-based. It is important to remember that the NDIS is an insurance model funding scheme and different language & terminology is required.

Be evidence based

- Refer to data collected (e.g. Realize Language & Data Logs, GAS Goals – more info at <https://liberator.net.au/support/resources/realize>)
- Specify all environments that the AT was trialed in and progress in these environments
- Refer to research or articles that support the request

Use NDIS terms

- Always link the AT to NDIS goals within the client’s plan
- The participant’s permanent impairment/s need to be described in relation to activity limitations and the consequent impact on participation in daily, community and where appropriate, economic life.
- Read and specifically address the content prompts provided in each section of the AT template

Be familiar with the Reasonable and Necessary Supports (section 34 of the NDIS Act 2013)

- In order for any request to be approved by the NDIS it must meet ALL of the criteria outlined in the Extract from the NDIS Act: Reasonable and Necessary supports, listed on Page 2 of the AT form.
- Refer to the Reasonable and Necessary supports throughout the report and use the terms outlined such as; ‘value for money’, ‘supports social/economic participation’, ‘support is effective regarding current good practice’

Be familiar with the AT and Consumables Guide & the AT Level of Complexity Classification

(more information available here: <https://ndis.gov.au/providers/at/supplying-at.html>)

- Know what support item is being requested and refer specifically to the support item (e.g. dynamic display dialogue unit, eye gaze system, key guards)
- Know what Level of Complexity the AT being requested fits under. This will assist in determining the advisor characteristics and type of assessment required.

Support Item in AT and Consumables Guide	Description	Example
communication software for computer or tablet	Software to convert the computer or tablet to a communication device	Communication apps such as LAMP WFL, Proloquo2go and TouchChat
dynamic display dialogue units	Speech generating device that has a dynamic screen	Accent, NOVA Chat, Chat Fusion, Liberator Rugged 7
eye gaze system	Hardware and software accessed via eye gaze	Accent with NuEye
head pointer	Assistive product to access the screen	Accent with NuPoint
keyboards/ key guards	Guards that assist in accessing the screen	Touch guide

Useful websites

Summary of the NDIS Act:

http://www6.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/legis/cth/consol_act/ndisa2013341/s34.html

NDIS Operational Guideline for AT:

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/Operational-Guideline/including-4.html>

NDIS Operational Guideline for Reasonable and Necessary Supports:

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/operational-guideline/planning/statement-participant-supports.html#9.2>

Summer Foundation: 'Getting the language right' – guide to writing reports for the NDIS:

<https://www.summerfoundation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/getting-the-language-right-web.pdf>

Valid: '10 Steps to Excellent NDIS Therapy Reports' – guide to writing reports for the NDIS:

<https://www.valid.org.au/sites/default/files/10-steps-to-excellent-National-Disability-Insurance-Scheme-NDIS-therapy-reports-v1.pdf>

Suggestions for information to include in the AT Assessment Report Template

These suggestions are based on successes and feedback from therapists, and have not been provided by the NDIA.

PART 2 – Participants Goals and AT assessment request

- Specify relevant goals from NDIS plan. For each relevant goal, specify how AT will help meet it.
- Specify Speech Pathology goals - remember to ensure that goals are functional and focus on participation and independence (visit <https://liberator.net.au/support/education/aac/goal-setting>). Assessments such as the Individually Prioritised Problem Assessment (IPPA) can be used to identify the need for AT.

PART 3 – Evaluation and Assessment

A: BACKGROUND

This section should provide a clear picture of the client for the reader. Discuss the following:

- o Diagnosis and any coexisting conditions
- o Relevant medical history
- o Living situation and family/social supports
- o Environments accessed such as preschool, school, respite
- o Disability limitations to activity participation based on age and skill (specify communication).
- o Levels of support required to complete tasks. Be specific about the level of support required and include examples.
- o Any behaviours related to disability or communication skills
- o Overview of previous intervention history including supports that have or haven't helped

You may wish to refer to the Participation Model/ ICF within this section.

B: FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

Refer to Speech Pathology assessment findings including:

- o Observations
- o Specify receptive language, expressive language, pragmatics, speech etc. For example:
 - X's expressive communication is characterised by X. This negatively impacts on his/her ability to *communicate clearly/ get needs met/ build relationships/ ask for help etc.*
 - X's receptive communication is characterised by X. This impacts on his/her ability to *follow instructions to participate in the class routine/ comprehend the routine resulting in behaviours such as etc*
 - X has poor speech intelligibility characterised by X. This impacts X's ability to successfully communicate resulting in X.
- o Explicitly outline the impact of communication on social functioning and opportunities – help the reader see the impact of the client's communication difficulties on their independence and participation in their community
- o Focus on FUNCTION- how do they communicate day to day, what are the barriers, what communicative functions does the participant currently use.
- o Include reference to specific assessment tools used. For example, SETT assessment, AAC profile, Likert Rating Scales, Pragmatics Profile, etc. For more information about these assessments visit <https://liberator.net.au/support/education/aac/assessment-evaluation>.
- o Communication skills in more than just one environmental setting

Outline how AT would assist in addressing the issues and concerns identified. Also discuss how the goals identified cannot be met unless the specified AT is available.

PART 4 – Exploration of Options

Do not assume that the person reading the report is a speech pathologist. **All** options considered or trialled must be specified, with a clear explanation of why there were not suitable. It can be beneficial to also discuss low technology options considered or trialled.

The PDF version of the AT template has very little space for your rationale. We suggest using the Word Document so you can format the table as required.

If requesting eye gaze, discussion must be included around other access methods, such as: direct access assisted by a keyguard, switching, and head pointing. Demonstrate that these alternative approaches have at least been considered before having been discounted, or preferably that several have been trialled.

You can also include the preferred option that you have chosen at the end of the table, but save the detail about why it is the most suitable option for subsequent sections.

	Describe features/functions of AT solutions and other options trialled that make goal achievement possible	Trialled (T) or Considered (C)? Include trial details	Describe why it was not considered suitable (not applicable for preferred option)	Estimated cost (include training¹)
Option	<p>Specifically name the option of the system considered or trialled.</p> <p>Use feature matching.</p> <p>When discussing high technology options specify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hardware <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Battery life ○ Durability ○ Speakers ○ Dedicated or not dedicated ○ Warranty ○ Environmental Control Options ○ Computer access & social media integration Software <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Language representation (alphabet based, single meaning pictures, semantic compaction) ○ Vocabulary file (LAMP WFL Full, Unity 144) ○ Navigation (category/page based, sequences) ○ Number of cells Access <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Direct or indirect ○ If indirect specify method <p>Specify what Support Item under the AT and Consumables guide the high technology option is</p>	<p>If a trial has been completed specify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Length of trial - Environments that the trial was completed in - Communication partners that utilised the option <p><i>The specifics of the trial of the preferred option can be discussed in Part 5B.</i></p> <p><i>If you have considered an option but not trialled it, explain why it was not trialled (especially for alternative access options).</i></p>	<p>Link this information to the features/ functions described as well as those identified during assessment</p>	<p>Specify amount of time required for programming and training separately.</p> <p>The AT Template states the following: ¹ <i>NOTE training in device use is included and expected to be accomplished within 2 hours. Provide rationale and hours required if more extensive or specific training is indicated. A quote is not required.</i></p> <p>Please note: Liberator offers a free 60-90 minute on-site or virtual training session for all new device purchases, in addition to unlimited free telephone & email support for the life of the device. Be sure to include this information when providing your rationale for the recommended option in Part 5B, and explicitly outline the cost of training for devices or apps that do not offer free training in the table above.</p>

PART 5 – Recommended Option

A: Please state all supports required

Outline additional supports required for the AT. Some therapists use this section to request intensive Speech Pathology intervention following prescription of the device, others write a separate letter of recommendation in preparation for a plan review.

B: Explain the evidence for the recommended option as the most suitable/ appropriate alternative which will facilitate achievement of the participant’s goals, compared to others considered

The specifics of the trial of the preferred option should be detailed here. Refer to:

- GAS (Goal Attainment Scaling) outcomes from trial – more info at <https://liberator.net.au/support/education/aac/goal-setting>
- Janice Light’s Communicative Competencies in AAC (linguistic, operational, social and strategic) – can be discussed in the context of the AAC Profile. For example:
 - Linguistic: discuss pragmatic functions used, improvements to expressive and receptive language
E.g. “when using the LR7 X could make choices, request, answer yes/no questions and use some descriptive concepts. The device provided a communication strategy that allowed her/him success with both familiar and unfamiliar communication partners. The vocabulary builder option was active when X was using the devices. This meant that only targeted vocabulary was shown. This assisted him to learn the sequences for targeted words.”
 - Strategic: discuss navigation skills, level of support required, ability to make changes to the system/add words,
E.g. “Strategic competence: X was able to navigate LAMP WFL to locate frequently used vocabulary such as food items, as well as motivating activities like games. He required direct verbal prompting and gesture to assist him to locate vocabulary used less frequently and to use more than one word phrases. X would pick up on cues from communication partners when she/he had chosen an incorrect icon and correct his error. For example: if X identified that a picture was the same and the Speech Pathologist said "no, it is different", she/he would independently clear the word 'same' from the speech display bar and complete the sequence for 'different'
- Functional impact on participation and independence
- IPPA (Individually Prioritised Problem Assessment) to indicate how AT made positive difference.
- NDIS and speech pathology goals and how having access to the recommended AT meets them

More information about the assessments listed above is available at:

<https://liberator.net.au/support/education/aac/assessment-evaluation>

Discuss any environmental supports (e.g. carers, teachers, aides)

Discuss long term benefits of AT. For example: vocabulary available will suit the needs of the participant in the future, durability of device, warranty, availability of data logging to monitor progress and for goal setting.

Discuss any potential risks of the participant not having AT. For example: behaviours, inability to participate socially or economically etc

Describe the successes & outcomes of the trial in all environments where the device was used. This may include parent observations, reports from school staff, and examples of use in the community.

C: Are there any other factors that need resolution in order to implement the above?

These may not be relevant to many clients. Please state:

Yes – XXX *OR* Not applicable

D: Are there any additional features, customisation, specification recommended that is considered to be above the minimum or standard of this support for reasonable and necessary funding?

Often not applicable for AAC. Consider your individual situation.

PART 6 – Recommended AT Specification

Description of AT device

Provide sufficient details for the NDIA to identify the exact device you are requesting, including vocabulary option chosen etc - obtain from supplier website if needed.

Obtain a quote of the device from website and attach at the end of the report. Reference the attached quote number here. You can immediately generate your own quote for a Liberator device on our website.

Is the AT solution/device likely to be available on reissue?

There are currently very few services around Australia that offer Liberator's dedicated devices second-hand / on re-issue, so the answer to this question is most often going to be 'no'.

Extra Features

Include items such as carry strap or bag here. These items should also be included the quote from the supplier.

Are plans in place for the ongoing maintenance and repair of the recommended AT?

Liberator provides a comprehensive 3-year warranty on all its major voice-output communication devices (Accent, Chat & LR7 devices). This include parts, labour and freight in both directions, and covers physical damage & battery replacement. Be sure to state this if applying for a Liberator communication device, clearly outlining that repairs will not be out of pocket.

It is recommended that after the 3 year warranty has expired, a participant requests a set amount of money in their plan be put aside for repairs if required.

For more information about the NDIS AT funding process, please visit

<https://liberator.net.au/support/funding/ndis>