

Step-by-Step AAC Implementation Guide

Step 1: Establish the Layout & Build Motor Memory

- **Keep Symbol Placement Fixed:** Select a balanced core board or device layout and lock icon locations.
- **Avoid Frequent Rearranging:** Keep core vocabulary items (e.g., *STOP*, *GO*, *WANT*, *HELP*) in static locations to allow the communicator to develop motor automaticity and muscle memory.
- **Ensure High Accessibility:** Make sure the communication display or device is physically accessible across all environments (classroom, cafeteria, playground, therapy room).

Step 2: Practice Aided Language Stimulation (Modeling)

- **Model Without Demands:** Point to core symbols on the display while speaking naturally during everyday activities.
- **Do Not Force Imitation:** Provide input continuously without demanding that the student immediately press or touch the symbols back.
- **Match Plus One:** Model at the student's current communication level or one level above (e.g., if the student communicates with single words, model 2-word combinations).

Step 3: Target Core Vocabulary Across Communication Functions

Introduce vocabulary systematically across four main functional communication areas:

1. **Asserting Control:** Model core words like **STOP**, **GO**, **MORE**, **WANT**, and **HELP** during high-motivation activities to teach self-advocacy and choice-making.
2. **Basic Affirmation & Action:** Model **YES**, **NO**, **PLAY**, **DO**, and **EAT** during daily routines, play sessions, and mealtimes.
3. **Directing Actions:** Incorporate spatial and directional words (**GIVE**, **UP**, **DOWN**, **IN**, **OUT**) during physical play or structured tasks.
4. **Socializing & Expressing Opinions:** Model greetings and descriptors (**HELLO**, **BYE**, **GOOD**, **NOT**, **FINISHED**) during circle time, peer interactions, and activity transitions.

Step 4: Advance to Multi-Word Combinations

Once single-symbol selection is established, explicitly model 2–3 word phrase structures using core-plus-fringe combinations:

- **Action + Object / Noun:** MORE PUDDING
- **Stop / Action + Verb / Activity:** STOP TICKLES

- **Action + Location:** GO PARK

Step 5: Maintain Presumption of Competence

- **Set High Expectations:** Assume the learner is capable of understanding language and growing their communication system over time.
- **Provide Diverse Contexts:** Ensure opportunities to communicate go beyond simple requesting (e.g., rejecting, commenting, asking questions, greeting).
- **Monitor & Collaborate:** Review communication growth regularly with the speech-language pathologist, educational team, and family to adjust vocabulary access as language expands.