



Northern Therapy Group

5820 Stoneridge Mall Road, Suite 203

Pleasanton, CA 94588

www.ntg-inc.com

haleh@ntg-inc.com

AAC Terms/Abbreviations

- **AAC** = Augmentative Alternative Communication
- **AT** = Assistive Technology
- **ASHA** = American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
- **ISAAC** = International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication
- **YAACK** = Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Connecting Young Kids
- **WATI** = Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative
- **Augmentative Alternative Communication:** All forms of communication used to express thoughts, needs, desires, wants, and ideas.
- **AAC system** = According to ASHA (2017), an AAC system is "*an integrated group of components, including the symbols, aids, strategies and techniques used by individuals to enhance communication*. Communication encompasses more than just spoken words it includes gestures, eye gaze, body postures, sign language, photographs, printed words, objects, pictographs, and Braille".
- **Assistive Technology:** Is any item, piece of equipment, software program, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities.
- **SGD** – Speech Generating Device
- **Synthesized Speech** = Artificial production of human speech
- **Digitized Speech** = Real voice, recorded speech
- **Aid** = The term aid refers to "*a physical object or device used to transmit or receive messages (e.g. communication book, board, chart, mechanical or electronic device, computer)*" (ASHA, 1991, p. 10).
- **Strategy** = A strategy is defined as a "*specific way of using (AAC) aids, symbols, and/or techniques more effectively for enhanced communication. A strategy, whether taught to an individual or self-discovered, is a plan that can facilitate one's performance*" (ASHA, 1991, page 10).
- **Technique** = Technique refers to "*a method of transmitting messages (e.g. linear scanning, row-column scanning, encoding, signings, and natural gesturing)*" (ASHA, 1991, page 10).
- **Gestures** = Some gestures, such as shaking or nodding the head or shrugging the shoulders, are so common that they are generally understood by everyone. Other less obvious, but still easily recognizable, gestures can also be used for communication. For example, the American Indians made up a group of hand signals that they could use for basic communication at their intertribal meetings. These gesture systems are easy to use, but detailed conversation is not possible.
- **Sign languages** = These are languages composed of different hand shapes originally developed for people with severe hearing loss or deafness. They require a certain amount of manual dexterity, and are not understood well by people who do not know the system. Different sign languages have developed in different countries.
- **Finger-spelling** = Letters are formed by different shapes of the hand and fingers. Each word is then spelled out. Finger-spelling often is used with sign language for spelling of proper names, technical terms, and the like.
- **Speech** = Oral symbols/speech can be spoken by a person or generated by computer.
- **Language representation methods** = Speech output AAC systems use one or a combination of three basic language representation methods: single meaning pictures, alphabet-based methods, and semantic compaction. An understanding of the performance differences and appropriate choices of method(s) are very important to the effectiveness of the communication system.



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- **Single meaning pictures** = Each word in the vocabulary is represented by a different picture. Thousands of pictures are needed for a modest vocabulary size. Meanings must be taught since most words are not naturally represented by pictures.
- **Alphabet-based methods** = These include spelling, word prediction, letter codes, and whole words. Literacy is required.
- **Semantic compaction** = This method uses sequences of multi-meaning icons to represent vocabulary items.
- **Core Vocabulary** = The small number of words that are used for the majority of communication. For most people, about 85% of communication is accomplished using just a few hundred words.
- **Extended vocabulary** = The words that are used for the 15% of communication not covered by core vocabulary.
- **Language activity monitoring** = This is the automatic recording of the content and time of language events. The information is then analyzed to produce a report of various quantitative summary measures of communication performance.
- **VOD** = Voice Output Device (VOCA)
- **PECS** = Picture Exchange Communication System
- **Eye Gaze** = A choice is made by looking at the picture/object
- **Communication Symbols** = Symbols of objects, photos, or drawing used to communicate
- **Communication Book/Board** = A book, a board, or pages of board containing communication symbols
- **Direct Selection** = The Augmentative Alternative Communication user directly selecting symbols to communicate - by touch. If the user's motor control is not good enough for pointing, an electronic device used for pointing may be used.
- **Switch Scanning** = Activating a switch when a choice is presented (visual/oral)
- **Static Screen** = Communication board/screen does not change
- **Dynamic Screen** = When the screen opens/changes to another screen
- **Partner Assisted Scanning (PAS)** = AAC user indicating a choice by a communication partner manually scanning objects, symbols, or words
- **Scanning** = choices are presented one at a time to the user. The user chooses the symbol/group of symbols wanted by signaling at the appropriate time.
- **Multi-modal Communication** = The use of more than one communication method by one person (e.g. signs, gestures, icons, voice, device).
- **TOTAL COMMUNICATION** = Is an Approach mainly used for deaf education; different modes of communication (sign, oral, auditory, written, visual aids) to communicate.
- **Encoding** = The user will learn to use specific codes for each message (e.g. Numerical codes, shapes, and letters). It is important for both the user and the communication partner to know the codes or have a reference code sheet available.
- **Unaided communication systems** = rely on the user's body to convey messages. Examples include gestures, body language, and/or sign language. (ASHA 2017).
- **Aided communication systems** = require the use of tools or equipment in addition to the user's body. Aided communication methods can range from paper and pencil to communication books or boards to devices that produce voice output (speech generating devices or SGD's) and/or written output. Electronic communication aids allow the user to use picture symbols, letters, and/or words and phrases to create messages. Some devices can be programmed to produce different spoken languages. (ASHA 2017).