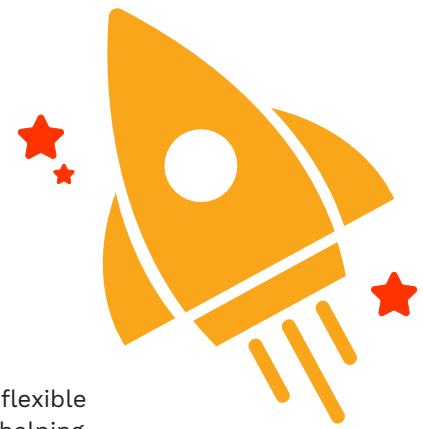


AAC and Autism



Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is characterized by unique patterns of communication, with individuals demonstrating varying degrees of speech and language support needs.

AAC is an evidence-based communication support that provides autistic individuals with a flexible tool for effective communication. AAC can be customized to meet each individual's needs, helping them express their wants, needs, thoughts, and ideas in ways that work best for them.

Evidence-Based Benefits of AAC for Autism



Enhanced Communication Outcomes

Research shows that AAC interventions, particularly speech-generating devices, improve both communication and spoken language outcomes (Sterrett, K. et al., 2022). Importantly, AAC does not hinder speech production. Studies demonstrate increased speech output among those who use SGDs (Schlosser & Wendt, 2008).



Expanded Communication Functions

AAC devices support a variety of language functions beyond basic requesting:

- ✓ **Self-advocacy:** Expressing needs, preferences, and boundaries
- ✓ **Social functions:** Greeting, commenting, sharing experiences
- ✓ **Information seeking:** Asking questions, requesting clarification
- ✓ **Reciprocal Interactions:** Turn-taking and social communication (Griffin, Holyfield, Lora, & Caldwell, 2023)

If an individual cannot communicate the following language functions through speech, they may benefit from AAC. Even if an individual has some spoken language, AAC can act as an augmentative support for moments when they are not able to use spoken words.



Customizable and Individualized Support

Every autistic individual is unique and their AAC tools should be personalized and customized to their needs. AAC devices offer customizable vocabulary and layouts, the combination of multiple communication modalities, and the ability to grow with the user's developing skills.

Many individuals diagnosed with autism are also gestalt language processors, meaning they learn language in chunks rather than single words. AAC can incorporate this learning style through pre-programmed meaningful phrases and flexible device programming to fit all language development patterns.

AAC and Autism Best Practices



**Presume
Competence**



**Honor
Communication
Preferences**



**Make AAC
Accessible from
Day One**



**Provide
Consistent
Access**

References

- Griffin, B., Holyfield, C., Lora, E. R., & Caldwell, N. (2024). Increasing linguistic and prelinguistic communication for social closeness during naturalistic AAC instruction with young children on the autism spectrum. *Augmentative and alternative communication* (Baltimore, Md. : 1985), 40(3), 168–181.
- Schlosser, R. W., & Wendt, O. (2008). Effects of augmentative and alternative communication intervention on speech production in children with autism: a systematic review. *American journal of speech-language pathology, 17*(3), 212–230.
- Sterrett, K., Holbrook, A., Landa, R., Kaiser, A., & Kasari, C. (2023). The effect of responsiveness to speech-generating device input on spoken language in children with autism spectrum disorder who are minimally verbal. *Augmentative and alternative communication* (Baltimore, Md. : 1985), 39(1), 23–32.