Playing With Purpose

An AAC Toy Companion for The Helper Play Kit

A play-based vocabulary guide for modeling AAC and targeting core words across everyday toddler play. Use these ideas with the kit, with other toys, or with simple household items.



The Helper Play Kit

- ***Sorting & Matching Toys***
- ***Daily Routine Cards***
- ***Art & Drawing Kits***
- ***Water & Sink Play***
- ***Stacking & Counting Toys***

AAC Implementation Tips for All Activities:

AAC Integration Strategies:

- Model vocabulary on the AAC device throughout every activity
- Pause and wait for a response (10+ seconds)
- Use aided language input — select an icon as you speak
- Honor all communication attempts, including approximations
- Repeat target words in natural contexts
- Favor core words that work across many activities
- Vary language functions: request, comment, protest, share joy

Differentiation Ideas:

- **Emerging:** single words (go, stop, more, colors)
- **Expanding:** 2–3 word phrases (I want ___, put on ___)
- **Advanced:** full sentences and descriptive language
- **Gestalt processors:** phrases and gestalts that carry across settings

Programming Tips:

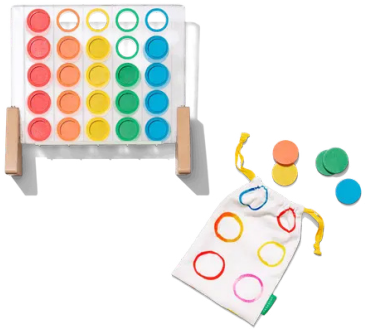
- Send families a materials list ahead of time with household alternatives
- Use screen share for slideshows, spinners, and short videos
- Use household items for sensory play (rice, beans, cotton balls)
- Prep the toy or another similar toy at home before the session

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Sorting & Matching Toys

Focus: Colors · Sorting · Matching · Cause & Effect · Turn-Taking



Drop & Match Dot Catcher

Play Idea 1 · Drop and Watch

Take turns dropping pieces into the container and watch what happens. Build a “ready, set, go!” routine before each drop and celebrate together. Pause and wait for the child to request “more” or “again” before handing over the next piece.

Target Vocabulary: go, stop, more, again, drop, in, look, wow, my turn, your turn

Play Idea 2 · Match by Color

Sort pieces by color into groups, labeling each color on the AAC device. Model “same” and “different” as you compare pieces, and model “match!” when two colors go together. Talk about which color has the most.

Target Vocabulary: colors, same, different, match, more, put, in, look, help, all done

Play Idea 3 · Where Did It Go?

Hide a few pieces around the play area and search for them together. Model “where is it?” and comment with prepositions as you find each one. Bring them back to sort or drop again.

Target Vocabulary: where, find, found it, in, on, under, behind, look, here, there

Extend the Play

PEER PLAY · COLOR TEAMS

Give each child a color to collect. Peers race to find and sort their color, cheering each other on with the AAC device. First to fill their group wins — then swap colors and play again.

Target Vocabulary: my turn, your turn, colors, more, go, stop, you did it, good job, help, again

SENSORY · SORTING BIN DIG

Bury matching pieces in a bin of dry rice or beans. Have the child dig to find each one, then sort by color. Talk about how it feels as they search.

Target Vocabulary: in, out, dig, find, feel, touch, colors, more, wow, textures

TELETHERAPY · VIRTUAL COLOR SORT

Share your screen with a simple drag-and-drop color-sorting game or slideshow. Model "ready, set, go!" before each move and have the child pick the next color on their device.

Target Vocabulary: go, stop, colors, more, same, different, put in, look, my turn

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Water & Sink Play

Focus: Practical Life · Actions · Sequencing · Clean-Up · Basic Concepts



Super Sustainable Sink With Cups & Plates

Play Idea 1 · Wash the Dishes

Pretend to wash and dry play dishes at a sink or bin. Narrate the steps — wash, rinse, dry — on the AAC device and comment when something is clean.

Target Vocabulary: wash, rinse, dry, clean, dirty, wet, more, all done, help, again

Play Idea 2 · Fill and Pour

Fill and pour water between cups and containers of different sizes. Talk about "full," "empty," and "more" while pouring, and model "uh oh" for spills.

Target Vocabulary: pour, fill, full, empty, more, in, out, wet, uh oh, stop

Play Idea 3 · Bath Time for Toys

Give toys a bath in soapy water, then dry them off. Talk about who's dirty, who's clean, and what happens at each step on the device.

Target Vocabulary: wash, clean, dirty, wet, dry, soap, water, more, in, out

Extend the Play

PEER PLAY · WASH-UP LINE

Peers form a wash-and-dry line — one washes, one rinses, one dries. They pass items along, requesting "more" and saying "your turn" on the AAC device.

Target Vocabulary: my turn, your turn, wash, dry, more, give, help, next, we did it, all done

SENSORY · BUBBLE BIN

Fill a bin with soapy bubbles and water toys. Scoop, squeeze, and splash while talking about how it feels. Model "wet," "more bubbles," and "splash."

Target Vocabulary: wet, splash, more, in, out, squeeze, pour, feel, wow, all done

TELETHERAPY · SINK SETUP AT HOME

Have families set up a small water bin ahead of time. Guide simple pouring and washing steps over video, pausing for the child to choose what to wash next.

Target Vocabulary: wash, pour, more, wet, clean, first, next, all done, help, look

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Stacking & Counting Toys

Focus: Counting · One-to-One · Colors · Spatial Concepts · Actions



Double-Sided Sunny Day Puzzle

Play Idea 1 · Build It Up

Stack or add pieces one at a time, counting together as the tower or row grows. Model “up,” “more,” and “on top,” then knock it down and start again.

Target Vocabulary: up, more, on, put on, one, two, three, knock down, again, uh oh

Play Idea 2 · Color Patterns

Arrange pieces in a color pattern or in rainbow order, labeling each color on the AAC device. Ask what color comes next and let the child choose.

Target Vocabulary: colors, next, more, same, different, put, on, look, my turn, help

Play Idea 3 · How Many?

Count how many pieces you can add before they fall or fill a row. Compare “more” and “less,” and celebrate the biggest number with a cheer.

Target Vocabulary: one, two, three, more, less, big, small, count, all done, wow

Extend the Play

PEER PLAY · ADD ONE EACH

Peers take turns adding one piece each, saying their color or number on the AAC device first. Work together to see how tall or long you can build it.

Target Vocabulary: my turn, your turn, up, more, one, colors, put on, uh oh, we did it, again

SENSORY · BIN BUILD

Hide stacking pieces in a sensory bin of beans or shredded paper. Dig them out one at a time and add each to the build, counting as you go.

Target Vocabulary: in, out, find, more, up, one, two, feel, wow, all done

TELETHERAPY · BUILD WHAT I BUILD

Both you and the child have pieces. One builds and gives directions on the AAC device while the other copies without looking. Reveal and compare at the end.

Target Vocabulary: put on, on top, next to, colors, same, different, up, more, help, stop

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Art & Drawing Kits



Anywhere Art Kit With Tempera Paintsticks

Focus: Creating · Describing · Requesting · Colors · Choice-Making

Play Idea 1 · Choose Your Colors

Offer a choice of colors and let the child request each one on the AAC device before drawing. Model "I want ___" and comment on what you're making together.

Target Vocabulary: I want, colors, more, draw, look, like, different, help, all done, mine

Play Idea 2 · Draw and Tell

Draw simple pictures together and describe them — big, small, up, down. Take turns adding to each other's drawing and talking about it.

Target Vocabulary: draw, big, small, up, down, colors, more, look, I made, what's that

Play Idea 3 · Sticker Scenes

Build a scene with stickers or shapes, placing each one while modeling prepositions and location words on the device. Talk about where each piece goes.

Target Vocabulary: put, on, off, up, down, next to, here, there, more, help

Extend the Play

PEER PLAY · GROUP MURAL

Peers create one big drawing together, each requesting colors and describing their part on the AAC device. Talk about what everyone added at the end.

Target Vocabulary: my turn, your turn, colors, more, look, I made, we did it, share, help, done

SENSORY · MESSY ART

Try finger paint, shaving cream, or textured materials. Talk about how it feels and looks while creating. Model "messy," "wet," and "clean up."

Target Vocabulary: wet, messy, clean, more, colors, feel, touch, mix, all done, wow

TELETHERAPY · DRAW WHAT I SAY

On a shared online whiteboard, the child directs the drawing using their AAC device — choosing colors, size, and what to add. Bring their ideas to life on screen.

Target Vocabulary: draw, colors, big, little, up, down, more, like, don't like, all done

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Daily Routine Cards



Let's Map It Out Routine Cards

Focus: Routines · Sequencing · First / Then · Time Concepts · Following Directions

Play Idea 1 · What Comes Next?

Lay out picture cards for a familiar routine — getting dressed, mealtime, bedtime. Put them in order together, modeling "first," "next," and "last" on the AAC device.

Target Vocabulary: first, next, last, then, go, all done, more, look, help, what's next

Play Idea 2 · Act It Out

Pick a routine card and act it out together — brushing teeth, washing hands, putting on shoes. Narrate each action on the device as you go.

Target Vocabulary: put on, take off, wash, brush, go, stop, help, me, you, again

Play Idea 3 · First/Then

Use two cards to build a "first ___, then ___" plan. Model choosing a not-so-fun task first and a favorite activity next. Great for building cooperation and predictability.

Target Vocabulary: first, then, want, go, all done, more, help, yes, no, wait

Extend the Play

PEER PLAY · ROUTINE RACE

Give peers a set of routine cards to sequence as a team. They talk it out on their AAC devices, deciding together what comes first. Act out the finished routine together.

Target Vocabulary: first, next, my turn, your turn, same, different, go, help, we did it, again

SENSORY · FEEL THE ROUTINE

Pair each routine step with a sensory item — a washcloth for washing, a spoon for eating. The child feels each item and matches it to the right card while labeling the action.

Target Vocabulary: wash, eat, sleep, feel, touch, first, next, wet, dry, more

TELETHERAPY · COOK-ALONG

Share a slideshow of daily-routine pictures. The child picks what happens next on their device and describes it. Talk about their own routine at home.

Target Vocabulary: first, next, last, go, all done, more, look, I see, help, my turn

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