AbleNet ableteams
LET THE CONVERSATION BEGIN

Motor Planning & Grid Size

At first glance, a robust vocabulary board may look like too much for the AAC user, but there's often a good reason to start with a larger grid size. When choosing a grid, begin with **the largest size the user can successfully access**. A larger grid opens access to a more robust vocabulary system, increasing opportunities for language exposure, communication across contexts, and personalized vocabulary that improves engagement.

A larger grid from the beginning also helps preserve a consistent **motor plan**, the user's ability to remember where icons are through repeated movement patterns. Start small, and the user may later have to relearn icon locations as the grid expands. That's understandably frustrating! Still, grid-size selection should consider the individual's fine motor abilities, visual needs, and diagnosis.

Starting with a larger grid

- Access to robust language
- Preserves a motor plan, which reduces cognitive load
- Access to more personalization, which can increase engagement
- Increases modeling opportunities

Starting with a smaller grid

- Limits access to robust language
- Moving to a larger grid can change the motor plan
- Relies more on memorization and navigation, fewer buttons shown means higher cognitive load
- Less ability to personalize
- Decreased modeling opportunities

The takeaway: Start with the largest accessible grid to protect the motor plan and keep robust language within reach, then tailor to the individual user's needs.