



AbleNet Goal Bank

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Introduction

If you’ve ever found yourself staring at a blank screen before an IEP meeting, unsure how to craft meaningful goals for a student who uses AAC—you’re in good company. Goal writing can feel overwhelming, especially when balancing both language development and AAC use.

This resource is designed to help you write clear, functional goals that can be adapted to meet each student’s individual needs. Whether you’re focusing specifically on AAC or embedding AAC into broader language goals, this guide offers structure, flexibility, and inspiration to support your planning process.

We recognize that every school, district, or state may have its own guidelines when it comes to IEP goal development. These goals are intended as starting points and should be tailored to fit your students’ unique needs and align with local expectations. Feel free to add qualifiers like “given visual supports,” “with verbal prompting,” or “using a specific communication modality” as appropriate.

When in doubt, be sure to check with your district or team about specific expectations related to AAC and IEP.

Analytic Language Processing Goals

Based on AAC Core Competency Areas (Light, 1989)

Linguistic

1. Long Term Goal (Emerging Communication): The student will use multimodal communication (e.g., gestures, vocalizations, switch activation, AAC device) to intentionally communicate a basic need, want, or response in 80% of observed opportunities.
 - a. The student will make a choice between two preferred items or activities using multimodal communication in 4 out of 5 opportunities across 3 consecutive sessions, with minimal to moderate prompts.
 - b. The student will respond to yes/no questions using any available modality (e.g., head nod, visual choice, AAC button) with 80% accuracy during therapy activities across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - c. Given consistent modeling, the student will activate one symbol (e.g., “more,” “go,” “help”) on their AAC device to participate in a familiar routine or activity in at least 3 opportunities across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - d. Given consistent modeling, the student will use multimodal communication (e.g., gestures, vocalizations, switch activation, AAC device) to intentionally communicate a need or want in at least 5 opportunities across 3 consecutive sessions.
2. Long Term Goal (Language Expansion): The student will use multimodal communication (e.g., AAC, spoken, ASL, etc.) to expand utterances from 1–2 words to 4–6 word phrases or sentences during therapy play and activities with 80% accuracy as measured by clinician data collection.
 - a. The student will combine 2–3 words (e.g., “want ball,” “go outside”) to make a short phrase at least 5 times per session across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - b. The student will add a describing word (e.g., color, size) to expand a phrase (e.g., “big dog,” “red car”) in 4 out of 5 opportunities across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - c. The student will use a simple sentence frame (e.g., “I want __,” “Let’s go __”) to create a 4+ word utterance during language activities in 4 out of 5 opportunities across 3 consecutive sessions.
3. Long Term Goal (Syntax) The student will use a multimodal communication approach (e.g., AAC, spoken language, ASL, etc.) to produce grammatically

accurate sentences during sessions with 80% accuracy as measured by clinician observation.

- a. During a therapy-based language task, the student will combine symbols to form correct sentence structures (e.g., subject + verb, subject + verb + object) with 75% accuracy across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - b. The student will use morphological markers (e.g., plurals (“dogs”), possessives (“Mom’s hat”), and regular past tense verbs (“jumped”)) with 80% accuracy during therapy-based language activities across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - c. The student will respond to WH questions (who, what, where) using grammatically correct responses (e.g., “He is running,” “The book is on the shelf”) with 80% accuracy across 3 consecutive sessions.
1. Long Term Goal (Vocabulary and Concepts): The student will use a multimodal communication approach to accurately respond to WH questions, describe attributes, and demonstrate understanding of basic concepts with 80% accuracy as measured by SLP data.
 - a. After a shared reading or therapy activity, the student will answer WH questions (who, what, where) using their AAC system with 80% accuracy across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - b. The student will label or describe at least one attribute (e.g., color, size, shape) of given items with 80% accuracy across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - c. Given visual and verbal supports, the student will demonstrate understanding of basic concepts (e.g., same/different, big/small, in/out) using AAC responses in 4 out of 5 opportunities across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - d. Given visual stimuli, the student will label educational vocabulary using their AAC system with 80% accuracy across 3 consecutive sessions.
 2. Long Term Goal (communication across purposes): The student will use their multimodal communication to express at least four communicative functions (e.g., requesting, commenting, protesting, shared enjoyment) across multiple settings with 80% accuracy as measured by therapist or team data.
 - a. The student will independently request desired objects or actions using their AAC system or multimodal communication at least 5 times across 3 sessions.

- a. The student will initiate at least two comments per session (e.g., “There’s the ball” or “It’s red”) using their AAC system over 3 consecutive sessions.
 - c. The student will protest or advocate for wants/needs using multimodal communication (e.g., vocalization, gesture, device) at least 3 times across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - d. The student will express shared enjoyment (e.g., “That’s funny!” or “I like that!”) at least 2 times during a session using a multimodal communication approach across 3 consecutive sessions.
6. Long Term Goal (Answering Questions): The student will respond to questions and/ or communicative exchanges using multimodal communication (AAC, gestures, verbal approximations) with 80% accuracy during therapy and classroom activities as measured by team or clinician data.
- a. The student will accurately respond to yes/no and WH questions using their AAC system or other communication modes with 80% accuracy across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - b. Given an open-ended question, the student will respond with a 2-3 word answer with 80% accuracy across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - c. The student will answer questions in the classroom setting with verbal and visual support in 2 out of 3 opportunities across 3 consecutive sessions.

Quick Implementation Tips

- Pair goals with both visual and verbal supports as needed
- Collaborate with teachers and paraprofessionals to help generalize goals across settings
- Include consistent modeling during sessions to reinforce language use

Operational

1. Long Term Goal (Engagement): The student will demonstrate consistent engagement with their AAC system (e.g., exploring icons, touching the screen, initiating use) in at least 4 out of 5 sessions within a month, as measured by clinician or staff observation.
 - a. The student will demonstrate physical interaction and activation of their AAC system using a selection modality (e.g., touch, scan, explore icons) at least 5 times per session across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - b. Given a model, the student will select an icon using their designated access method at least 5 times per session in 3 consecutive sessions.
 - c. The student will independently select or activate their AAC system at least 5 times per session across 3 consecutive sessions.
2. Long Term Goal (Promoting Device Independence): By the end of the IEP period, the student will independently prepare their AAC system for use (e.g., retrieving, turning on, positioning) with 80% accuracy during daily activities, as measured by clinician or staff observation.
 - a. The student will retrieve their AAC system and bring it to scheduled activities (e.g., circle time, snack, small group) in 4 out of 5 observed opportunities across 3 days with minimal prompting.
 - b. The student will independently turn on their AAC system in 2 out of 3 observed opportunities across 3 days during classroom routines.
 - c. The student will transition between activities with their AAC system in 4 out of 5 daily transitions across 3 consecutive days with verbal or visual supports.
3. Long Term Goal (Navigation): By the end of the IEP period, the student will navigate within their AAC system to access target vocabulary (core or fringe) with 80% accuracy as measured by clinician data.
 - a. The student will navigate to the correct page or folder to select a desired icon in 4 out of 5 opportunities across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - b. With adult support, the student will add or request a new fringe vocabulary word to their AAC system in 3 out of 4 observable opportunities within a month.
 - c. The student will return to the home or main page independently after selecting a message in 2 out of 3 opportunities during 3 consecutive sessions.
4. Long Term Goal (Operation Among Settings): The student will demonstrate

consistent operational use of their AAC system across at least 3 different settings or routines (e.g., classroom, therapy, cafeteria) exhibited by independently transitioning with AAC device and utilizing device without prompting with 80% accuracy, as measured by clinician or staff observation.

- a. The student will independently use their AAC system to communicate in at least 3 different daily activities (e.g., play, transition, circle) across a school week.
- b. Given minimal cues, the student will initiate AAC use in a non-speech setting (e.g., cafeteria, hallway) in 3 out of 4 opportunities across 2 school weeks.
- c. The student will independently carry and set up their AAC device in 2 different settings across a school day.

Social



When creating social communication goals for AAC users, make sure to consider whether they are neurodiversity affirming. This means supporting authentic communication, honoring each individual's natural interaction style, and avoiding goals that aim to “normalize” behavior or suppress differences. Instead, goals should focus on expanding access to meaningful, self-directed social interaction—such as building relationships, advocating for needs, and engaging in shared experiences—while respecting the communicator's autonomy, preferences, and identity.

1. Long Term Goal (Initiating Interaction): The student will initiate or respond to a peer or adult using multimodal communication (e.g., AAC device, gestures, vocalizations) across daily routines with 80% accuracy, as measured by data collection.
 - a. The student will initiate or respond to a social interaction with a peer or adult using their AAC system in 4 out of 5 opportunities across school routines.
 - b. The student will use a preferred greeting or farewell message (e.g., “Hi,” “Bye,” “See you later”) at least 3 times daily during structured transitions across 5 school days.
 - c. The student will use multimodal communication to indicate a choice between 2–3 social options (e.g., game, partner, activity) in 2 out of 3 observed opportunities across 2 consecutive sessions or school days.
2. Long Term Goal (Peer Play): The student will participate in preferred play activities with peers (e.g., turn-taking, sharing, requesting) using a multimodal communication approach (e.g., AAC, verbalizations, etc.) with 80% accuracy, as measured by clinician or staff observation.
 - a. Given visual or verbal cues, the student will use AAC to request a turn or item from a peer in 2 out of 3 observed opportunities across 3 days of classroom routines.
 - b. During preferred play or shared activities, the student will make at least one relevant comment using AAC (e.g., “That’s cool!” “I like it!”) in 2 out of 3 opportunities across 3 sessions.
 - c. The student will use self-advocacy skills to introduce new play ideas to peers or change the play activity in 2 out of 3 opportunities across 3 consecutive group sessions.

1. Long Term Goal (Using Social Phrases): The student will use personally preferred social messages (e.g., greetings, introductions, polite expressions) using a multimodal communication approach with 80% accuracy.
 - a. The student will use preferred greetings and farewells (e.g., “Hi,” “Nice to meet you,” “Bye”) in 2 out of 3 opportunities during daily classroom transitions.
 - b. The student will use personalized phrases to engage in classroom discussion (e.g., “My name is __,” “This is my device”, My favorite color is blue) in 2 out of 3 observed opportunities across 3 different activities.
 - c. The student will use a social expression (e.g., “please,” “thank you,” “excuse me”) with AAC in 2 out of 3 naturalistic opportunities within a classroom or community-based instruction.
2. Long Term Goal (Expressing Opinions): The student will express positive and/or negative opinions about topics or activities using AAC in 3 out of 4 observable opportunities during session activities.
 - a. The student will use AAC to state preferences or feelings (e.g., “I like,” “I don’t like”) about a given activity or item in 3 out of 4 opportunities during one therapy or classroom session.
 - b. Given visual supports or verbal prompts, the student will provide a reason for their opinion using AAC in 2 out of 4 opportunities across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - c. The student will respond to a peer or adult’s opinion with agreement or disagreement via AAC at least 3 times across 3 sessions.

Strategic Advocacy

1. Long Term Goal (Communicating Safety Information): The student will use their AAC system to provide biographical and safety information (e.g., parents' names, address, phone numbers, medical info) in response to direct questions with 80% accuracy.
 - a. Student will use AAC device to provide biographical safety information (parents' names, address, parent phone number, medical information, etc.) in response to a question with 80% accuracy across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - b. The student will indicate medical information (e.g., allergies, medications) using AAC with 80% accuracy across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - c. Given role-play or simulated scenarios, the student will respond to emergency or safety questions using AAC in 3 out of 4 opportunities across 3 consecutive sessions.
2. Long Term Goal (Identifying Communication Breakdowns): The student will recognize and indicate communication breakdowns (e.g., "I don't understand," "Wait," "Help") using AAC at least 3 times per school day as measured by observation.
 - a. Given verbal and visual support, the student will utilize advocacy words/ phrases on their AAC device in at least 2 opportunities when communication is unclear across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - b. The student will demonstrate requesting clarification phrases (e.g., "Say that again," "I don't understand") in at least 2 opportunities across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - c. The student will signal the need for repetition or assistance using multimodal communication (gesture, vocalization, AAC) in 3 out of 4 naturalistic interactions within a two-week period.
3. Long Term Goal (Requesting Accommodations): The student will independently request accommodations (e.g., breaks, sensory supports) using AAC or other communication modes at least 3 times throughout the school day as measured by observation.
 - a. The student will use a multimodal communication approach to request a break during classroom or therapy activities at least 2 times across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - b. Given visual or verbal prompts, the student will request sensory supports (e.g., noise-canceling headphones, fidget tools) using multimodal communication at least 3 times per session across 3 consecutive sessions.

- a. The student will indicate needs for other accommodations (e.g., seating change, lighting) using a multimodal communication approach at least 1 time per session across 3 consecutive sessions.
- 4. Long Term Goal (Repairing Communication Breakdowns): The student will repair communication breakdowns by clarifying information using multimodal communication (AAC, gestures, verbal approximations) with 80% accuracy.
 - a. The student will use AAC to restate or rephrase a message when a communication breakdown occurs in 4 out of 5 opportunities across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - b. Given a model prior, the student will utilize their device to repair a communication breakdown 2 times throughout a session across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - c. The student will use clarification requests (e.g., “Do you mean ___?” “Can you say that again?”) via AAC in 4 out of 5 naturalistic opportunities within a two-week period.

Gestalt Language Processing Goals

Stage 1 of the Natural Language Acquisition Framework

1. Long Term Goal (Producing Gestalts): During the IEP period, the student will independently use at least 10 gestalt phrases using multimodal communication across the school day in natural contexts, as measured by language sampling and daily data collection.
 - a. The student will use multimodal communication (e.g., AAC system) to produce gestalt phrases during child-led activities at least 5 times per session across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - b. The student will produce at least 3 different gestalt phrases during preferred classroom routines (e.g., transitions, centers, snack) across 3 days.
 - c. The student will spontaneously use at least 3 gestalt phrases during unstructured, child-led time (e.g., recess, lunch) across 3 days.
2. Long Term Goal (Varying Language Functions): Within the IEP period, the student will use multimodal communication to produce at least 2 gestalts for at least 5 communicative functions (e.g., requesting, commenting, protesting, affirming, transitioning) during daily activities, as measured by language sampling and daily data collection.
 - a. The student will use unique gestalts to **request** items or actions (e.g., “I want that,” “Let’s do it”) at least two times per session across 3 days.
 - b. The student will use gestalts to **comment or protest** (e.g., “I don’t want that,” “That’s funny”) at least two times per session.
 - c. The student will use gestalts to **gain attention or affirm** (e.g., “Hey, look!” “Yeah, that one!”) at least two times per session.
 - d. The student will use gestalts to **self-advocate** (e.g., “I need a break”) at least two times per session.

***Can add more goals for different language functions as needed.**

Stage 2 of the Natural Language Acquisition Framework

1. Long Term Goal (Producing Gestalts): Within the IEP period, the student will mitigate gestalts using AAC or multimodal communication to create at least 10 semi-unique utterances during daily activities, as measured by language sampling and daily data collection.
 - a. The student will mitigate a gestalt (e.g., “Let’s go to the park”) by changing one word or element (e.g., “Let’s go to the library”) at least 5 times per session across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - b. The student will combine elements from familiar gestalts to form a novel message (e.g., “I want that” + “Let’s go” → “I want to go”) during at least 3 different activities across 2 days.
 - c. The student will produce 3 mitigations of at least 5 current gestalts (e.g., “Let’s go play” → “Let’s go now,” “Let’s go eat,” “Let’s go outside”) across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - d. Student will produce mitigated gestalts as at least 50% of measured language during language samples obtained across 3 sessions.
2. Long Term Goal (Varying Language Functions): Within the IEP period, the student will mitigate gestalts using AAC or multimodal communication to create at least 2 semi-unique utterances for at least 5 different communicative functions during the school day
 - a. The student will use semi-unique phrases to **request** (e.g., “Can I play?”) and **protest** (e.g., “I don’t like that”) using AAC at least 3 times during preferred activities across 3 consecutive sessions or days.
 - b. The student will express **comments** (e.g., “That’s so cool,” “I love this one”) using mitigated gestalts at least 3 times during preferred activities across 3 consecutive sessions or days.
 - c. The student will use unique or semi-unique phrases to **ask questions or gain attention** (e.g., “What’s that?” “Come here!”) at least 3 times during preferred activities across 3 consecutive sessions or days.

***Can add more objectives for different language functions as needed**

Stage 3 of the Natural Language Acquisition Framework

1. Long Term Goal (Single Words from Gestalts): Within the IEP period, the student will use multimodal communication to isolate and use at least 10 single words from previously learned gestalts during daily activities, as measured by language sampling and daily data collection.
 - a. Using multimodal communication (e.g., AAC device, verbalizations, etc.), the student will independently produce single words isolated from gestalts at least 5 times a session across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - b. Using multimodal communication (e.g., AAC device, ASL, etc.), the student will use at least 5 different isolated words independently during child-led activities across 3 consecutive days.
 - c. Using an AAC device or multimodal communication, the student will independently select single noun words at least 5 times across at least 3 different child-led (e.g., play, recess) activities during the school day for 2 days.
2. Long Term Goal (2-word combinations): Within the IEP period, the student will combine two isolated words (e.g., noun + noun, noun + adjectives) using multimodal communication at least 10 times during daily activities, as measured by language sampling and daily data collection.
 - a. Using multimodal communication (e.g., AAC device, gestures, verbalizations, etc.), the student will produce at least 5 two-word combinations per session across 3 consecutive days.
 - b. Using multimodal communication (e.g., AAC device, gestures, verbalizations, etc.), the student will mix isolated words to construct a minimum of 3 different referential two-word phrases (noun+noun, noun+ adjective) per session.
 - c. The student will produce at least 3 isolated words or 2-word phrases to communicate in new environments and activities (e.g., classroom activities, with new communication partners) in 2 out of 3 observations across a school week.
 - d. Student will produce isolated words or 2-word phrases as at least 50% of measured language during language samples obtained across 3 sessions.

Stage 4+ of the Natural Language Acquisition Framework

1. Long Term Goal (Self-Generated Phrases): Within the IEP period, the student will independently produce self-generated phrases using multimodal communication at least 10 times during daily activities, as measured by language sampling and daily data collection.
 - a. The student will generate a novel phrase (not a previously heard gestalt) using their preferred communication modality at least 5 times a session across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - b. The student will create at least 3 different self-generated utterances across different activities each day for 3 consecutive days.
 - c. The student will use spontaneous phrases for a variety of language functions (e.g., initiate activity, comment, protest) at least 5 times per session across 3 consecutive sessions.
2. Long Term Goal (Grammatical Components): During the IEP period, the student will use self-generated phrases including appropriate grammatical morphemes (e.g., plurals, verb tense, possessives) in at least 10 opportunities across the school day.
 - a. The student will use regular past tense verbs (e.g., “played,” “jumped”) in 4 out of 5 opportunities across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - b. The student will include plural or possessive markers (e.g., “dogs,” “Mom’s book”) using AAC or multimodal supports in 4 out of 5 opportunities across 3 consecutive sessions.
 - c. The student will use auxiliary/helping verbs (e.g., “is running,” “are playing”) in 4 out of 5 opportunities across 3 consecutive sessions.

Refer to the Developmental Sentence Scoring (DSS) measure (Lee, 1974) and the Developmental Sentence Type (DST) measure (Lee, 1966) to determine areas of need and appropriate next targets for your gestalt language processors for the remaining stages.

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