

Getting Started with AAC (Augmentative And Alternative Communication)

- 1. Provide opportunities for your child to be an active participant in making choices throughout the day.** This will empower your child by providing him/her with some control. Offer choices between 2 or more objects, photographs, or pictures. Your child can touch, take, point to or eye gaze to the desired choice. Be creative and think of the choices you make daily.
 - What to eat for breakfast
 - What clothing to wear (dress or pants?, what colour?)
 - Who to complete an activity with
 - What to do next (play with a puzzle or build with blocks)
 - Which movie or tv show to watch
- 2. Encourage your child to take a communicative turn during common activities. The following are some ideas to get you started:**
 - use toy animals while singing Old MacDonald; give your child a choice of what animal to sing about next
 - encourage child to use 'my turn' gesture during ball play, before rolling the ball back to them
 - encourage child to point up or down to tell you where to blow bubbles
 - collect pictures or photographs which represent individual pieces that make up a toy (ie. Potato Head parts). Use the pictures while playing with the toy. You can either just show the picture, label it and then give the piece to your child, or give them choices between 2 pictures.
- 3. Some children are not yet symbolic, meaning that they do not yet understand that a photograph or picture represents an object.** You can help develop this skill by pairing parts of your daily routine with specific objects. You would say, 'time for ___' and then hold up or give the object to your child. Initiate that task immediately. Make sure that you always use the same object to represent a specific routine. Pay attention to the signals that your child makes when you show him/her the object. If he loves bath time and get excited every time you show them the object, even before labeling it, then chances are your child has learned to recognize that the object represents something else. And this is exactly what pictures and words do.

Examples of object representation for specific routines could be:

 - a spoon to represent mealtimes
 - a towel or rubber ducky to represent bath time
 - toy keys to represent going out in the car
 - a doll house pillow to represent bedtime

- 4. Let your child see you using AAC.** Experiencing receptive use of augmentative systems is important for children’s language development. They see how you use the system, when you use it, and learn what vocabulary it contains. This strategy of modeling how to use a system is called Aided Language Input or Aided Language Stimulation. We also like to refer to this as ‘show as you go’. If you would like to trial this, print off one or more of the sample theme displays in the “Theme Displays” section of our website (childdevelopmentprograms.ca). If you would like to see what Aided Language Stimulation looks like in action, you can find a link to a YouTube video prepared by One Kids Place in the “AAC Related Websites” section of our website.