

<b>COMMUNICATION AIDS - GLOSSARY OF TERMS</b>
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**AAC** – See **Augmentative and Alternative Communication**

**Access** – The method or way the user interacts with their communication aid. This can be direct or indirect:

- Direct access involves the person actually touching something, e.g. using their finger to activate a cell on a display, using a stylus (pointer) with a palm held device, or using a head pointer. When the person touches something, the device or system performs a direct action e.g. a letter is typed when a key is pressed down
- Indirect access involves the person getting the device to perform an action without actually touching it e.g. the person may use a switch, a head tracker or an eye gaze system.

**Aid** – A physical object or device used to transmit or receive messages (communication book, speech generating device, etc.). For the purposes of MASS documentation **communication aid** refers to:

- Artificial Larynges
- Speech Generating Devices
- Communication Software
- Voice Amplification Devices

**Aided AAC** – AAC that requires an external communication source for production, such as communication boards/books consisting of objects, photos, symbols or alphabet displays (low, light and high tech).

**Artificial Larynx** – A communication aid for speech, primarily used after laryngectomy (removal of voice box). The battery operated artificial larynx can be either a neck type or mouth type (intraoral) device. An example of a neck type device is the Servox.

**Assistive Technology (AT)** – ‘Any device, system or design that allows an individual to perform a task that they would otherwise be unable to do, or increase the ease and safety with which a task can be performed..’ (*The South Carolina Assistive Technology Program cited in Assistive Technology, 2006*)

**Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)** – ‘The term used to describe methods of communication which can be used to add to the more usual methods of speech and writing when these methods are impaired. AAC includes unaided systems such as signing and gesture, as well as aided techniques ranging from picture charts to the most sophisticated computer technology currently available. AAC can be a way to help someone understand, as well as a means of expression.’ (*International Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication (ISAAC)*).

**Cells / Keys** – The areas on a speech generating device that the user accesses to select a message/letter for speech production.

**Communication Aid – See Aid**

**Communication Competence** – is the ability to functionally communicate to adequately meet daily communication needs. It involves knowledge, judgement and skills in four areas: linguistic (mastery of the language code required by an AAC system), operational (technical skills required to operate an AAC system or device), social (mastery of the social rules of communication) and strategic competence (effective use of compensatory strategies for communication breakdowns). (*Light, J. 1989, 1996*)

**Communication Software** – Specialised software that provides on-screen displays and/or keyboards and voice output, that can be run on a laptop or installed on a tablet computer.

**Complex Communication Needs** – A term used to describe the needs of people who have communication problems associated with a wide range of physical, sensory and environmental causes which restrict/limit their ability to participate independently in society. They and their communication partners may benefit from using Alternative or Augmentative Communication (AAC) methods either temporarily or permanently. (*ISAAC Australia, 2002*)

**Computer Access** – Refers to providing an individual with a means of access to various computer programs and functions, e.g. accessing the internet via a switch and onscreen keyboard.

**Dedicated Communication Device** – A communication device that has been set up to use a specific communication program, and which cannot be used for other computer applications.

**Digitised Speech** – Spoken words recorded directly into a microphone on the device.

**Dynamic Display** – Dynamic display electronic communication is usually a portable tablet style, touch screen computer running specially designed software. The software usually provides numerous communication displays that can be set up for the user. Individual cells within each display (or page) may contain words, symbols and/ or letters and speech will usually be generated when cells or sequences of cells are selected. The numerous pages can be displayed sequentially or sometimes simultaneously as pop-up windows, by selecting keys or cells which link one page to another. The 'dynamic' feature refers to the changing displays. (*Bode, T. Zyteq Australia*)

**Environmental Control** – Environmental control stems from the term Environmental Control Units (ECUs) which are purpose-designed devices that assist people with limited physical abilities to control their immediate environment using alternative means, e.g. to turn a lamp on and off, change the channels on the TV, etc. Some speech generating devices and communication software have inbuilt environmental control capabilities. (*LifeTec Queensland*)

**Filter Keys** – A feature on some devices/software that assists with preventing repeats of keys, e.g. lllllllike this.

**Functional Communication** – Any method or communication strategy that successfully allows a message to be conveyed and understood by the communication partner.

**High Tech / Technology** – Electronic communication aids which can have speech output (e.g. SGDs, communication software).

**Icons** – See **Symbols**

**Integrated System** – An integrated system may allow an individual to control their powered wheelchair, use their communication device with inbuilt ECU, and use the computer via one system controller and method of access.

**Key Guard** – An accessory that assists with accurate selection of keys/ cells by providing physical borders between cells.

**Levels** – Number of pages/overlays that can be programmed to store voice messages.

**Light Tech / Technology** – Single message devices that offer some but limited access to communication interaction.

**Low Tech / Technology** – Non-electronic communication aids (without speech output) and strategies, e.g. a communication book, topic lists, chat books, etc.

**Minspeak** – A registered trademark of Semantic Compaction Systems and a type of visual language in AAC. Minspeak is a pictorial system that allows for fast and accurate access to language through a process of using multiple meaning icons.

**Moisture Guard / Raincoat** – A transparent accessory that protects the device from moisture, saliva and accidental spillage.

**Mount** – An arm or bracket that can be attached to a wheelchair, or specific materials/equipment (e.g. foam) onto which a device / equipment can be positioned for optimal access.

**Multimodal Communication** – The use of more than one AAC strategy in the communication environment in order to facilitate communication.

**Non-dedicated Device** – A device that allows the user to access a full range of programs (e.g. Windows applications and the internet) as well as specific communication software.

**Oral Adaptor** – Can be used with a neck type artificial larynx (e.g. the Servox) to convert it to a mouth type (intraoral) device. (Only applies to artificial larynges)

**Overlay** – A display consisting of various photos/ symbols/ letters/ words and/ or phrases which represent the messages stored in each cell for communication.

**Peripherals** – A peripheral is a piece of computer hardware that is added to a host computer, in order to expand its abilities. i.e. any hardware except the computer.

**Rate Enhancement** – Refers to features on a communication device or software that can speed up message production for some users. Some examples are:

*Word prediction* – The device/software guesses the word being typed as letters are selected. The accuracy of the guess increases as more letters are typed. The user is often able to select the word they want before having to type the entire word.

*Sticky Keys* – A feature that allows two keys to be pressed separately instead of simultaneously, e.g. to produce a capital 'M' - the shift key can be pressed before the 'm' and the device/software will perform the necessary action.

*Abbreviation expansion* – A feature that allows word/ phrases/ sentences to be stored via initials or abbreviations, e.g. when "HS" is typed, the following message might be spoken: "Hi my name is Sarah".

*Phrase storage* – A device/software's ability to pre-store entire phrases eliminating the need for the entire message to be typed each time.

**Scanning** – An 'indirect selection' technique in which items are presented sequentially and the individual activates a switch or otherwise signals to accept one of the items when presented. .

([http://depts.washington.edu/augcomm/00\\_general/glossary.htm](http://depts.washington.edu/augcomm/00_general/glossary.htm))

**Speech Generating Device (SGD)** – A device that speaks aloud messages for communication, previously known as Electronic Communication Device or Voice Output Communication Aid (VOCA). Speech generating devices may be useful for individuals whose speech or other means of communication are not meeting their needs.

**Static Display** – A static display electronic communication device is one where the display representing the stored messages is a fixed set of pictographs and/or words. These displays are usually called overlays and may be printed on paper or other material. The overlays are physically changed by the user or an assistant when a different display is required. (Bode, T. Zyteq Australia)

**Symbols** – A Symbol stands for or represents something else. A symbol could use visual, auditory, and/or tactile representation of conventional concepts e.g. gestures, photos, manual signs, picto-ideographs, printed words, objects, spoken words, Braille. They can assist with receptive language (i.e. understanding / comprehension) or used to augment or as an alternative to spoken language.

**Symbol Sets** – These are commercially available sets of symbols/ pictures/photos/line drawings that represent a variety of vocabulary concepts. The pictures are commonly used to produce communication resources such as communication books, charts or displays on Speech Generating Devices, both to assist with receptive language and as a means of expression.

Some commercially available symbol sets in Australia include:  
Photos; Line Drawings; *Rebus*; *Picture Communication Symbols (PCS)*; *Compic*; *Softpics*; *Techsyms*; *Dynasyms*; *SymbolStix*

**Switch** – A piece of equipment that allows an individual to operate a range of technology using a consistent and reliable body movement. Switches come in all shapes, sizes and styles and must be carefully matched to meet the needs of a user.

**Switch Cap / Skin** – A clear, rigid plastic cover that snaps onto some switches. It allows for the placement of a symbol on the switch surface without the need for adhesive and keeps the symbol protected.

**Synthesised Speech** – Artificial, computer-generated speech, which is selected from a vocabulary that has been created entirely on a computer by specialised software. It can be customised to be gender/ age group specific i.e. (child/ adult voice).

**Text to Speech** – Device or software that speaks aloud words that are typed in by the user.

**Unaided AAC** – AAC that does not require any sort of external communication sources other than one's own body movements for the production of expressive communication, such as signing, gestures, facial expression, body language.

**Voice Amplification Device** – A device that increases the volume of the user's voice via a microphone and amplification unit.

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