



10 Things You May Not Know About AAC



1. **AAC supports speech development.** This has been documented in multiple research studies and in clinical practice, too. When provided with AAC, the vast majority of people say more words with their natural speech.
2. **AAC builds language skills.** With AAC, individuals aren't limited to saying only what their mouths can produce. It allows them to put endings on words to make plurals and past tense, for example. It also helps them move from simple sentences (e.g., "I want cookie") into more complex sentences (e.g., "I want a big cookie because I worked hard").
3. **There are no cognitive prerequisites to AAC use.** AAC is used successfully with people who have significant intellectual disabilities. They need considerable support, but with good services and consistent implementation, these individuals can make considerable gains in their communication skills.
4. **People learn AAC best when others use it to talk to them.** In this way, it is similar to learning a foreign language. We'd all learn to speak a new language more easily if our teachers, therapists, friends, and family spoke that language.
5. **AAC helps build literacy skills.** The language, sequencing, and exposure to print on AAC systems is helpful for people who are or (could be) learning to read.
6. **There is no evidence that people need to start with simple, paper-based AAC systems** before they can be successful with high tech electronic systems.
7. **Some speaking people need AAC and use it when highly stressed.** There are adults with autism who speak well, have college degrees, hold good jobs, and are raising families who have significant difficulty talking when they are tired, sick, or stressed. AAC helps them during these times. They then go back to speaking normally when they feel better.
8. **AAC can reduce the severity and frequency of challenging behavior.** With appropriate intervention, research and clinical practice has demonstrated that AAC can be an effective substitute for things like hitting, grabbing, dropping to the floor, or throwing things.
9. **Eye contact is not a prerequisite for successful AAC use and something we rarely prioritize.** In fact, many people who make poor eye contact do so as a means of coping with a disordered sensory processing system. They may be able to listen and process what they hear much better when they don't look at their communication partners.
10. **It's never too late for someone to develop better communication skills with AAC.** We used to think that most language learning was limited to the first 12 years of life. We now know that people who have never been successful communicators can learn and be effective users of AAC starting in their teens, twenties, and beyond.