

# Using Alternate Communication



## Strategic Emergent Transitional:



### Goal

Uses an alternate method of communication if the first attempt fails, with partner support (e.g., cries but does not get their message across so next they point to the desired object or touch partner's arm).



### Preparation

- Determine what form of interaction is most motivating to the individual.
- Determine their most natural method of current communication, even if not appropriate or successful.
- Determine if there is a toy or game the individual prefers. If so, use that during interactions. Examples are Potato Head, blocks, cars, dolls, dress-up, cooking, or action figures.



### Materials

- Communication book or device.
- Materials needed for selected activity (e.g., favorite toy).
- Supports if needed.



### Tips for Success

- Remember to demonstrate the use of the system via modeling. Explore the device yourself when you are sitting with the individual or during activities with them.  
[Modeling AAC Example Video](#)
- At this linguistic level, we do not expect the individual to independently locate (navigate to) the targeted page.
- Inconsistency is normal at first. You may have to repeat this activity multiple times.
- Make sure to wait even longer than you expect to see if the individual will interact.
- No matter what they select, reinforce, or act on whatever they communicate.



Modeling AAC  
Example

**Scan QR code**



## Activity with Steps

Activity: Finding another way to communicate

- 1 Introduce the selected activity, "Sometimes people don't hear what we say or miss what we are trying to tell them. Today we will practice what we can do when that happens."
- 2 Tell the individual, "When someone doesn't understand me, I try something new. For example, if I wave and you don't see me, I may touch your hand to get attention instead. Also, if I call for help but no one answers, I may try to use the device and press here to ask for help."
  - Note: Model exactly how you could do that using the device and/or gestures.
- 3 If practical, set up a mock role play by asking them to get your attention, act as if you missed it, and help the individual by showing how they can try something different to gain your attention.
- 4 "Now let's try this while playing with (insert most motivating toy or game here)." Begin playing and be sure you can 'control' the activity. For example, if playing with dress-up or dolls, hold the clothing choices next to you and pass over only what is needed. After a few rounds, when the interaction is very motivating, pretend to be distracted.
- 5 Notice if the individual uses a different method to get your attention after their first attempt fails. For example, if they vocalize but you are still not responding, see if they use the device or reach for you instead. If not, model other communication methods they could have used and try again.
- 6 If the individual commonly cries or screams as their first communication attempt, help them to find a more successful second attempt to communicate and model as needed.



## Supplemental Activities

Repetition with variety is essential in teaching AAC. Create practice opportunities that are not boring by keeping the skill constant and varying the activity. Use the following scenarios during the day to work on this goal using the same steps in the activity above. Send some of these home as practice activities:

- Practice using various modes of communication in an interaction. It's important to model that we all do that when interacting, but it's also important to suggest new ways to communicate when our first attempt is unsuccessful. For example, model and practice the following throughout the day:
  - Gestures
  - Pointing
  - Facial expression
  - Use of symbols
  - Use of a voice output device
  - Body language
  - Vocalizations



## Measuring Success

- Increased attention to the interaction.
- Movement towards the device or communication book.
- Increased number of attempts to repair communication breakdowns, even if not consistently successful.
- Initiation of self-repair.



### Note

The individual does not have to 'master' this goal at 80% accuracy before you can move on to the next one. Even if they don't meet the goal consistently, or without cueing, the individual may still be ready to move forward to the next goal.

## Parent/Caregiver Letter

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear: \_\_\_\_\_

I'm sending this letter to let you know that we are working on using all methods of communication needed to be a good communication partner. You will play an important part in the learning process. .

How? You can reinforce the skills we address here, at home.

- **Model targeted responses in a variety of activities and environments.** During your daily activities, touch the device yourself along with your speech. Modeling will feel more natural to you the more you do it.
- Complete the attached suggested activities to get you more familiar with the system.

I will be sending more activities and suggestions home. Please provide any feedback and contact me with any questions. The more you can practice, the better! I'm looking forward to hearing more about the fun you have working on this skill.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

Activities for carryover

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_