



Beth Moulam's A-Z of AAC

A is for always having **access** to your #AAC device. Would you leave your voice at home or zipped in your bag? Please make sure we have our resources anytime, anyplace, anywhere, even in bed.

I'm often tweaking my #AAC setup. B is for making sure you **back up** your #AAC device regularly, and if you have your software on several devices, like me, make it part of your routine to update them all immediately you make a change.

Every interaction needs a speaker and a listener. When you use #AAC C is for great **communication partners**. Depending on need they scaffold, prompt, translate and more with positive patience.

D is for **determination**. #AAC users need grit and resilience in buckets, and more, to learn to use their own language systems. The motivation to keep trying despite communication setbacks has to come from within as well as from others

E is for **efficient** communication in different situations. Natural speakers may have unlimited access to vocabulary. An #AAC user needs to be able to spell the word or have a symbol they can access to say what they want and when they need.

F is for **funding**. Unlike natural speech #AAC speech isn't free. Using #AAC costs. Whether it's hardware, software, peripherals, charging, mounting, warranty, insurance, or printing boards and pages. And there's a human cost.

G brings **good** times. You don't always need goal setting to celebrate successful #AAC encounters in life. Adhoc opportunity also brings growth and confidence. And, if things don't always go as expected learn from these too. There is always next time.

H is for **home**. Often #AAC is first introduced in an educational environment yet around 66% of a child's waking life is outside of school each year. AAC must be embedded in everyday life not just in formal learning.

I is for **me!** Nothing about me without me! #AAC gives me a voice that can be heard, it means my views, feelings and thoughts can be shared. #AAC promotes #inclusion and reduces social #Isolation.

J is for being **non-judgemental**. #AAC users need their communication partners to provide time and space for quality interactions, never judging, assuming or jumping in, but waiting for each unique output.

K is for **kudos** and **kindness**. We all learn through encouragement so praise an #AAC user's achievements; we are working hard on the process of communication. Every utterance has taken conscious physical effort as well as cognitive processing.

L is for **love** to all #AAC user's families. Never underestimate the time to charge, clean and troubleshoot our devices. With our best interests at heart they keep our #AAC devices nearby, give us time and encouragement and more. Thank you. They help make us who we are.

M is for **modelling mentoring and role models**. Other children have communication modelled daily in every setting. As an #AAC user it's just as important we see good #AAC communication being modelled at home, school and in the community.

N is for the **nitty gritty** of using #AAC. To access their devices many people need additional kit. From mounting to input resources. Providing the kit is only the start, physical and environmental factors also impact each time we use it.

O is for **organisation**. Each #AAC user is different so the way they organise their thoughts should be reflected in the programming of their device. My own software has been personalised so it no longer looks the way the programme designer intended.

P is for **potential**. Everyone is different but we can all fulfil our own communication potential, including those who use #AAC. I was 'lucky' following an assessment age 3 my local authority believed in me and I got my first device to start school age 4.

Q is for **quiet**. Sometimes we all need privacy. Being able to turn down the sound on your #AAC device so the whole room doesn't hear something personal is important. We all need to be able to have a private conversation.

Today is R. With the **right to communicate comes responsibility**. #AAC users need to be empowered and motivated to want to take control of their own communication. "When the chips are down there is only me that can communicate for me".

S is for **symbols**. Many #AAC resources use a symbol language to support communication. There are many different symbol systems but once you've learned one it's a huge transition to learn another. Changing a symbol language can be traumatic, think losing all your social narratives, and you not being fluent overnight! Think months and years of communication undone. Think becoming a classical pianist.

T is for **text and time**. Literate #AAC users use text with word prediction for speed, and some symbol users can be as fast. Natural speech varies from 160 to 240 words per minute. Fast users output spontaneously at 10-20 wpm unless preprogrammed. Many are slower.

U is for **unique**. Not only is every individual person unique that means the way we access and use our #AAC devices is unique too. One size does not fit all whatever our condition, the basic principles may work but the execution will need to be tailored.

V is for **vision**. No-one has a crystal ball but we do need those around us to have a long term vision for us as users of #AAC and empower us in our ability to fulfil our own potential. Please make sure our #AAC can grow with us.

W is for **why not?** Being open minded and willing to embrace change and opportunity can only bring out the best in those who need #AAC. My communication evolves nearly daily, trying out new approaches or tweaking the existing to be my best. Be brave! But with caution, my why not extends to only changing one thing at a time to know what works and what doesn't.

X is for life, not just for **Xmas**. Using #AAC needs a lifetime commitment. No-one reaches their communication and language potential overnight. Routinize the use of #AAC, create regular daily opportunities and ensure resources are always to hand.

Y is for **you**. If you use #AAC you should always be central to all decisions regarding your communication. Not just the big decisions at assessment but the daily decisions of living your life your way. #Nothingwithoutme

Z is for **zeal**. In life we need supporters and cheerleaders. When we use #AAC we need champions and advocates. People with a passion for communication, let that be all of us!

Beth Moulam has used an electronic communication aid from the age of 4. She started with a symbol based system which was changed to a different symbol language at the age of 8. As her literacy improved, she moved onto a text based system at the age of 10. After receiving her first communication aid in 1998 she knew that when she grew up she wanted to work with other children to make sure they got a voice too. This dream has never changed. Beth remains passionate about finding ways to empower people of all ages with complex communication needs to fulfil their own communication and life potential. Find out more about Beth at www.bethmoulam.com