

Parental involvement?

Parents and family members are often the people with whom the child 'talks' most. Children only spend 6 hours a day, 5 days a week, at school. The rest of their time is usually with family. Parents are involved with a child throughout their life, whereas teachers and therapists come and go.



For more information: Go to the [Family Issues page of the Augmentative Communication News Newsletter site](#).

People to communicate with and opportunities to communicate

Communication requires at least two people and has been described as the 'essence of human life'. It is therefore, important to think about the number and type of people with whom the child has opportunities to communicate.

Vocabulary selection - which words and messages go on an AAC system?

The words and messages chosen for an AAC system are very important. If they are not useful or motivating to the child they will not be used. This does not necessarily mean that the AAC system is not right for the child, just that the messages are wrong.

People who know the child best and the activities that he/she is involved in are in the best situation to suggest messages.

For further information try the [YAACK website](#).

Ongoing evaluation

It is never possible to design a perfect AAC system for a person from the outset. Good AAC systems have to be developed with use and trial and error. It is important that people who communicate with the user keep giving feedback to the speech pathologist about what is working well and not working well.



Communication needs keep changing as:

- new friendships are made
- new subjects are introduced at school
- hobbies and interests change
- new events are coming up or have happened, for example, the purchase of a new family car, the cat running away, a weekend away or a sleep over
- 'cool' sayings change
- special dates approach, for example, Royal Show, Christmas, school holidays.

AAC systems may need to be redesigned when;

- a new wheelchair arrives
- physical skills change
- language skills develop.

AAC systems and the skills of the user therefore should be [assessed](#) on an ongoing basis, that is, everyday.

Quick and easy to use

Communication needs to be able to happen quickly and easily. If using an AAC system takes too long or is too hard to use it won't be used. Something simpler, such as looking at the thing they want, might be used instead. Guidelines that can be used to work out if a communication system is quick and easy to use include:

- when a person is given an AAC system they should be able to 'talk with it' straight away
- training might begin on a more advanced system
- the advanced system would be used when the child has learnt how to use it.