

AAC and Vision Impairment

Access: Low Tech AAC

People with complex communication needs who are also blind or severely visually impaired require specialized approaches to accessing low-tech AAC tools and supports.

Tactile Symbols

Accessed via direct selection.

Tactile symbols are tangible representations for words, activities, or concepts. Symbols may range in abstraction from whole objects to partial or representative objects to abstract or texture symbols. For communicators using tactile symbols, the selection method can be either symbol exchange (tactilely scanning options, removing the desired option, and handing it to the communication partner to express the message) or touch (tactilely scanning options and then touching the target), and may or may not be paired with voice output.

Tactile representations may include partial objects, more abstract tactile symbols, and Braille. This access method would utilize devices that can support tactile symbols such as the ProxPad Choice Maker, GoTalk, ProxTalker, or 7-Level Communication Builder*. This does not typically include touchscreen devices.



Partner-Assisted Auditory/Visual/Tactile Scanning

Accessed via scanning with a pre-determined affirmative response
Partner-Assisted Scanning (PAS) is a communication strategy that reduces both visual and motor demands on the user. It reduces visual demands by presenting only one item at a time (visually, auditorily, and/or tactilely), and reduces motor demands by requiring only a single pre-determined response from the user (e.g. head nod, smile, switch activation, reach).

Partner Assisted strategies may look different for each user. For example, it may include a series of whole objects presented sequentially, or may be a list of options presented only auditorily.



Work with your speech-language pathologist, teacher of the visually impaired, and occupational therapist to determine the optimal representation level and selection method/strategy for your AAC user.

*Devices mentioned are one of several that have the described feature, and should serve only as an example