

## Behaviors that Help with AAC Use (Strategies that ensure learning)



**Waiting:** Don't anticipate your learner's every need! Celebrate spontaneous communication. When communication is not happening frequently enough to ensure learning, check to see that you are waiting for communication rather than anticipating and meeting all needs.

**Withholding/Sabotage:** Communication solves problems! Life often presents huge problems that overwhelm learners. A nice way to help is to create a small problem that can be overcome. A missing spoon when eating a bowl of cereal is an easy problem! Remember to create obstacles across different activities so your learner discovers that they can solve the problem by communicating with you!

**Correspondence Checks:** Everyone misspeaks sometimes- we say one word but mean another. Some learners use the wrong picture. Early communication involves learning what different words (pictures) mean. We occasionally teach/assess this skill by asking the learner to "take" or "go get" the item that corresponds to their picture use.

**Communication Partner Etiquette:** Some learners repeatedly give the same picture. Don't take pictures away or deny access to pictures! Rather, teach learners to tolerate being told "not now" or "later." Balance anticipating and meeting needs ("Oh, I forgot your spoon") with expecting communication (the spoon is not in the bowl of ice cream).

**Frequent Opportunities to Practice Communication:** Learning any new skill requires frequent opportunities to practice! Ensure that your learner is learning his picture system by striking an effective balance between creating opportunities throughout the day to communicate ("can I have some juice") vs. opportunities to do something independently (I can get my own juice!)

**Appropriate and Effective Guidance:** Just like Mom and Dad help a toddler to pick up and use a spoon, help your learner give or point to a picture. Prompting is one way we help learners. Remember that independence is achieved when you stop helping, so have a plan in place to stop! A prompt is always used to help expand skills, never to restrict.

**Encouraging Speech:** If a learner gives you a Sentence Strip, you provide a quick opportunity for him to "speak" the pictures by pausing a planned short time. If they talk, celebrate! If they don't, honor the picture message. Nearly 80% of young learners using PECS for six months develop speech and no longer need PECS!

**Personal Responsibility for AAC system:** Learners should be responsible for carrying their system with them wherever they go! We are responsible for getting and wearing our glasses or hearing aids! Teach this from the beginning!

