

DYNAMIC AAC GOALS

The Dynamic AAC Goals Grid is a tool for assessment and measurement of an individual's current level of communication ability across communicative competencies. In addition, it may be used to assist with planning more appropriate future communication goals with the overall goal of achieving successful communication as independently as possible.

Developed in conjunction with Dynamic Therapy Associates of Kennesaw, GA. www.mydynamictherapy.com

COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCIES

Skills in these four areas are directly related to conversational interactions using an AAC system:

- **Linguistic:** Receptive and expressive language; Learning and using vocabulary, sentence structure and pre-programmed messages in increasing number, variety and complexity
- **Operational:** Skills related to the maintenance and operation of the AAC system
- **Social:** Skills needed to communicate effectively and in socially appropriate ways such as initiating, maintaining, developing and terminating an interaction
- **Strategic:** Strategies to overcome or minimize the functional limitations of AAC and to prevent or repair communication breakdowns

COMMUNICATION ABILITY LEVEL

Each Communicative Competency has been organized into three levels - Emergent, Context-Dependent, Independent. In the AAC Goals Grid, these levels provide a way to define observable communication behaviors for present and progressing competency skills. We suggest evaluating from Emergent moving forward through Independent (see InterAACt Framework checklist on last page).

PROMPTING HIERARCHY

When we are trying to teach a target skill, we often use a graduated or "least to most" prompting hierarchy to elicit the communicative response. The ultimate goal is that the individual recognizes the opportunity to communicate given only natural conversational cues (e.g. facial expression, actions, gesture, statement or question) or natural environmental cues (e.g. desired object is out of reach). If the individual is using a "Natural Cue" the targeted goal would be met. Consider the following example:

- **Goal Met (Natural Cue):** Other people saying hello
- **Indirect Cue (IC)**
 - Search light – randomly moving light/pointer over device
 - Verbal – "Did you hear what they said?" "I wonder if you could say something back?"
 - Visual/Gestural – shrug of shoulders, "I don't know" hand gesture
- **Direct Verbal Cue (DVC):** "They said hello to you." or "They were nice to say "hello" to you."
- **Direct Pointer Cue (DPC):** Showing the location of "hi" on the device without activating it
- **Physical Assistance (PA):** Provide some means of physical assistance to activate the appropriate message on device

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InterAACt™ FRAMEWORK

What is InterAACt? InterAACt is the language framework used on all DynaVox devices. It allows individuals with speech and language disabilities to successfully communicate, develop higher-level language skills and express themselves, in everyday activities. InterAACt uses familiar communication settings that are natural and easy-to-use. InterAACt provides individuals with the communication messages they need to say what they want and how they want in a timely manner.

Mark each statement that best describes an individual's observable communication behaviors. Use this guide to help provide insight to current and potential target skills and strengths, as well as to identify the most appropriate set of communication pages in their DynaVox device. It is not necessary to achieve skills in order within a given communication ability level as individuals may demonstrate skills in more than one level.

YOUNG CHILD 2-6	<input type="checkbox"/>
CHILD 7-13	<input type="checkbox"/>
TEEN 14-21	<input type="checkbox"/>
YOUNG ADULT 22-50	<input type="checkbox"/>
ADULT 50+	<input type="checkbox"/>

EMERGENT

- May be starting to follow directions within routines and familiar activities.
- May be communicating most successfully using facial expression, body language, gestures and/or behaviors (either socially appropriate behaviors or challenging behaviors).
- May have a few messages that (s)he communicates well and/or often using symbols or any methods listed above.
- Frequency and reliability of both understanding and expression varies from day-to-day and/or activity-to-activity.
- Pictures seem to increase both comprehension and expression.
- Attempts to communicate are most frequent in motivating situations or favorite activities.
- When using symbols to communicate (e.g., pictures, signs, objects), uses only one symbol at a time.
- May be beginning to use clear and simple symbols (including objects, photographs and picture symbols) in motivating situations and/or favorite activities.
- Benefits from help from his/her communication partner to communicate successfully (e.g., narrowing choices, page navigation, interpreting gestures/body language).
- May be starting to show interest in social interactions, especially with familiar people.

NOTE: "Children's natural actions and behaviors are the only prerequisites to AAC... Early behaviors and skills facilitate the gradual development of more complex communication skills, including language" (Cress & Marvin, 2003).
We believe that this is true of individuals of all ages. As a result, the communication system should embrace growth and development.

COMMUNICATION ABILITY LEVEL CONTEXT-DEPENDENT

- Understands general conversations and directions.
- Understands picture symbols that represent objects and common actions (e.g., run, point, eat).
- Starting to understand more abstract picture symbols (e.g., think, big, hot, few).
- Uses symbols and objects spontaneously to communicate basic needs and wants.
- Uses a combination of communication methods (e.g., pictures, objects, pointing/gestures, speech vocalizations) to express messages.
- Beginning to combine two or more symbols to create longer and/or more complex messages.
- Communicates best in routines and regarding familiar topics.
- Benefits from help to initiate social interaction and/or take additional turns in conversation.
- Benefits from help to participate in interactions in new environments and with new people.
- May continue to benefit from the help of his/her communication partner to narrow down choices, navigate pages and to interpret their communicative attempts (e.g., gestures, word approximations, etc.) as skills develop.
- Literacy skills developing (e.g. letter names and sounds, sight words, spelling of simple words).

NOTE: Because these characteristics cover a broad range of skills, many AAC users fall into this category.

INDEPENDENT

- Understands communication the same as same-age peers.
- Able to talk about a broad range of age-appropriate topics in flexible ways.
- Combines single words, spelling, phrases and complete messages together to support routine and novel communication about a variety of subjects as would others of his/her age.
- Changes the way words and phrases are combined based on the communication partner and situation.
- Literacy skills on par with same-age peers.
- Social interaction skills, environments, and activities are similar to others of his/her age.
- Participates in age-appropriate environments and activities.
- Actively participates with communication partner when communication breakdowns occur.

NOTE: Self-sufficiency and flexibility when using AAC is not a characteristic limited to individuals of the independent level. Context-Dependent users can also be self-sufficient and/or flexible with AAC. However, their skills in language, literacy and social interaction will be below those expected of same-age peers.



