



# Communication Partners: Introduction to AAC and How You Can Help

## **About me:**

Full name: \_\_\_\_\_

Prefers to be called: \_\_\_\_\_

AAC Devices/System used: \_\_\_\_\_

My interests and hobbies: \_\_\_\_\_

Some daily challenges: \_\_\_\_\_

## **What is autism:**

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication. Autism looks different for everyone, and each person with autism has a distinct set of strengths and challenges.

## **What I need you to know to support me:**

A good communication partner plays an essential role in helping transition-age youth and adults with autism use AAC confidently and effectively. When communication partners use patience, curiosity and respect, they help AAC users feel heard and confident speaking up in all parts of their lives.

## **A good communication partner:**

- Understands that both partners play a role in communication and adjusts how they communicate to support the AAC user.
- Appreciates the AAC user's effort and recognizes that learning to use a device takes time.
- Helps create a comfortable space by keeping things quiet and making sure the device screen is easy to see.
- Gives plenty of wait time and is willing to slow down so the AAC user can finish their message.
- Checks to make sure they understand correctly and aren't afraid to ask for more information.
- Talks directly to the AAC user, not to their staff or to the device.
- Asks if the AAC user has something to say or needs more time.
- Supports all forms of communication—gestures, typing, sounds and AAC messages.
- Feels comfortable using the device and can add helpful icons or remove ones that aren't needed.
- Makes sure the AAC system is available at all times and uses it naturally during everyday activities.
- Uses tools like a [Communication Partner Checklist](#) to continue improving their support.
- **Always presumes competence and believes that everyone can learn and has something to say.**

## **Training programs for communication partners:**

[AAC Essentials - AAC Community](#)

[Learning Hub - Tobii Dynavox US](#)

[PRC-Salttillo - Blog](#)

(Coaching for communication partners)

## **Additional resources:**

[Communication Partners | Beth Moulam](#)

[Communication Partner Profile - OpenAAC](#)

[How to be a respectful communication partner - AssistiveWare](#)