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Choosing a Communication Device

Considerations and Feature Matching

When conducting Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) assessments we need to match the individual to the AAC tools, devices and strategies that will meet their communication needs (McBride, 2001). With an increasing range of AAC options available to us we need to maintain comprehensive evaluation processes to ensure suitable devices are chosen and provide sound justification for the device purchase particularly if funding is being sought.

McBride (2011) suggests considering the following questions when beginning an AAC assessment:

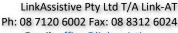
- What does the individual need, want, or desire to communicate? How do they currently communicate these?
- Where, when and with whom will the individual communicate?
- What are the individual's current skills and abilities?
- What is the individual's language ability? What do they understand?
- What are the device functions and features required?
- How will you make the best choice of communication device? Who should be involved in the decision-making process?
- If the device has already been provided, is the individual currently using the AAC device? What are the barriers of the current device?

This resource follows the Matching Persons and AAC Technology Model (Hill, 2010) to help compare communication device features as part of the overall AAC assessment process. It is designed to give you a start point for some of the features you may need to consider for the individual you are working with. You can always contact one of our team to help you understand the features of the Link Assistive Products!

How to use the Comparison Table

First use the table to help you determine which features an individual requires. Consider which features are reasonable and necessary for the individual and why. Also consider future features required by the individual. Then use the table to help compare the communication device options. Add other features that may be specific to the individual. Make notes as to why each feature is required by the individual, this will start to form part of your rationale when applying for funding and making decisions regarding best options.

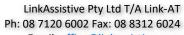
Speech Pathology Australia's AAC Clinical Guideline (2012) suggests comparison of features is an essential part of the AAC assessment process with comparison of the individual's performance on using *at least two* AAC systems required to determine the relative benefits of different device features. A full feature-matching assessment ensures that more than just cost of devices are compared (Speech Pathology Australia, 2012). If you are looking for more support models and frameworks to support your AAC assessment **The Participation Model** (Beukelman and Mirenda, 2013) and **SETT Framework** (Zabela, 2005) can be helpful, see reference list for details.



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Is it needed by the individual & why? Description Device **Device** Feature **Primary Considerations Language Representation Method** Single Meaning Pictures Pictures represent one word Access language by spelling Alphabet Sequence of pictures to make a word Multiple Meaning Icons **Vocabulary Organisation** Words are organised by meaning or category Semantic Words are organised by word order (grammar) Grammatical Words are organised by topics and activities Topic / Activity Words are organised by first letter (alphabetical) Alphabetic Words and phrases are embedded in an image Visual Scene Words are organised according to language function Pragmatic Vocabulary Core Vocabulary Everyday words used eg I, like, want, go, big Words specific to topics eg cheeseburger, Kmart Fringe Vocabulary Words are organised into phrases Phrases ABC Keyboard Alphabet organised in ABC format QWERTY Keyboard Alphabet organised in QWERTY format Software allows words to be added and customised Customisable Vocabulary Enough words to meet communication requirements **Robust Vocabulary Method of Utterance Generation** Spontaneous Novel Individual words can be combined to create sentences **Utterance Generation** Words are stored in short sentences accessed through a single Pre-stored sentences /phrases Words and sentences are created through spelling using the Spelling alphabet Other Features Specific to the Individual

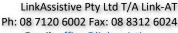


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Feature	Description	Is it needed by the individual & why?	Device	Device
Secondary Considerations	and pro-	,		
User Interface				
Symbols	Picture library eg PCS, Symbol Stix, High Contrast PCS			
Navigation	Comment on ease of navigation to find words			
Consistent Vocabulary	Comment on vocabulary placement and how it promotes motor			
Placement	automaticity			
Ease of editing and	Comment on editing features eg quick modify, link out to camera			
programming				
Search Function	Ability to search for words within software.			
Hide Buttons	Ability to hide buttons to reduce page complexity			
Operating System	Hide single buttons? Hide multiple buttons? Hide word lists? Eg Windows 10, IOS, Android			
Operating System Eg Windows 10, IOS, Android Control Interface – Access Method				
Direct Touch	Comment on settings			
Head Pointing	Comment on settings			
	Comment on settings Comment on settings eg dwell time, calibration			
Eye Gaze / Pointing Switch Scanning (1 or 2)	Comment on settings eg scan patterns, scan speed			
Mouse / Joystick	Comment on settings			
Multiple Access Methods	Consider need for motor skill change			
Outputs				
Speech (voices)	Voice options eg Aus voice, child voice			
Voice Personalisation	Ability to message bank, change pitch, rate of speech			
Speakers	Comment on speaker volume			
IR Controls	Infra-red remote outputs			
Wifi	Able to connect to internet via wifi. Does the user have wifi?			
Bluetooth	Able to connect to Bluetooth devices			
Data logging	Able to record data within the device			
Back Up	Comment on how back up and restoring is done			
Accessories	, 0			
Durable casing	Device is durable or additional casing available			
Keyguards	Comment on keyguard if required			
Handle / Carry Strap	Device comes with accessory			
Mounting	Device able to be mounted			
Stand	Comment on how device stands			
Staria	I .			

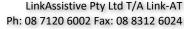


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Is it needed by the individual & why? Description Device **Device** Feature **Tertiary Considerations Integrated Features** Comment on ability to control remotes eg TV, video, music, lights Environmental / Remote Controls In built music playing pages Music Player In built camera 1 or 2 Camera Ability to share to social media eg Facebook, Twitter Social media In built email, email pages Email Comment on computer access functions **Computer Access** Ability to connect to a mobile phone Phone Consider compatible phones Ability to work with Skype Skype Visual schedule, timers **Behaviour Supports** Dedicated / Non-Mainstream tablet vs dedicated AAC Dedicated **Training and Support Local Supplier** Device has a local supplier to support use Device has easily accessible technical troubleshooting. Comment on **Technical Support** how support is accessed. The device has manuals, website supports, FAQs Website Support Videos and Webinars Training videos are available Device has therapy resources to support learning Implementation Resources Device has a paper based version available Non-electronic version Comment on warranty periods Warranty Device repairs Comment on repair options eg local supplier, free screen repairs External Editing software Device has software for editing and programming of the device. Is this software free? **Other Specifications** Battery Life Hours of battery life Weight of device Weight Comment on device portability / mounting options Portability Screen Size Consider pricing of device and accessories **Device Cost** Comment on device suitability eg in home, community, school Environmental Considerations



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