



# HIGH-TECH AAC

## (AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION)

### MAINSTREAM DEVICES

**AAC** stands for **Augmentative and Alternative Communication**. This includes methods to communicate (other than speaking) your needs and wants, share experiences, and participate in social conversation.



#### IMAGINE

**Do you, or someone you know:**

Having difficulty being understood due to a communication disability?

Wish it was easier to get your message across?

Need tools to express more in-depth messages with speech output?

Want support in finding, and training in using, a high-tech AAC device that fits your needs?



#### SEEK

**To find out more, you can...**

Phone **LifeTec on 1300 543 383** to discuss communication options with a health professional.

**Schedule an assessment here:**

**<https://lifetec.org.au/our-services/referrals/>**.

Use the National Equipment Database at **[www.ilcaustralia.org.au](http://www.ilcaustralia.org.au)** for more information on communication software and devices.

Speak to your Speech Pathologist.



#### CHOOSE

**What can I choose from?**

**Speech-generating devices** are devices that speak a message out loud when you choose it by using symbols, pictures or by writing it.

There are various softwares (i.e. programs or apps) with different features available. It's recommended you trial at least two different options with a Speech Pathologist before choosing the best device for your needs.

'Mainstream' devices are available for anyone to buy and are not made solely for AAC. This includes tablets with Windows, Android and iOS (iPad). Communication apps or software can be added to these devices to create a 'mainstream speech generating device'. These can be tailored to your needs.

'Dedicated' devices are built solely for communication. For more information on dedicated devices, please see our '*High-Tech AAC – Dedicated Devices*' factsheet.

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It's best to have one device just for communication and keep other programs (e.g. games) on a second device. If you cannot touch ('access') the screen directly, 'alternative access' options exist (e.g. switch scanning, head tracking). See below for examples of mainstream AAC systems. A LifeTec Speech Pathologist can assess and trial these to help you find the best option for your needs.

### Text-based Systems



Speech is generated through spelling words via an onscreen keyboard. This is known as 'text-to-speech' and involves the user typing the sentence/s they want to communicate. This is then produced as a spoken message by the device.

These help people with good reading and writing skills to express themselves. They have different features such as word prediction and storage of phrases.

### Symbol-based Systems



Icons are used (with or without written words) to represent different words and meanings. These can be good for people with learning reading and writing skills and who understand symbols more than written words. These can be simple or more complex and may also include photos and alphabet letters.

### Cases, keyguards, harnesses and external speakers

Mainstream devices aren't designed as communication devices so may need to be changed to use for communication. Mainstream devices may break more easily, may be less portable, and have lower volume for speech. Keyguards can help you select items on the screen, cases help to protect the devices, and straps and stands make it easier to carry the device. External speakers can make the volume loud enough to be heard when talking to others.



LIVE

**Once you have chosen the speech generating system that best meets your communication needs, LifeTec Speech Pathologists can provide support to achieve maximum success, including:**

- ⊗ Applications for funding of devices or iPad/tablet applications
- ⊗ Assistance with set up and customisation of your speech generating devices
- ⊗ Education and training for you and your communication partners in using the device
- ⊗ Low tech AAC supports to use alongside your high-tech speech generating device
- ⊗ Identification of barriers to successful communication, and problem-solving to overcome these barriers

#### Contact details

- ➔ [www.lifetec.org.au](http://www.lifetec.org.au)
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