Considerations for Adding Vocabulary to an AAC Device

Robust AAC language systems contain preprogrammed core and fringe vocabulary that is research-based and applicable across contexts and populations. However, it is impossible for all the vocabulary an individual wants and needs to use to be preprogrammed in an AAC device due to the uniqueness of each individual and the limited amount of real estate to store vocabulary in the AAC device. Thoughtful consideration should be given to deciding which vocabulary to add to an individual's AAC device.

Should I add certain preprogrammed vocabulary to the individual's AAC device?

Considerations	Yes	No
Will the individual be motivated and/or need to use the word repeatedly in the long term?		
Can the individual demonstrate comprehension of the word by using vocabulary that is currently preprogrammed in their AAC device?		
Will the word enhance the individual's engagement and participation in their environment and with communication partners?		
Does the word support the individual's social-emotional and/or self-regulation skills and/or needs?		
Is the word commonly used by the individual's same-aged peers and/or do they feel that it is important to be able to use it?		
Total		

If the total number of check marks in the "**Yes**" column is greater than the total number of check marks in the "**No**" column, it is appropriate to add the vocabulary to the individual's AAC device.

- Be sure to add the vocabulary on the appropriate page(s) within the vocabulary file to maintain consistency and in accordance with existing motor planning principles.

continued

Vocabulary customization should be a team effort – be sure to involve all members of the AAC team in determining which vocabulary should be added to the individual's AAC device.

If the total number of check marks in the "**No**" column is greater than the total number of check marks in the "**Yes**" column, it is inappropriate and/or unnecessary to add the vocabulary to the individual's AAC device.

Instead of adding the vocabulary to the individual's AAC device, complete the following steps:

1. Search the AAC device for the word to ensure that it is not already preprogrammed in the device.

2. Use initial letter cueing by supporting the individual to indicate the first letter of the desired word on the keyboard page in the AAC device (e.g., "*It starts with*").
   a. Create a button in the AAC device that says, "*It starts with*" and links to the keyboard page.

3. Use descriptive teaching to model and/or use core vocabulary in the AAC device to describe the word.
   a. Create a button in the AAC device that says, "*Let me tell you about it. It is*" and links to the describe page.

   b. Create a button in the AAC device that says, "*It's like this but different.*" and links to the home page.

   c. Create a button in the AAC device that says, "*It's from here.*" and links to the places page.

   d. Create a button in the AAC device that says, "*This is what it can do.*" or "*This is what you can do with it.*" and links to the actions page.

   e. Create a button in the AAC device that says, "*It sounds like*" and links to the home page.

   f. Create a button in the AAC device that says, "*It's in this group.*" and links to the groups or categories page.

   e. Create a button in the AAC device that says, "*Let me try to spell it.*" and links to the keyboard page.

If the objective is to assess the individual's word knowledge, transform the expressive task into a receptive task by telling them the referent and asking them to choose the corresponding symbol from a set of symbols presented to them.

FORBES AAC