



# Setting Goals for AAC

**What skills do our students need to learn to become successful communicators? What areas should we be focussing on when setting goals for AAC use?**

There are several areas we need to think about to support our students to develop communicative competence. Light (1989) proposed that AAC users need to develop knowledge, judgement and skills in four interrelated areas. It can be useful to consider your student's skills and areas for development in each of the four areas of communicative competence below.

## Operational Competence

- Technical skills used to operate the AAC system
- Access to the system (eg. direct selection, scanning)
- Use of the AAC system features (eg. on/off, volume, clear etc.)
- Skills to use the system most efficiently

## Linguistic Competence

- Learning the language of the home and community (expressive and receptive)
- Learning symbols that represent vocabulary and the way vocabulary is organised in the AAC system
- Combining words into sentences
- Range of language functions (requesting, commenting, protesting, sharing information)

## Communicative Competence

### Social Competence

- Participating in conversation
- Discourse strategies (eg. initiating, turn taking)
- Expressing different interaction functions (eg. expressing wants and needs, sharing information, expressing emotions, commenting, protesting etc.)

### Strategic Competence

- Using the most appropriate communication method and vocabulary for the situation
- Developing compensatory strategies for effective communication within the AAC system and any restrictions for the person using AAC
- Repairing communication breakdown

(Kovach, 2009)

**How do I know where my students are at with their AAC skills and what some next steps may be?**

It can be useful to work with the team around the student using AAC to complete some assessment to determine a student's communication strengths and areas for development. One assessment based on the four areas of communicative competence is the AAC Profile by Tracy Kovach (2009). This tool can be useful for mapping student strengths and areas for development, as well as identifying next steps for your students which can be highlighted as goal areas. (see over).

## Tips for writing high quality communication goals

**Make goals meaningful** - Linda Burkhart and Gayle Porter share valuable thoughts on setting meaningful communication goals for AAC users that will work towards the ultimate goal of autonomous communication. Some example presentations about this are linked below:

Writing IEP goals for authentic communication

[http://www.lburkhart.com/Writing\\_IEP\\_Goals\\_rev11.pdf](http://www.lburkhart.com/Writing_IEP_Goals_rev11.pdf)

Writing IEP goals for emergent communicators

[http://www.lburkhart.com/hand\\_ISAAC\\_B/IEP\\_goals\\_ISAAC\\_Barcelona\\_handout.pdf](http://www.lburkhart.com/hand_ISAAC_B/IEP_goals_ISAAC_Barcelona_handout.pdf)

**'SMART' goals** - The below link has some useful tips on writing high quality goals to make it easier to monitor and report on student progress.

<http://uk.dynavotech.com/tips/communication/details.aspx?id=27>

## Can I see some examples of AAC related goals?

There are a number of resources available with more information about setting meaningful goals around AAC and with many examples of communication goals for students using AAC.

How I do it: writing IEP goals Lauren Enders

<http://praacticalaac.org/praactical/how-i-do-it-writing-iep-goals-for-students-who-use-aac-with-lauren-enders/>

Sample AAC goals

<http://www.ushaonline.net/Resources/Documents/Sample+AAC+Goals.pdf>

More PrAACtical AAC goals that matter

<http://praacticalaac.org/praactical/more-praactical-aac-goals-that-matter/>

[http://praacticalaac.org/?wpfb\\_dl=94](http://praacticalaac.org/?wpfb_dl=94)

PrAACtical suggestions for writing AAC goals

<http://praacticalaac.org/praactical/praactical-suggestions-writing-goals-for-people-learning-aac/>

Dynamic AAC goals grid

<http://www.dynavotech.com/training/toolkit/details.aspx?id=32>

Lauren S. Enders Pinterest Board of AAC goal related resources

<https://www.pinterest.com/lasenders/aac-writing-goals-objectives/>

## References

Kovach, T. M. (2009). *Augmentative & Alternative Communication Profile: A Continuum of Learning*. East Moline, IL: LinguiSystems.

Light, J. (1989). Toward a definition of communicative competence for individuals using augmentative and alternative communication systems. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, (5), 137-144.