

Modelling

Modelling means 'leading by example for somebody to follow or imitate'. We need to model the language of symbols for the person using AAC for them to learn how to speak it. That means we need to talk in symbols as much as we can.

Here's why:

"The typically developing child will have been exposed to oral language for approximately 4,380 waking hours by the time he begins speaking at about 18 months of age.

4000-6000 words per day for 1 year before saying their 1st word. 4000-6000 words per day for the 2nd year before putting 2 words together.

If someone is using a different symbol set and only has exposure to it twice a week, for 20-30 minutes each time, it will take the alternate symbol user 84 years to have the same experience with their symbols that the typically developing child will have with the spoken word in 18 months!"

- Jane Korsten, 2011

How to model

Modelling can be done either by using printed grids of your child/adult's communication system or by using the electronic communication system itself.

When modelling, point to the words on the page/screen as you are saying them.

Here are some tips to remember when you are modelling language:

- **Try to do it in as many situations as possible:** the user does not have to have access eye gaze technology for you to be modelling language.
- **Make it meaningful:** model in real life situations - things you would say anyway rather than forcing a situation just to be able to model.
- **Include a range of word types:** pronouns, verbs, short words, describing words and nouns so the user is exposed to a range of language. The more language you expose someone to, the more they will be able to give back to you.
- **Model ahead of the user:** you need to be building on their sentences e.g. if they use the word "dog" you could model back 'I like dog' or 'you have dog' or 'dogs are funny'.

Places to model: everywhere!

Print sheets, laminate them to use about the house for reading, bath time, bed time, meals etc.

Take sheets out and about: shopping, to the cinema, zoo, farm, park, eating out.

Even modelling 2 sentences for 30 seconds in the whole time you're out is valuable exposure to your child's language in the right context.

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