

# AAC Strategies by Communication Phase

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## Supportive Techniques for Young Children Learning to Communicate

Match your strategies to the child's current communication phase, and revisit often—development is not always linear. Use this guide to support caregiver coaching, goal writing, and intervention planning.

### **Phase 1:** Pre-Intentional, Pre-Symbolic Communication

#### **What to Look For:**

Child uses reflexive sounds and body language (crying, yawning, smiling) to communicate needs or feelings.

#### **Key ACC Strategies:**

- **Observe and Respond Consistently:**  
Treat every movement or sound as meaningful. Respond to all vocalizations and actions as if they are communication attempts.
- **Use Predictable Routines and Turn-Taking:**  
Play simple games like peek-a-boo to build anticipation and shared attention.
- **Build Receptive Language:**  
Pair words with actions and objects (e.g., say “up” while lifting the child).
- **Pause and Wait:**  
Stop an activity briefly and wait for the child to signal (with a sound or action) that they want to continue.
- **Introduce Cause and Effect:**  
Use single-message buttons or switches to activate lights, sounds, or toys, helping the child learn that their actions can make things happen—building early AAC awareness.

**Pro Tip:** Respond to children's sounds and movements to build connections and encourage further communication attempts. By recognizing their attempts, children become more aware of their own communicative abilities.