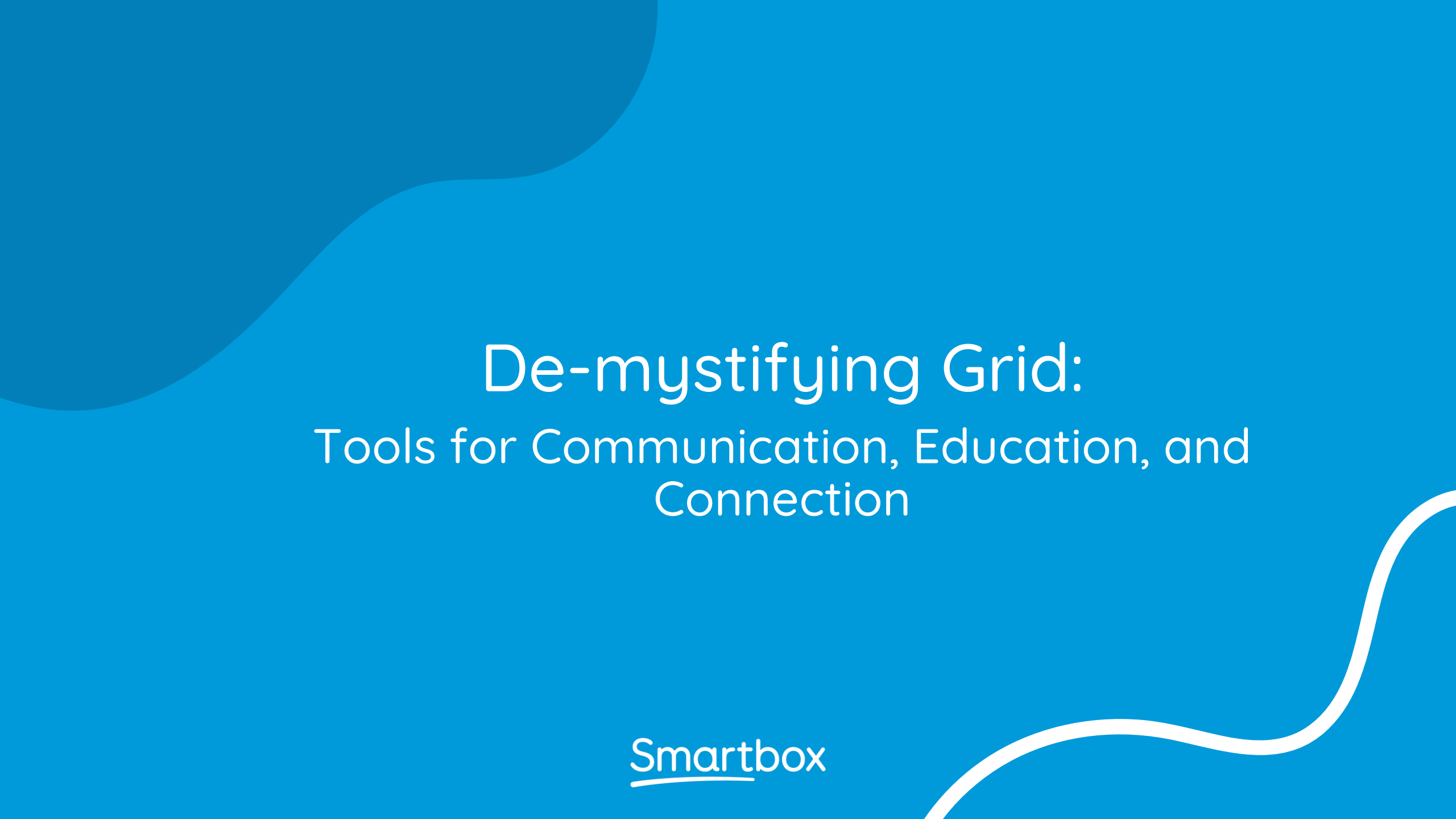


The background is a solid blue color with two white wavy lines. One line starts in the top left corner and curves towards the center. Another line starts in the bottom right corner and curves towards the center.

De-mystifying Grid:

Tools for Communication, Education, and Connection

Smartbox



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Financial disclosures: salary from Smartbox

Nonfinancial disclosures: member of ASHA, RESNA, ISAAC, USSAAC, guardian of individual who uses AAC



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AAC Consultant
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Financial disclosures: employee of Smartbox

Nonfinancial disclosures: member of ASHA, licensed OH SLP, receives equipment for AAC assessments while in this role

Personal reflection...

Think about challenges you face when working with students using AAC, particularly around their classroom experiences.

Which themes arise?

What do you feel is a barrier you just can't break through?

Share with your neighbor.

Share with the larger group, if you'd like.



Agenda

- Shared agreements and session theme
- Accessibility and inclusion
- AAC scaffolding for meaningful instruction
- Grid overview
- Case examples



Shared agreements for today

No
prerequisites
for AAC access

Engagement
and attention
can look
different

All students can
learn new and
challenging
things

Presume potential,
competence,
intellect

Access alone to
AAC $\neq$
communication
success

Where are we starting, where are we going?

Ultimate goal: successfully communicate

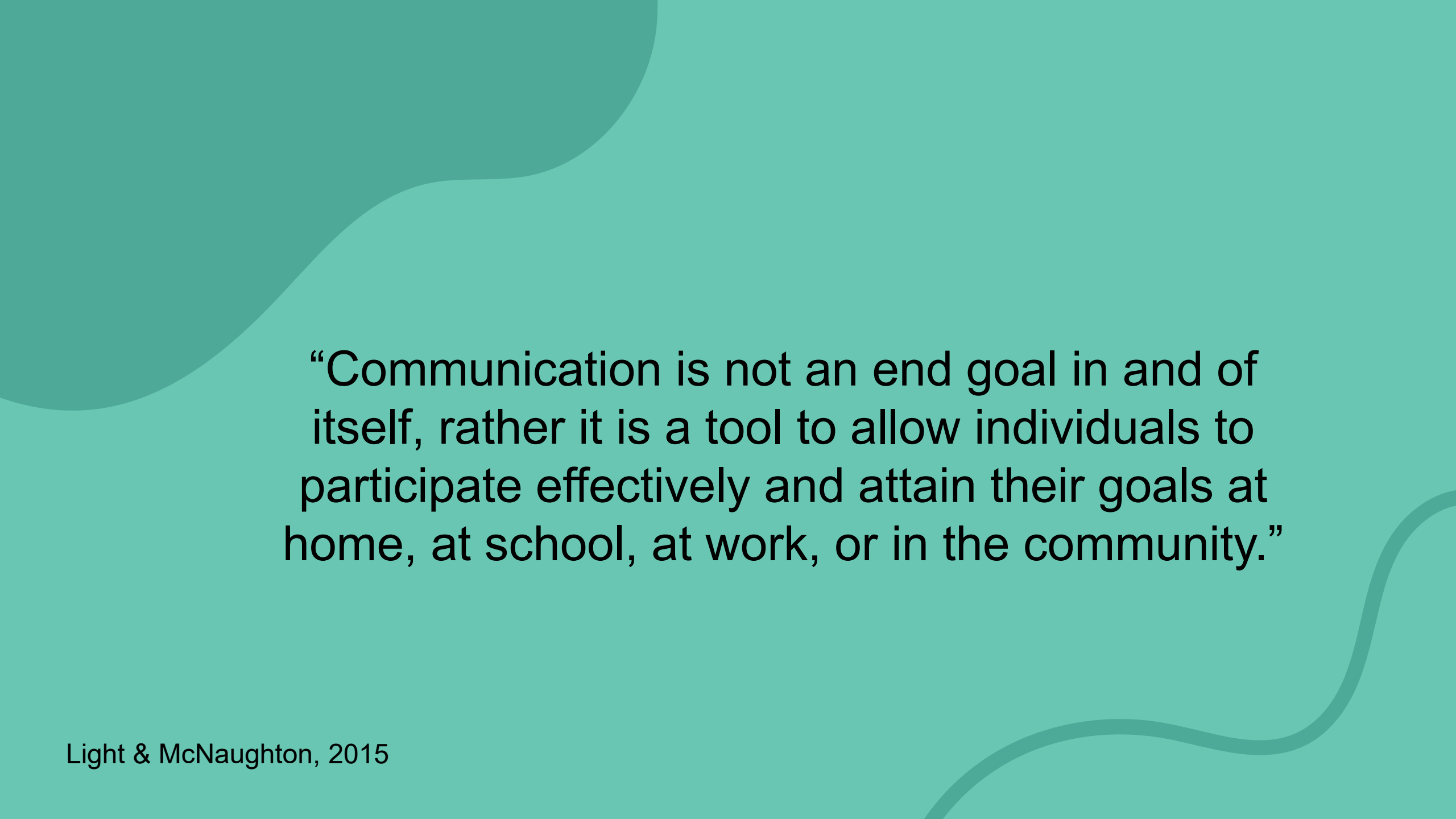
- to whom I want
- when I want
- where I want
- what I want
- whenever I want

Porter & Burkhardt, 2015

Robust AAC gives a means

Teaching and rich experiences provide the skills



The background is a solid teal color. There are two large, abstract, wavy shapes in a darker shade of teal. One shape is in the top-left corner, and the other is in the bottom-right corner, curving upwards.

“Communication is not an end goal in and of itself, rather it is a tool to allow individuals to participate effectively and attain their goals at home, at school, at work, or in the community.”

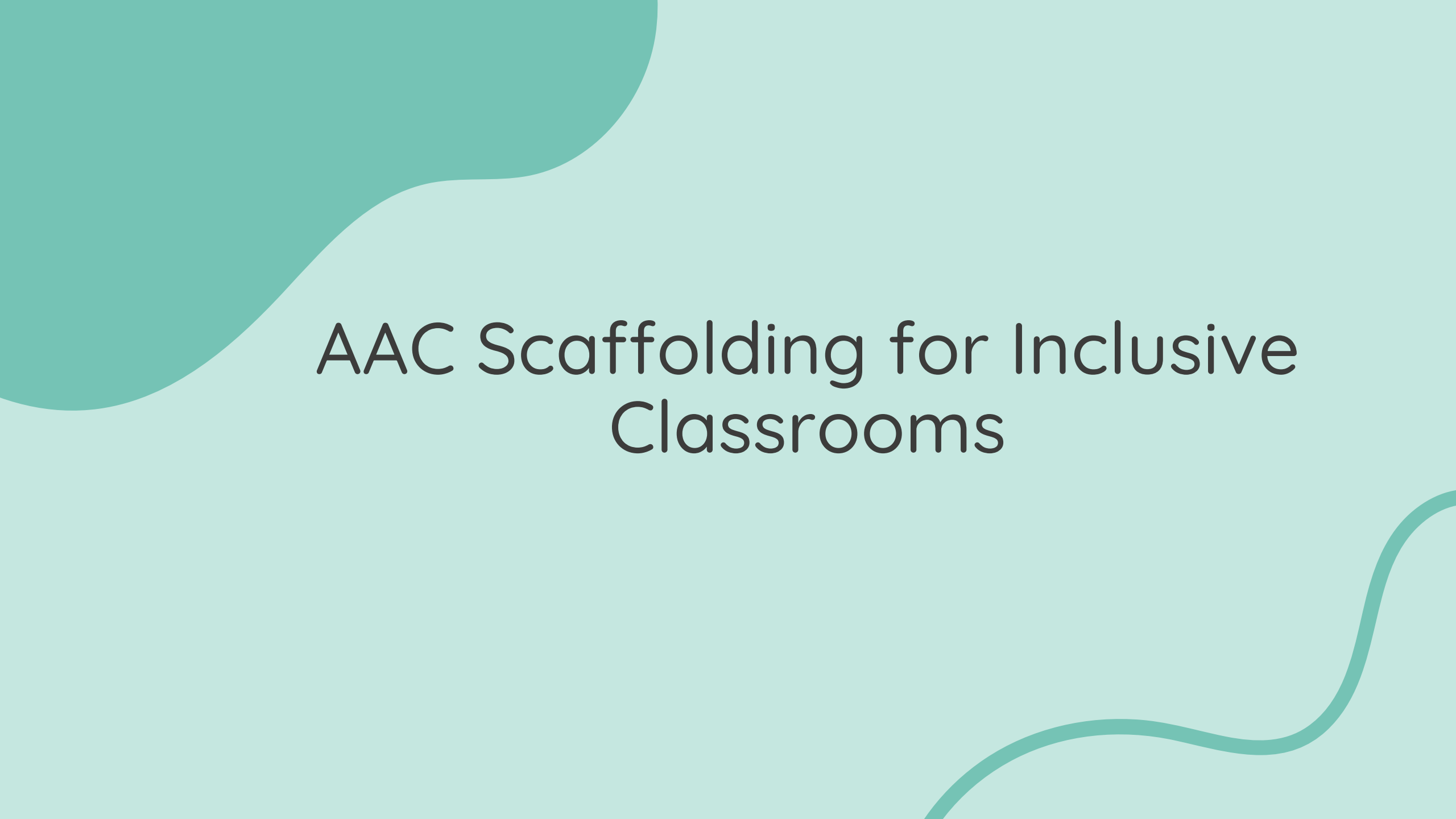
Accessibility and Inclusion

Accessible

- Students can access materials and communication in ways that support their strengths and needs
- Students are provided multiple ways to engage and respond to instruction in ways they can access
- Barriers to learning and communication are reduced

Inclusive

- Students are active members of their classroom community
- Students are participating alongside peers
- Students have meaningful opportunities to contribute
- This requires more than the student just physically being in a classroom – it's a start, but just the start

The background features a light teal color with two abstract teal shapes. One is a large, rounded shape in the top-left corner, and the other is a wavy line in the bottom-right corner.

AAC Scaffolding for Inclusive Classrooms

Scaffolding, what do we mean?

Not lowering expectations

Creating accessible entry to learning

Support to develop skills

Entry to the “just right” challenge

Spectrum of supports – plan for fading

Think about...

Communication demands of task

Cognitive demands of task

Skill strengths

Skill challenges

Supports to bridge gap between strengths and challenges

Examples of Scaffolds

High support

- Single page activity grid
- Topic-specific vocab
- Custom classroom pages
- Errorless, fully-guided activity
- Pre-recorded greetings on a button
- Light tech lesson specific boards

Medium support

- Supported guidance to locate relevant key words
- Navigation support to open classroom subject folder/page
- Masked vocabulary
- Command/function stacking to automate navigation

Low support

- Teacher modeling target vocab to whole class
- Peer modeling support
- Shared reading activity with assistance locating relevant vocab in robust system

These can be great ways to build rubrics around your goals!

Takeaways...

When meaningful participation is the goal AND is providing rich experience (educationally, socially, linguistically, etc.), sometimes scaffolded support that narrows linguistic flexibility (and therefore cognitive-linguistic demand) provides greater access than generating a response within robust AAC.

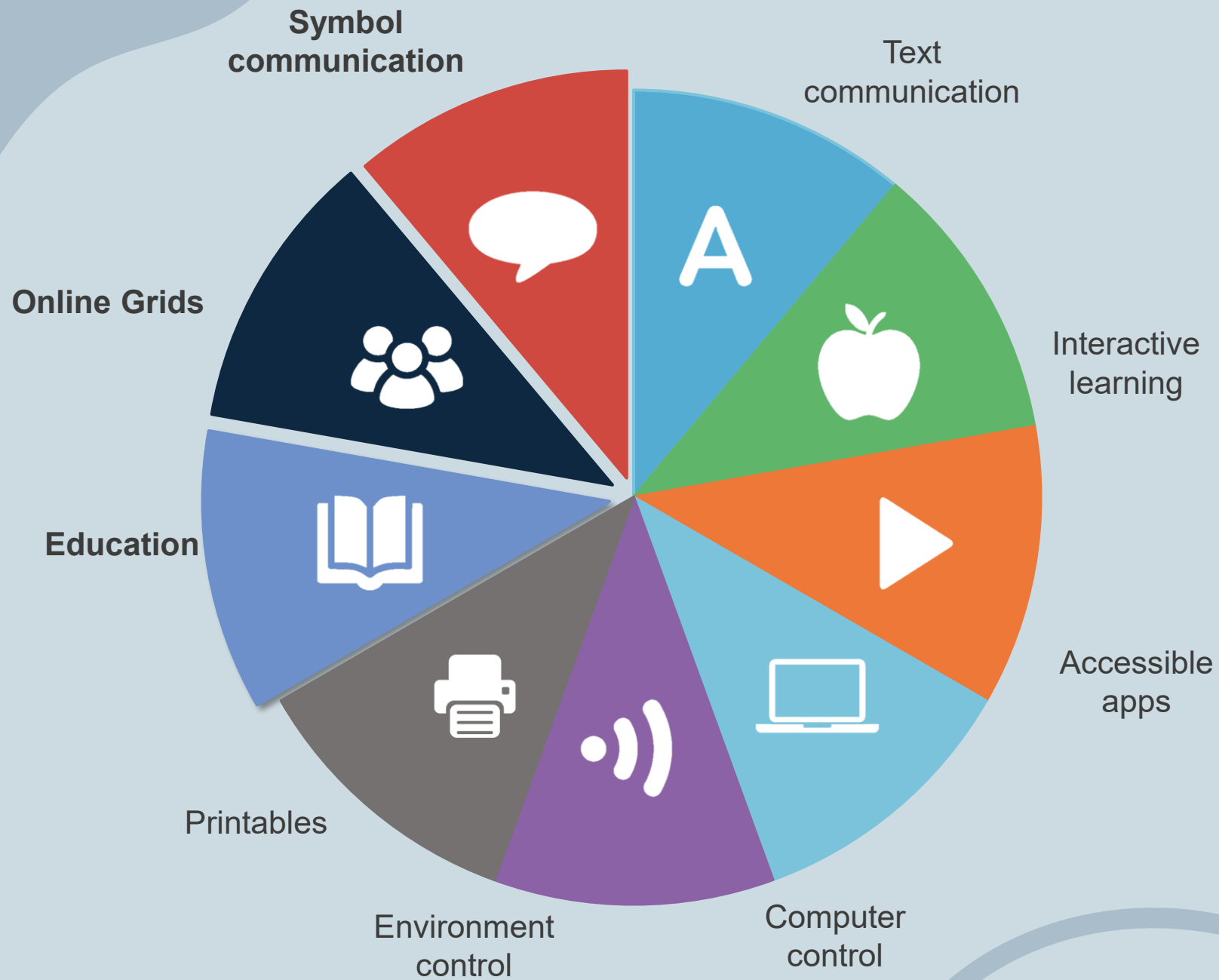
This doesn't mean
abandoning robust
AAC

Robust AAC is
still and always
available

It may mean
targeting linguistic
flexibility when
overall demands
are lower

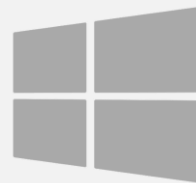
It means
supporting
inclusive and
meaningful
participation

A less
cognitively
demanding
entry point may
mean greater
learning





- AAC software for Windows
- Compatible with all access methods
- Integrated environmental control
- Ability to use with phone, email, and social media- not just face-to-face communication



- AAC software platform for iOS devices
- Touch and switch accessible
- Continuum of communication from birth to literacy

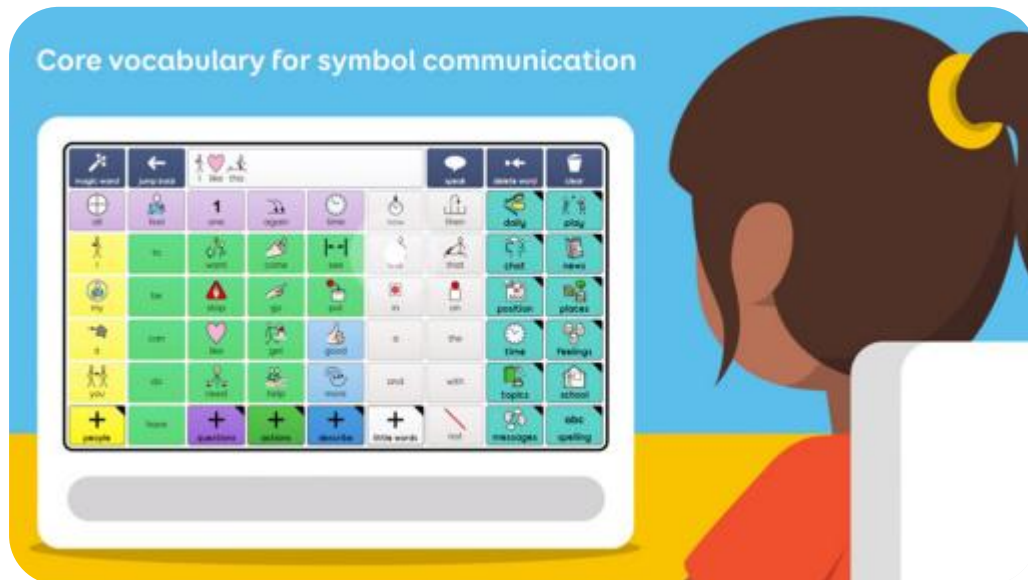


Say more with Super Core

Super Core is a symbol-based core vocabulary, developed to help AAC users experience success with symbol communication.

It's easy to learn and use, and is full of features to support language development, learning and literacy!

- Full and robust core vocabulary
- Quick access to over 2,500 of the most useful and commonly use words
- Organized in a consistent and meaningful way
- Includes everyday, activity-specific language
- Over 70 topic grids
- Available in two sizes
- Simple Learning grids for very early AAC learners to explore language
- Based on experience and grounded in research



Who is Super Core for?

Super Core is intended for individuals of any age, who use AAC to communicate and require symbol communication for message building. It is suitable for a range of individuals including those who are:

- Just starting to explore symbol communication
- Wanting a more comprehensive range of vocabulary with powerful grammar tools
- Using any access method



Touch



Eye gaze



Switch



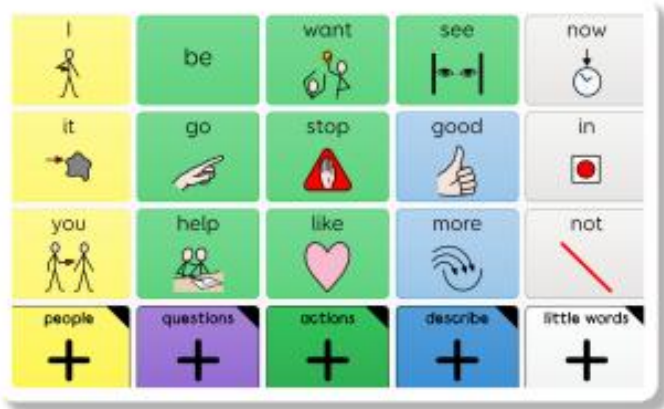
Pointer

You'll find lots of vocabulary relating to daily, play, and leisure activities, making it easier to learn and explore language with activities that are fun and familiar – and encourage AAC to be used all day, every day!



How it works

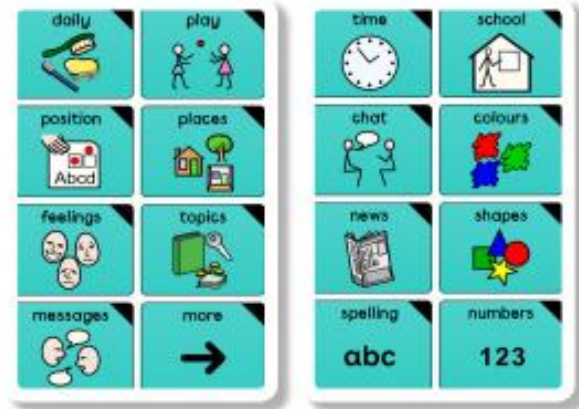
Core vocabulary



Quickly say the words we use all the time...

These useful words make up 80% of the phrases and sentences we speak.

Dynamic columns



Get access to even more everyday language...

Whether you're playing a game or going to bed, the words you need are always available!

Fringe vocabulary

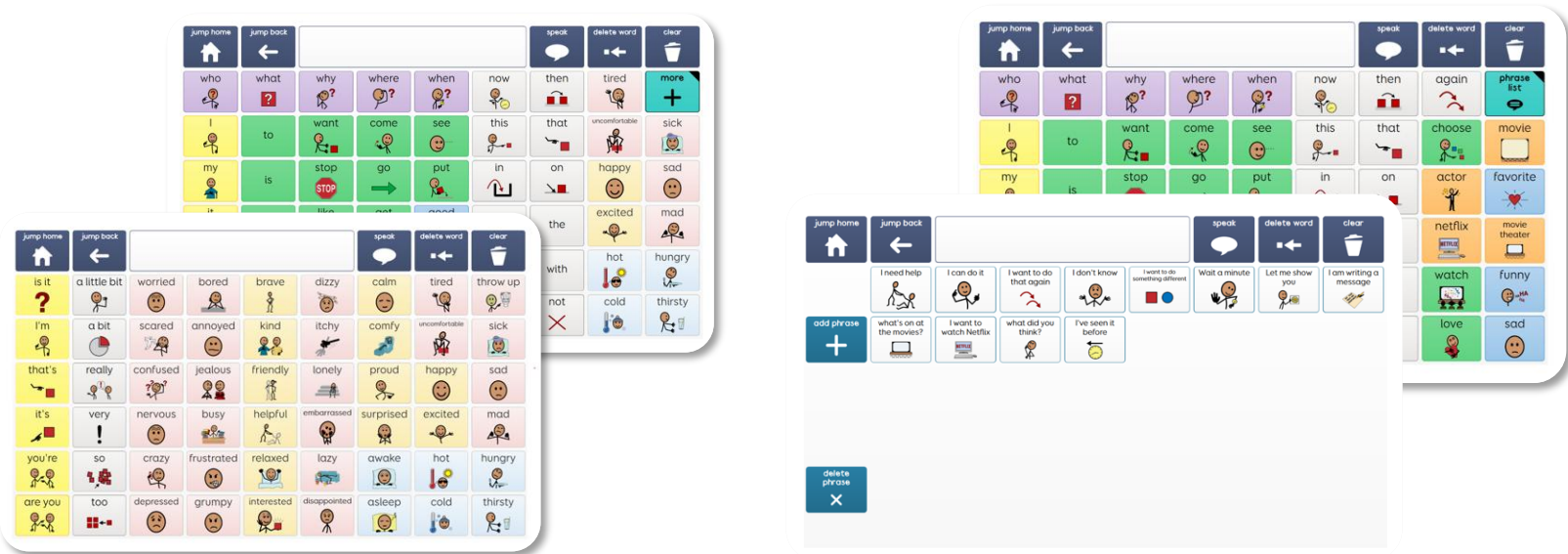


Explore over 70 different topic grids...

You'll find everything from food and clothes, to vehicles and magic.

Inside the dynamic columns

Super Core combines core words with activity-specific vocabulary that focuses on real-life situations, every day routines and play.

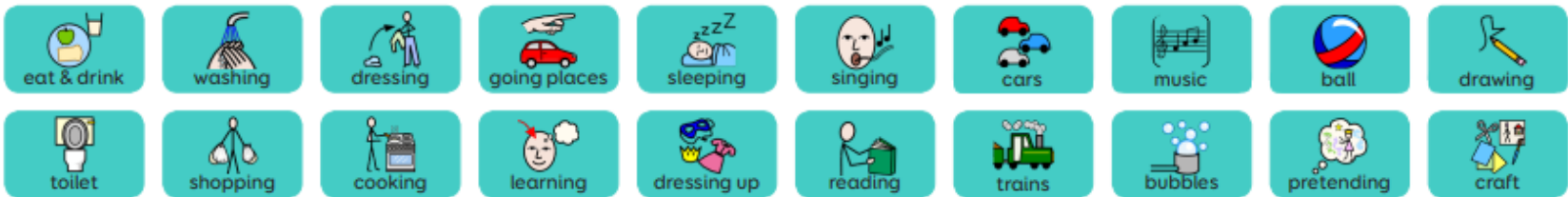


The dynamic columns jump to a range of grids with topic-specific fringe vocabulary.

You'll find a selection of **daily and play activities**, as well as grids for talking about **feelings, places, positions, time, school** and more.

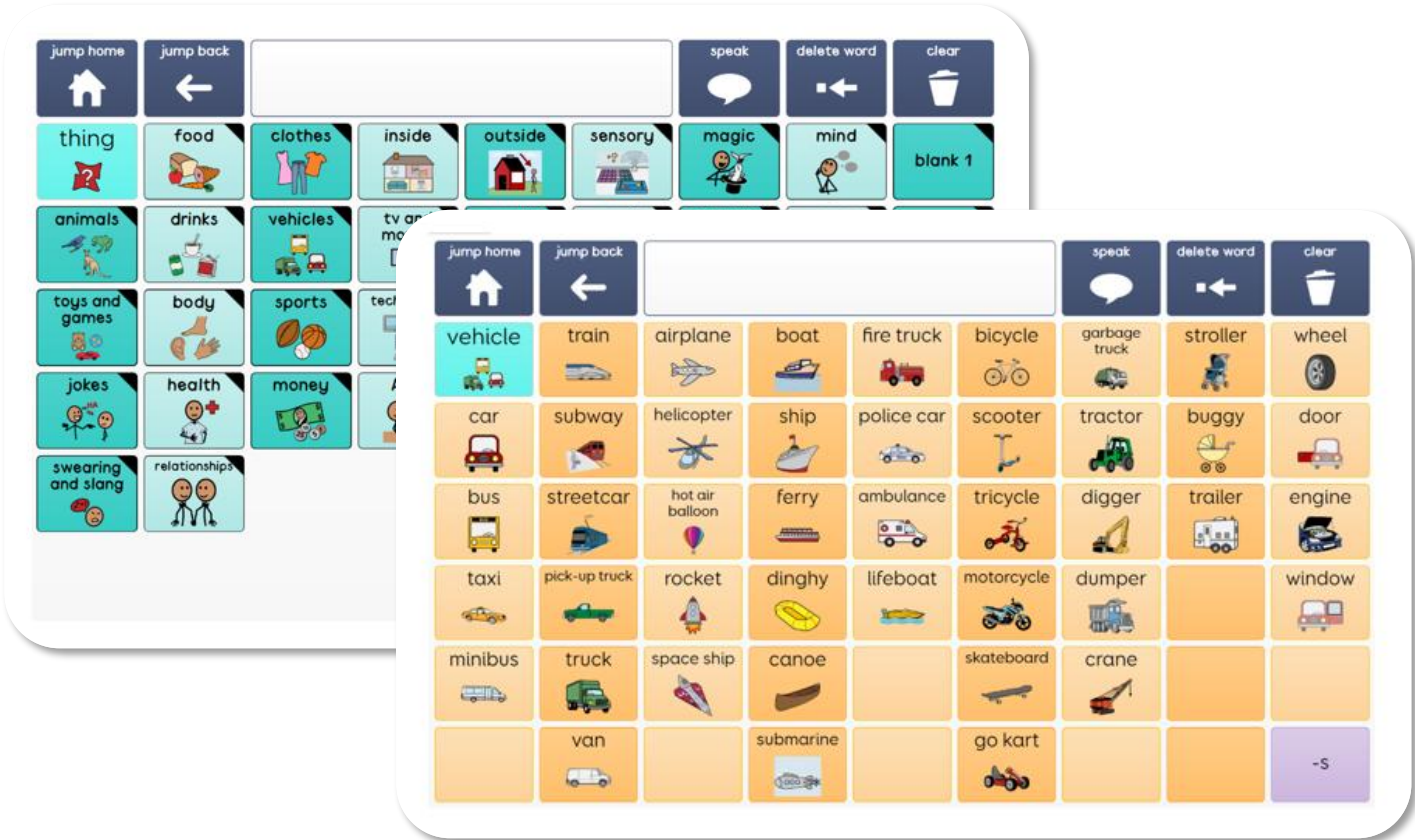
Many grids also come with useful whole phrases.

Example activities:



Topic grids with fringe vocabulary

There are over 1,000 fringe words to discover in the topic grids, each organized by frequency. If there are two grids, the more frequently used words will always appear on the first grid.



Each topic is organized semantically (by meaning) to help learners quickly find the words they need.

For example, you'll find vehicles that fly group together in one column of the vehicles grid, and those that go on water in another.

Super Core is designed to support...

Literacy

- Super Core includes a **phonetic keyboard** for learners at any level of literacy development to explore letter and sounds
- You can access a range of **other keyboard layouts**, including keyboards with prediction cells, that you can introduce when appropriate
- There is a **selective use of symbols**, encouraging whole word learning for words that are harder to represent with symbols (e.g., the, a, of, but, could)
- **Reading is emphasized** throughout Super Core, in daily and play activities, and school grids. You'll also find **story book vocabulary and phrases** alongside core words, supporting learners to join in with story book reading
- **School topic grids** contain subject-specific language alongside core vocabulary

Getting started guide



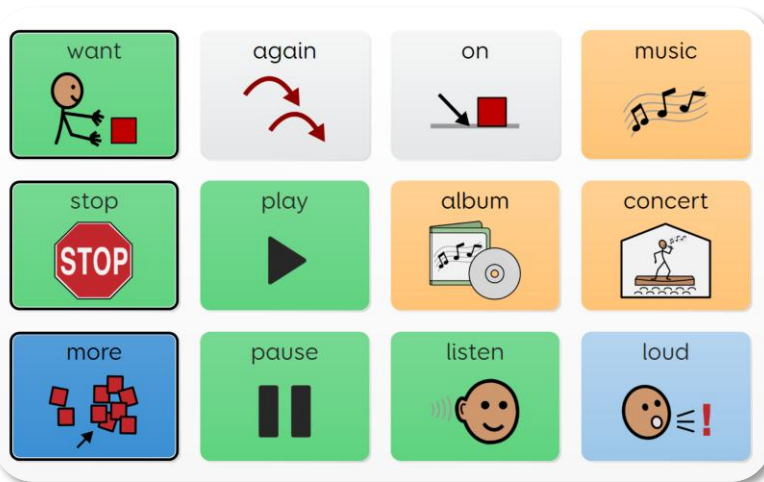
You'll find everything you need to get started with Super Core 30 and 50 in our manual.

<https://hub.thinksmartbox.com/topic/resources-super-core/>

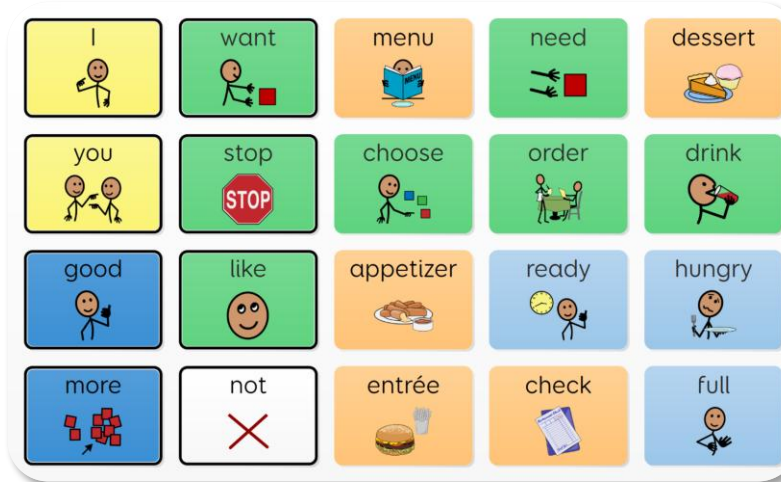
Learning grids

For learners just beginning their AAC journey there is a selection of simplified Learning grids to explore, in two sizes.

- In all major symbol libraries
- On Windows and iPad
- Ideal for those who are just starting to explore symbol communication, and may still be developing access skills



Music
play activity grid



Eating Out
daily activity grid

By introducing vocabulary in this way, you have the opportunity to learn words within activities that are meaningful and motivating



Light tech communication books

Light tech versions of Super Core are available to print directly from Grid as a book.

Instructions for personalization and printing are available on our website.

<https://hub.thinksmartbox.com/topic/printable-super-core-book/>



Super Core Grab Guide



Super Core

Created by Daisy Clay, MSc, RCSLT

Description

Symbol-based, research-backed core vocabulary strategy with over 4,000 of the most useful and commonly used words, supporting spontaneous novel utterance generation.

Read more: [Introducing Super Core](#), [Vocabulary selection](#)

Expected User Profile

Intended for the lifespan of communicators who need core- and symbol-based c
Supports emergent and developing communicators with generative language su
communicators with more refined skills that benefit from support of whole-word-
systems. [Who is Super Core for?](#)

Key Points

- **Child and teen & adult versions** provide access to vocabulary suited for ea
more: [Choose your vocabulary](#).
- Two sizes available ([Super Core 30 and 50](#)) containing all the same vocabular
- All versions available in Symbol Stix (US), PCS, and Widgit. Super Core Learn
PCS High Contrast. Default and alternative versions for PCS and Widgit vary i
language.

Access

Optimized for:



Consider for:



With considerable customization, can be personalized to fit switch scanning ne
vertical or block scanning. Pre-set blocks and auditory prompts can be modified



Symbol Communication
Super Core



Clinical Gems

Language, learning, and literacy: range of features support development of these skills. Read more: [Full Super Core Manual](#).

- Multiple keyboard layouts, including phonetic, support varying levels of literacy and access needs.
- Left to right organization, supports reading and writing development.

Navigational efficiency: research-backed organizational theories (e.g., motor planning, semantic relation, topic-based) for single-word use and multi-word message building. Read more: [Using Super Core](#).

- **Dynamic columns** with routine and play or leisure vocabulary allow topic-based vocabulary to exist alongside main core without need for navigation between both.
- Activity grids alongside core support vocabulary learning across different contexts, meaning individuals can learn what words like, "on" or "go" mean in different situations, and also get numerous opportunities for repetition, both crucial for developing vocabulary.
- Useful next words decrease navigation requirements by expanding main core with predictable words that change with user selection and maintain motor planning rules.
- The home and back commands allow users to easily navigate between topic-based fringe and core in a single-hit.

Motor planning: developed with motor planning principles in mind by maintaining consistent word location.

Modeling: routine and play or leisure grids provide context-rich and salient assistance to guide families and caregivers with support and modeling. Activity grids make the most of existing daily communication opportunities. This reduces time families and caregivers need to spend thinking about communication opportunities or creating new communication opportunities.

Scaffolding support: [Super Core Learning](#) provides built-in support to scaffold and teach Super Core in simplified routines or activities with lower-cell count grids (12 and 20 cells).

- Meant to be used alongside Super Core 30 or 50.
- Can be printed for ready-to-go **communication boards**.

Multi-modal support: customizable and printable one- and two- sided [communication books](#) can be downloaded for print in Grid.

- Easily print any Super Core grid right from Grid using the print settings.
- Additional core-boards and learning grids available to print from [Smartbox Hub](#) in multiple languages and symbol sets.

Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary: school and education topic grids contain subject-specific language, alongside core vocabulary.



Symbol Communication
Super Core



Super Core resources

Click the links below for more information on Super Core.

Options and prices	Webinars and videos	Smartbox Academy
Super Core	Super Core webinars	Personalizing Super Core in Grid
Super Core manual	Introducing Simple AAC	Personalizing Super Core in Grid for iPad
Super Core-based grids	Introducing printable Super Core books	Choosing a symbol vocabulary: Core and pragmatic language approaches
Super Core book licence		Intro to Super Core: Bite-sized

Additional knowledge base containing general knowledge, clinical gems (including customization ideas), and resources specific to Super Core.

Ideal for anyone using or considering Super Core.

<https://hub.thinksmartbox.com/topic/clinical-education/>

Introducing Voco Chat

Voco Chat is a low-cell count symbol vocabulary designed for people of any age who need larger cells.

Using a pragmatic approach, message pathways provide a supported model of language, with grids to promote communication, interaction and wellbeing.

- Large, easy to access cells
- Supported message building
- Vocabulary to support independence
- Suitable for any age and any access method
- Quick and easy to personalise



Who is Voco Chat for?

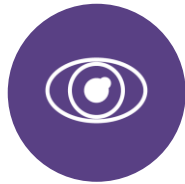
Voco Chat is suitable for anyone who needs larger cells, and can be used with touch, eye gaze, pointer and switches. Auditory prompts are included for both columns and individual cells.



Switch



Pointer



Eye
gaze



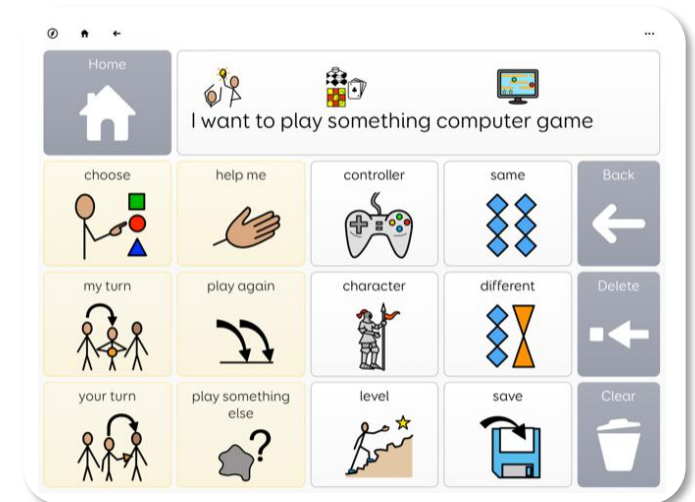
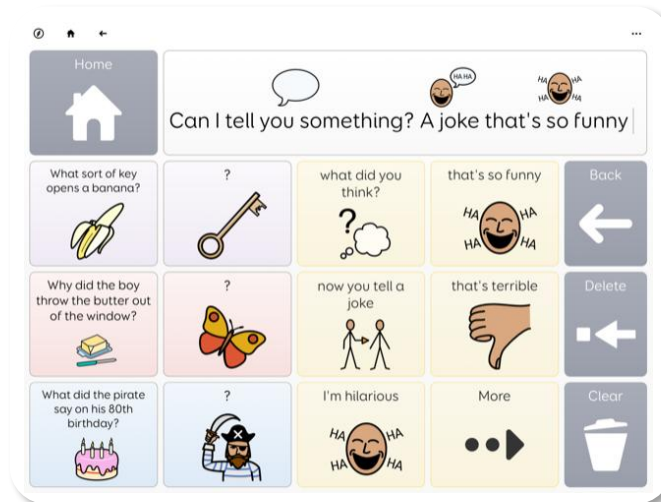
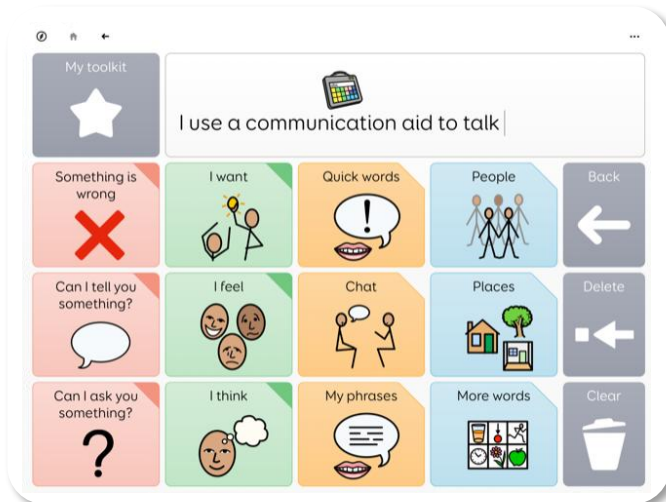
Touch



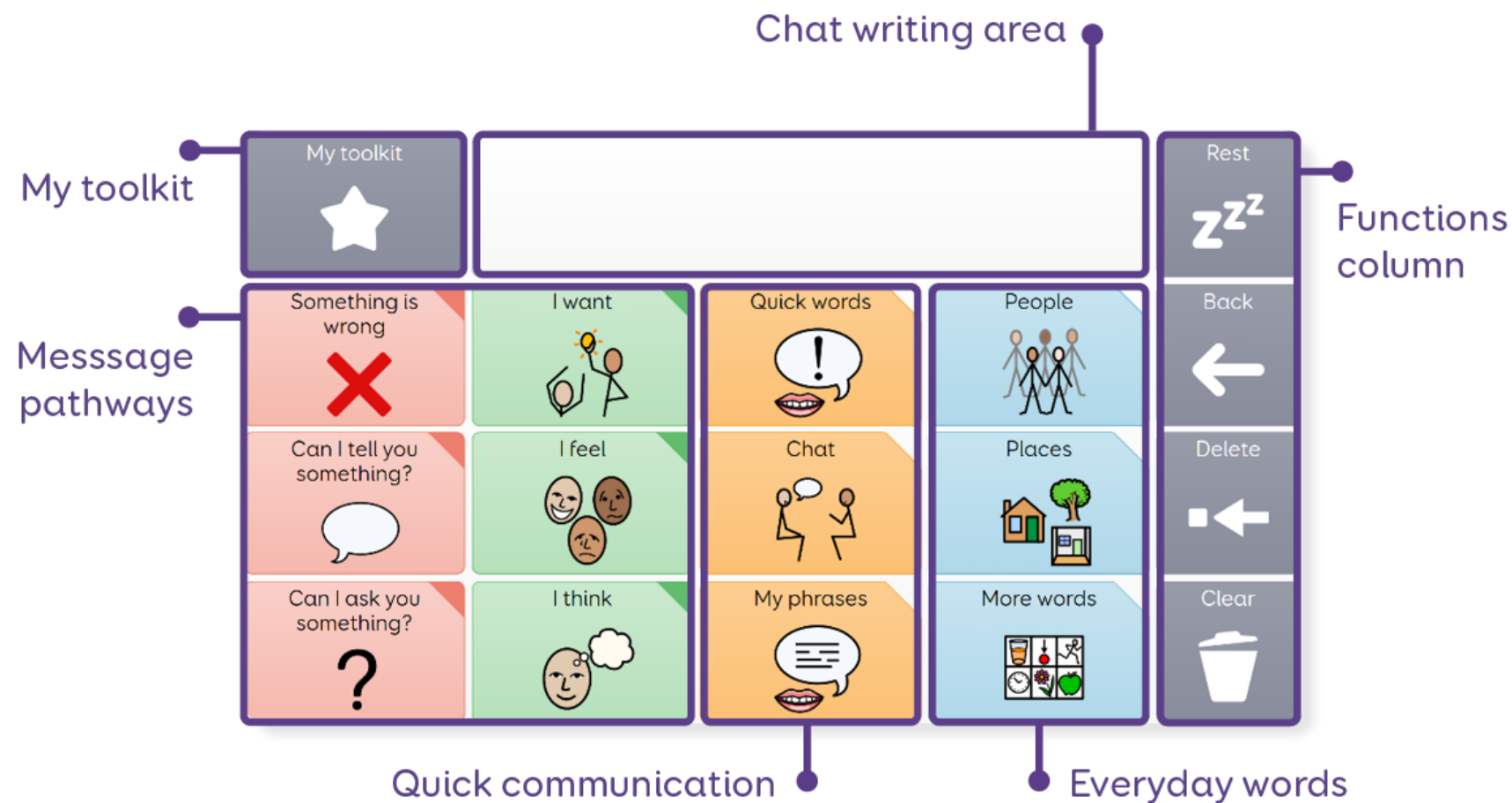
A pragmatic approach

Communication allows us to **participate** in activities, build **relationships**, and be more **independent**. Voco Chat aims to support all of this and more, by focusing not just on the words we use, but also **why we communicate** and how we interact using language. This is often referred to as **pragmatics**.

A resource which was central to the development of Voco Chat was **The Pragmatics Profile for People who use AAC** (Martin, Small & Stevens, 2017), which gives a comprehensive overview of all the reasons we communicate and how we participate in conversations.



The home grid



Getting started

<https://hub.thinksmartbox.com/topic/resources-voco-chat/>

Find everything you need to get started with Voco Chat in the grid set manual.



Voco Chat Grab Guide



Voco Chat

Created by Smartbox content team

Description

Lower cell count vocabulary organized pragmatically with a wide range of communicative functions. Includes vocabulary to support individuals to participate more, engage in conversations, and develop self-advocacy skills.

Expected User Profile

Designed for anyone with complex communication needs across the lifespan, supported message building, and easier ways to create messages such as attention, and/or learning difficulties. Individuals having difficulty moving past struggling to communicate the reason behind their message may benefit from this strategy.

Key Points

- Symbol-based, pragmatic approach organized around reasons we communicate. Read more: [Introducing Voco Chat](#).
- Lower cell count vocabulary consisting of 12 vocabulary cells and 4 functions. Read more: [home grid](#).
- Over 1500 single words and 375 phrases to support faster message building.
- Child and teen & adult versions provide access to vocabulary suited for their needs. Read more: [Choosing your vocabulary](#).
- Available with Symbol Stix, PCS, PCS High Contrast, and Widgeit. Default versions vary by global location.

Access

Optimized for:

Recommended scanning pattern is columns then rows. If using with cell-based scanning will allow individuals to move through like items first; horizontal scanning will allow individuals to move through like items first; horizontal scanning will allow individuals to move through like items first. Auditory prompts indicate when they can be modified to fit individual needs.

Voco Chat

Voco Chat resources

Click on the links below for more information on Voco Chat.

Webinars and videos	Smartbox Academy courses
Voco Chat video series	Introduction to Voco Chat: Bite-sized
	Choosing a symbol vocabulary: Core and pragmatic language approaches

Clinical Gems

Built-in scaffolding support: supported model of language organization assists those who may need more scaffolding to build messages. Read more: [Message pathways: Supported message building](#).

Complex access: if access is slow and/or effortful, fewer selections needed to communicate more.

Organized for efficiency: individuals who struggle to communicate beyond 1-2-word messages and get to the reason behind their message, may find the structured message pathways organized by communicative function help build more efficient and robust communication.

- Supports **self-advocacy**: My toolkit section includes areas for self-talk, discussing mental health, and how to best support the AAC user.

Personalization made easy: ready-to-use blank templates and empty cells to personalize for each individual. Read more: [Personalizing Voco Chat](#), [Personalization Checklists](#).

Multiple keyboard layouts: offer flexibility for any literacy level, keyguard use, and alternative access needs.

Supports partner-assisted auditory scanning (PAAS): vocabulary is organized and grouped in meaningful ways and by frequency within columns, creating a ready-to-go format for PAAS. Relevant grids can be easily printed for a paper-based communication book.

Gestalt supports: additional supports for gestalts exist in [Online Grids](#).

Bilingual use: **change grid set** command allows swapping between languages.

AI Tools: easily add **AI commands** to support fixing syntax and grammatical, spelling errors, language expansion, translation, and adding expression to messages.

- AI commands are an opt-in feature and require consent that person using is 13 years or older (with adult consent for ages 13-18).
- Smartbox has a set of [guiding principles](#) used to thoughtfully develop AI features.

Voco Chat

Additional knowledge base containing general knowledge, clinical gems (including customization ideas), and resources specific to Voco Chat.

Ideal for anyone using or considering Voco Chat.

<https://hub.thinksmartbox.com/topic/clinical-education/>

Joey



- 7 yo, CAS
- ~30% intelligibility with unfamiliar communication partners
- Experiences frustration when not understood by others.
- Touch activation with keyguard
- Family speaks Spanish

What types of supports/features would you look for Joey?



Marcus



- 5 yo, Autism, non-speaking
- Inconsistently uses gestalts via speech
- Restricted interests: books, Paw Patrol theme song, playground
- Benefits from visual schedule, real pictures (e.g., visual scenes), sensory support (i.e., pre-programmed self-advocacy tools)
- Touch activation

What types of supports/features would you look for Marcus?



Jordan

- 16 yo, CP, CVI, quadriplegia
- Dysarthric speech, ~45% intelligible with familiar listeners; 0-10% with unfamiliar listeners
- Highly social; wants to engage with peers about common interests (e.g., social media, TV shows, music, etc.)
- Developing literacy skills; requires access to classroom material



The goal is not the device, it's meaningful connection

Inclusive AND accessible instruction creates meaningful participation today while supporting skill development for the future!

Remember, skill building and learning is rarely linear.

Find meaningful
connection to
learning

Robust AAC
provides access to
words and
messages, but
NOT skill building

Scaffold while
building upon
skills, flexibly
finding that 'just
right' challenge

Grid Set Grab Guides



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Created by Daisy Clay, MSc, RCSLT

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Access

Optimized for:



Consider for:



With considerable customization, can be personalized to fit switch scanning needs, vertical or block scanning. Pre-set blocks and auditory prompts can be modified.



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Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary: school and education topic grids contain subject-specific language, alongside core vocabulary.



Updated May 2026

Super Core resources

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Super Core book		Intro to Super Core: Bite-sized



Updated May 2026

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Try Grid and Learn more...



Evaluator license

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evaluator-license-request-
form/](https://thinksmartbox.com/evaluator-license-request-form/)



SLP Education Program

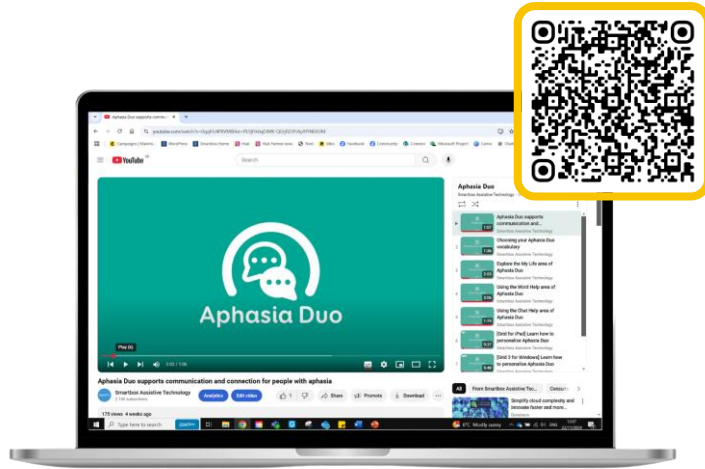
[https://eng.academy.thinksmartbox.com/
plus/catalog?coursed=368](https://eng.academy.thinksmartbox.com/plus/catalog?coursed=368)



Try Grid

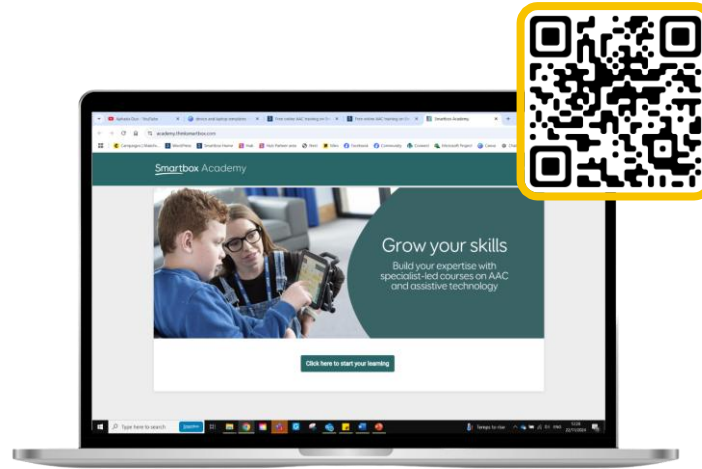
[https://thinksmartbox.com/
try-grid/](https://thinksmartbox.com/try-grid/)

Supporting resources



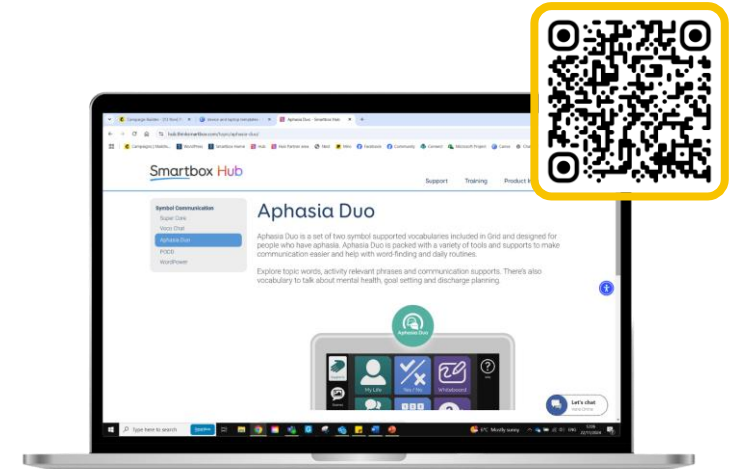
 **YouTube**

<https://www.youtube.com/@SmartboxAAC>



Smartbox **Academy**

<https://eng.academy.thinksmartbox.com/plus/>



Smartbox **Hub**

<https://hub.thinksmartbox.com/>

Thank you!



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