

Core Word Approach

Core words are the powerful, flexible words we use every day for most of our communication. These are words like *I, that, get, put, it, what, go, more, and, no*. Individuals who are learning to use their AAC systems (“talkers”) need lots of practice with core words. Most of these words can be used in many ways—that’s what makes them **core**. A core word approach gives the AAC learner focused practice the most important, common and powerful words that will help them communicate effectively in many different situations. While working with core words:

1. Encourage as many different ways to use the word as possible. Try to use, emphasize and model core words in your shared communication both in the moment and in the communication opportunities you set up for the student.
2. Use aided language modelling many, many times each day throughout activities and environments. This means living and breathing core words on the talker for your shared communication throughout the day. Set a goal for yourself for how many times you intend to use a specific core word that day. Note: there is no need for the student to obviously attend to what you are doing when you are modeling—at first the value is in them hearing important, relevant words as they are being used functionally.
3. Think ahead to how the student currently communicates a core word using their body language, actions, and/or sounds. Be ready to interpret that and model the core word on the talker as the student is expressing that idea. In the early stages there is no need for them to “repeat” themselves using the talker—it’s enough for them to know they were understood and that that message can also be communicated via the talker.
4. Look for core words in songs and stories. Highlight them and sometimes pause expectantly to give the AAC learner the idea they can use that word themselves. Songs and stories are an excellent medium for practicing core words because there is shared focus but not the same kind of emotional investment as when it is a personal message they are needing to convey.
5. Share the core word with the entire school team, peers and family. The power behind a core vocabulary approach is that these words are appropriate in all settings and activities, with all communication partners.

2021-22 Core Words: come, go, finish, get, put, take, want, open, stop, help, turn, like, good, more, again, no, yes, that, it, all, I, you, he, she, we, my, can, do, is, ready, what, when, where, on, off, in, out, and, with, don’t.