Your child has been using a communication device at school. It’s working, and you are ready to begin using the device at home to help your child communicate with you. But where to begin . . . Here are some quick tips and resources to help you get started.

**Getting Started and Maintenance:**

1) Familiarize yourself with your child’s device. Play with it, practice editing buttons, and play with the settings. If you get stuck, check out the manual which can be found online or call your speech therapist . . . I can help fix it!

2) Charge it every night along with the amp. Both need to be plugged in.

3) If it gets broken, damaged, or you cannot figure out something on it, call the Saltillo number on the back, they are very helpful.

**Important concepts for use:**

1) Core words: Your child’s device is programmed to maximize the use of core words; these are the words that appear on the home screen or on multiple screens in the same position. Core words are functional words which can be used across settings and activities. Words like: ‘go’, ‘open’, ‘help’, ‘want’ etc. Eighty-five percent of the language of a typical verbal speaker uses the same three hundred words; these are the core words. Attached please find a monthly list of words to use with your child which focuses on core words. Familiarize yourself with these words and their locations on the device. Try and model using these words for your child as much as possible.

2) Aided Language Input: This is a technique used to teach your child to communicate with the device. Essentially, it means you use the device to communicate to your child, rather than just expecting your child to use it independently. You use it too! Learning a communication device is exactly like learning a second language. It is really hard to learn a second language if no one ever speaks it to you, so use the device to speak to your child as
well. This also helps you learn the device so you can help your child use it too. In addition, it gives your child the opportunity to see how to repair mistakes on the device, search for new vocabulary, say longer sentences, communicate socially and make comments.

3) Access: Keep the child’s device with him/her, working, and locked onto the communication program at all times. In order for your child to learn and use the device, it has to be available. Be sure it is with you when you go places and is within reach when you are at home. Never take your child’s device away as a form of punishment.

4) Motor Memory: Your child will eventually learn the movements associated with words and sentences he/she uses frequently and will not need to concentrate so much on where buttons are located. This is extremely important to making his/her communications natural and speedy. Because of this, you should avoid moving words he/she has learned around on a page or deleting words. If you need to, you can “hide” words that your child isn’t using yet or that are confusing for him/her. This ensures that every button remains in the same position on the page at all times. This is especially important for any “core words” placed on pages in the device.

5) Avoiding the “Requesting Machine”: Typical language consists of more than just asking for things. In fact, you will be a very annoying friend if all you can do is make commands and requests of others. Be intentional about modeling social language, comments, protests, and exclamations.

If you have any questions please email or call me!

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