

How Everyday Technology Can Support Communication and Daily Routines for Young Children

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Meet Mateo

He loves jumping, dancing to music and swinging on swings.

He communicates with looks, movement, sounds and reaching. He often gets frustrated and acts out when people don't understand him

How can tech help?



Most images have been created with generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and Gemini

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Start with what matters to the child

What captures the child's attention?

How does he communicate now?

Where are the barriers?

What would give him more choice or control?

<https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/professional-issues/augmentative-and-alternative-communication/>



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Connection comes first

- Follow the child's interest.
- Create an enjoyable cause-and-effect moment.
- Set up opportunities for success
- Pause, notice and respond.
- No demands. No testing.
- Play with toys or try a fun app on a touchscreen



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Respond to all types of communication - Total Communication

Speech • vocalizations • facial expressions

Gestures • signs • objects • pictures

Printed boards • speech-generating technology

Not a hierarchy. Not an either/or decision.

Honor the message however it is expressed.



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A few cause/ effect and interactive apps to try

Sensory App House Live

- Free and low-cost cause-and-effect, sensory, switch-accessible and voice-responsive activities.

Sound Touch Lite

- Available free for iOS and Android. A simple tap reveals real photographs and corresponding sounds.

My PlayHome Plus

- iOS and Android- An interactive digital dollhouse for exploring familiar routines, actions, pretend play and early storytelling.

Toca Boca World

- iOS and Android - A free, open-ended digital world for creating characters, exploring environments and developing shared stories.



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As you engage the child:

- You stay in control- lock in with Guided Access on iPad if needed
- Beginning to introduce AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication-) on another device or use a communication board print out.



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Indicators of progress

- More spontaneous initiations
- Looking or orienting between the event and the communication partner
- Recruiting the partner to repeat or change something
- Anticipating a familiar routine
- Expressing "more," "stop," "different" or "my turn"
- Sharing affect in the child's own way
- Remaining in a back-and-forth interaction for additional turns



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Visual supports make routines easier to understand

Use familiar photos, symbols or words to:

- preview what will happen
- make meaningful choices
- support transitions
- ask for help or a break



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Glint: personalized visual supports in seconds

LIVE PROMPT

"Create a simple communication board for playing with bubbles."



Then personalize: vocabulary, photos or symbols, cell size, contrast, voice and home language.



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AI Visual Creation Tool to Support Therapy & Teaching

- Created with teachers, special ed, SLPs and other providers in mind
- New AI tool- adding features all the time
- Web based
- Works on all devices
- A new way to think about access, speed and personalization
- Great for creating visual supports quickly



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Two week pro version of Glint with this QR code

<https://nerchat.com/su/INNOVATIVESPEECH>

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AAC: Match features to needs

- Consider vision, hearing, dexterity, movement, language and environment.
- Keep important words in consistent locations.
- Offer vocabulary for refusing, commenting, asking, connecting and eventually spelling—not only requesting. Leave room for language growth.
- There is no prerequisite to using a dedicated communication app or device
- It will not hinder a child's talking- only help
- **An AAC-experienced SLP/team should support individualized assessment when a comprehensive system is needed.**

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Start with only a few options- gradually increase

Choose largest grid possible for dexterity and vision

Gradually reveal more choices



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Model & “think aloud” with the device as you interact

During a motivating activity:

- say and select a word
- pause without pressure
- notice any communication attempt
- respond naturally
- slow expand utterances



If distress occurs, prioritize regulation and connection. Later, model an available message such as stop, help, too loud, all done or something hurts—without blaming the child for not communicating correctly.

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AAC Apps

- Lock in with Guided Access
- May need special device if mainstream tablets aren't sufficient
- **Will enhance not take the place of speaking**

[Lamp WFL](#)- 30 day trial

[TouchChat Discover](#)- 30 day trial

[Weave Chat AAC](#) - Free

[AVAZ AAC](#)

[Proloquo2go](#)

[Coughdrop](#)- 2- month trial, works on many devices

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How Built-In features and AI tech tools can support school aged children who struggle to read and understand digital schoolwork



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Reading difficulty may have many reasons

What is getting in the way?

- Seeing and tracking the text
- Ignoring visual distractions
- Decoding words accurately
- Understanding vocabulary and complex sentences
- Identifying the most important ideas
- Accessing the assigned book or material

Match the feature to the barrier.



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Three Layers of Support

1. Built in accessibility features
2. Specialized and free
3. Flexible and AI powered



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All devices can read aloud for free!

The process depends on the device, operating system and format of the material



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Accessibility options

Google- <https://www.google.com/accessibility/>

Apple- <https://www.apple.com/accessibility/>

Microsoft- <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/accessibility>



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Reading Mode in Chrome

Right-click the webpage → Open in reading mode

- Remove visual distractions
- Change the font and text size
- Adjust colors and spacing
- Listen while following the text
- Select a voice and reading speed



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Read-aloud options

It can be tricky to streamline the approach!

Browsers

- Microsoft Edge- **Immersive Reader**
- Chrome- **reading mode** Right click on website- select "open in reading mode"

Devices

- "Enable/ Turn on" in settings of computers, tablets and phones

Documents

- PDFs may require a special app

Books

- Learning Ally, Bookshare, AudioBooks, Libby, Hoopla

Cross Platform

- **Speechify**

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Bookshare

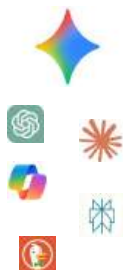
- Free for qualified U.S. students
- More than audiobooks: students can listen and follow the text
- Adjustable font, size, color, highlighting and reading speed
- Textbooks, novels and other educational materials
- Available through a browser and mobile app
- An IEP or 504 Plan is not required



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Using Generative AI to support reading

- Younger Students- Very helpful for educators and parents who want to create appropriate reading content
- For older students, can be used by them directly to support learning



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AI Can Support Understanding—Not Replace Thinking

AI can do more than just summarize content

- **Preview** - Build background knowledge • Introduce vocabulary
- **Explain**- Unpack difficult language • Give examples
- **Adapt**- Summarize • Simplify language • Add structure
- **Guide**- Ask questions • Offer hints • Return to the text

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Gemini for Education- Sample Prompt

"Rewrite this passage for a student who understands language at approximately a fourth-grade level.

Preserve all essential facts and important academic vocabulary. Explain difficult terms in parentheses, use short sections and do not add new information.

Finish with three questions that encourage the student to return to the original passage."

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[Gemini Notebook](#) (formerly NotebookLM) helps students explore assigned material

- Add trusted, teacher-selected sources
- Preview topics and important vocabulary
- Ask questions grounded in the source
- Generate study guides, mind maps and quizzes
- Listen to an AI-generated overview
- Follow citations back to the original material
- Excellent for understanding and studying—not a replacement for accessible text or direct reading instruction.



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Before using AI with schoolwork:



- Use district-approved tools and accounts.
- Remove names, grades, IEP information and other personal details.
- Verify the output against the original source.
- Teach students when, why and how to use the support.
- AI can omit important information, distort meaning or confidently add inaccurate details. Age rules also vary.

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How everyday technology can support an older child who struggles to remember tasks and manage daily routines independently



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Remember. Start. Follow through

Everyday technology can help make tasks and routines more manageable.

- The goal is to help the child develop a reliable system they can increasingly manage themselves.
- Many older children know what they are supposed to do but struggle to remember, initiate or complete it independently.
- What looks like carelessness, defiance or lack of motivation may reflect difficulties with prospective memory, working memory, time awareness or task initiation.



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Where does the child get stuck?

Remember: What needs to happen?

Start: What is the first step?

Sequence: What comes next?

Estimate: How long will it take?

Finish: How will I know I'm done?



Different breakdowns require different supports.

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Google Apps: [Calendar](#), [Tasks](#) and [Keep](#)



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School-Night Reset Recurrent Task- 8:00 PM Weekdays

- Check tomorrow's calendar
- Pack completed work
- Pack Chromebook and charger
- Place special items by the door
- Choose clothes
- Set alarm



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When a task feels too big, make the steps smaller

[Goblin Tools](#)- Goblin.Tools

- Magic ToDo: Break a task into steps
 - Estimator: Predict how long it may take
 - Taskmaster: Focus on one step at a time
 - Compiler: Turn a brain dump into actions
- AI suggestions are a starting point—not the final plan.



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Some students need to see the routine

Glint can turn a routine into:

- An age-respectful visual schedule
- A step-by-step task analysis
- A checklist or First/Then board
- A portable support with spoken output

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ChatGPT image creation

"Create an age-respectful school-night checklist with images for a middle-school student: check tomorrow's calendar, pack completed work, charge the Chromebook, place needed items by the door, choose clothes and set an alarm."



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Generative AI can personalize and rehearse the routine

AI can help the child:

- Create a realistic sequence
- Anticipate obstacles
- Develop a backup plan
- Practice what to do when something changes
- Adjust the routine for a busy day

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Generative AI prompt

"Help a 13-year-old create an after-school routine. Ask one question at a time about arrival time, homework, activities and needed materials. Keep the final routine to six steps. Begin each step with an action word. Begin with clarifying questions."

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Support Today, Independence Tomorrow

Technology supports independence best when it is simple, available at the moment of need and shaped with the child, not imposed on the child.

As routines become habits, the need for external supports can be reduced.

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Free Private Facebook Group- IST Tech Savvy Solutions



Let's help each other.
Everyone is welcome to
join!!

Just answer a few questions

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ISTTechSavvySolutions/>

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Tech Life Inner Circle Membership

- Stay on top of emerging tech, build confidence, and get the support you need!
- Weekly 10-15 min Tech Talks
- Weekly 45 min Tech Support with Q&A
- Robust video recording library
- You're invited to join us once as my guest to check it out!
- Members get access to [past Tech Talk Recordings](#)
- www.techlifeinnercircle.com



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Let's stay in touch!

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