

What is a Switch?

A switch is a voice output device that is used to communicate ideas, thoughts or messages to other people.



Switches can be used for **accessing functional language, social communication, play, navigating a communication device, accessing education!**

How to Start with and Use a Switch?

- The student may not yet understand selecting a button as a means of communication - but reaching for interesting things placed in front of them is a natural response.
- Understanding that the switch causes something to happen is an essential first step!
 - Building cause and effect skills: When the student touches the switch, they should get the item as well as a social reward (e.g. Using a toy and turning it on, playing a game OR turning on the lights after story time).
 - Use movements the student already makes. Head movements or arm movements are often a good place to start.
 - Let them activate the switch accidentally at first. Ensure the response is instantaneous, short and motivating.
 - Gradually encourage more intentional pressing. Try moving the switch slightly further away.
- Start to pair real photos or symbols with the switch so the student can start to make an association between the visual and the message.
 - If your student has a visual impairment, use tactiles instead.

Building on these steps is essential to developing precursor skills for a more robust AAC system.

Avoid hand-over-hand or hand-under-hand support. If you're doing this, the activity isn't motivating, or the switch is in the wrong place!

IDEAS FOR SWITCH ACTIVITIES IN THE CLASSROOM:

1. Have switch mounted at the door for requests such as "I need to use the bathroom" or "Let's go".
2. Use during mealtimes to request "open", "help" or "finished".
3. Store daily routines such as circle time or attendance, allowing student to say "Here!" or participate in morning songs.
4. Get the teacher's attention, such as, "Excuse me, I need help".
5. Participate while reading a book, to "turn the page" or for repetitive phrases (e.g., "What do you see?" in Brown Bear, Brown Bear).
6. Participating in a group activity or game ("Your turn", "Pick it up").
7. Program their favourite joke to tell different people.
8. Store "Do you want to play with me?" to initiate play with peers.
9. Have student cheer on their peers, "Way to go!" or "Great job!" during group activities.
10. Ensure that the student has opportunities to protest and self-advocate, "I don't like that", "I want to play by myself", "I'm uncomfortable", or "Can you reposition me?"

IDEAS FOR SWITCH ACTIVITIES AT HOME:

1. Play games such as Chase, Hide-and-Seek, or Duck, Duck, Goose. Store messages "You can't catch me!", or "Ready or not, here I come!", or "Duck" and "Goose!"
2. Initiate preferred physical contact (e.g., "bounce me", "I want tickles", "rub my back", "I want a hug").
3. Using during meal times to request "more" or "finished".
4. Play "Red Light, Green Light" using two buttons, or play Tag, "You're it!"
5. Store celebratory phrases for social events, such as, "Happy Birthday!"
6. Tell family members, "I love you!"
7. Store, "I want that one!" for making choices.
8. Have child announce different moments of the day, "It's time for dinner!", or "Time to go to the park!"
9. Call the family pet by name to play or feed them.
10. Cheer for favourite sports team when watching the game "Go Ti-Cats!"