

Voice and Message Banking

Augmentative Communication devices typically use a computer generated synthetic or recorded voice. A variety of synthetic voices are available and come standard, both male and female. While the quality of these voices has improved greatly over the years, they likely do not resemble your own voice or that of your loved one. Voice banking is the process of storing one's own voice, so when an augmentative communication device is used, the voice you hear is the voice of the person who previously recorded their voice.

There are two options for voice banking:

One option is **recording speech** and playing those recordings directly from the AAC device. Recorded messages might include, 'How are you?', 'I love you', 'What are we having for dinner?'. Each message should be recorded as a separate message. Messages can be recorded a variety of ways:

- Using a **voice recording app** on a smart phone. This method is often preferred as many individuals have their phone readily available throughout the day.
 - Android: Smart Voice Recorder (allows sharing with Dropbox, Google Drive and via emailing) Free.
 - iOS: Find the Voice Memos app
- Downloading a recording program onto a desktop or laptop computer. **Audacity** is an example of an easy-to-use program that allows high quality voice recording
- Using a **digital voice recorder**

Recorded messages can be saved in a variety of file formats but should be labeled individually to make importing these recordings onto a speech generating device an easier and more straightforward process.

Here are some suggestions for phrases to record:

- Names of family members, friends and caregivers
- Important personal phrases like "I love you"
- Greetings
- Commands for your pets

- Anything you say often (you might ask your friends and family for suggestions)

The second voice banking option is the creation of a customized **synthesized speech** synthesizer. The custom synthesized voice can be used on most augmentative communication devices. The method allows for anything you type on your speech generating device to be spoken with the custom voice.

There are several tools for creating customized voices but a free option is to use a program called **Model Talker**. The patient would go to the Model Talker website (www.modeltalker.org) and complete the process of compiling a list of phrases containing all of the combinations of letters and sounds in the English language. This voice sample is then converted into a custom synthetic voice. To complete this process, Model Talker requires between 4-6 hours of recording using your personal computer. This process can be interrupted and broken up into more manageable chunks of time.

It's often hard to know which option is best. Both recorded speech and synthesized speech are not mutually exclusive and both processes can be completed and loaded onto a dedicated speech generating device. Current communication devices come with good quality voice options. If it is important to have a device use a voice that sounds more similar to your own voice, look into Model Talker. That will provide the most versatility. If you are not interested in completing the recording process, use the digitized recording methods and identify specific target phrases you want to record. Ultimately the decision to pursue voice banking is a personal one and is optional. Please ask your Speech Pathologist for more information or assistance as needed.

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