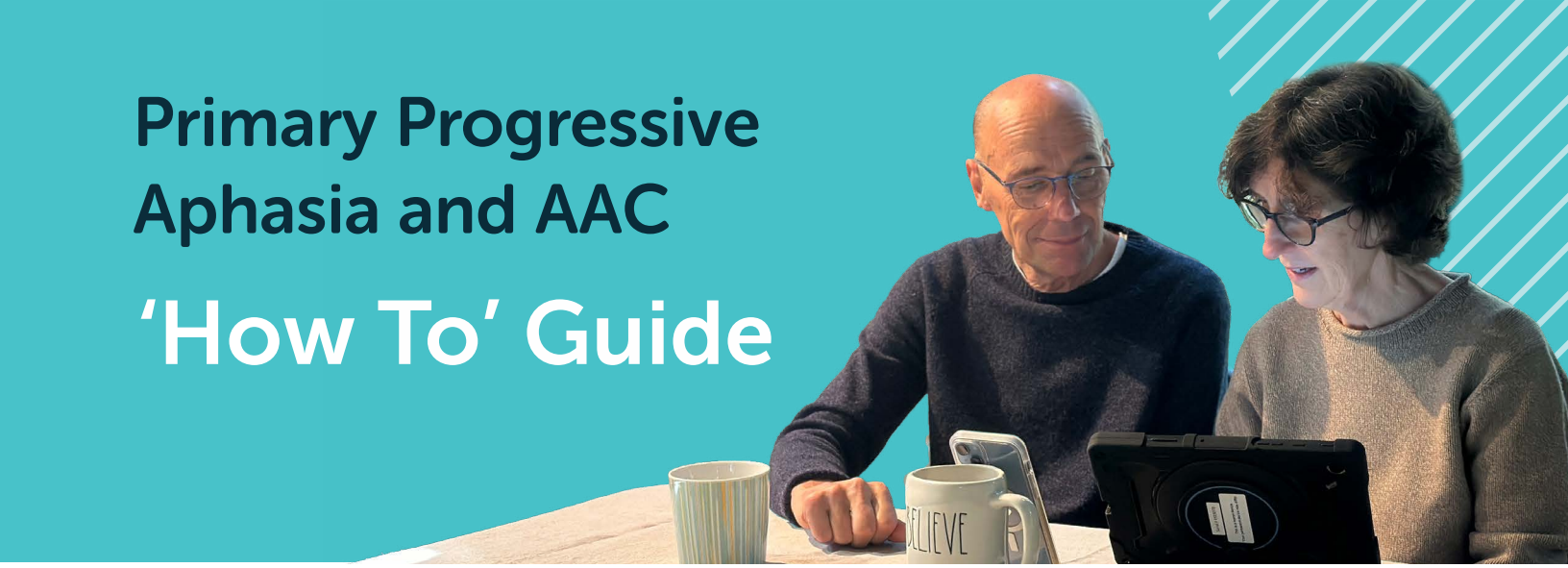
Primary Progressive Aphasia and AAC

‘How To’ Guide



About Primary Progressive Aphasia (PPA)

Primary Progressive Aphasia (PPA) is a type of dementia in which language impairments are the primary symptom. Language skills become more impaired over time as the disease progresses.

There are three subtypes of PPA: semantic, nonfluent/agrammatic, and logopenic.

Your client’s clinical presentation will vary depending on their subtype and which areas of the brain are affected, but common symptoms of PPA include:

- Trouble understanding spoken or written language
- Word-finding difficulties (anomia), paraphasias, and grammatical errors
- Not being able to repeat words, phrases, or sentences

As PPA progresses, cognition, memory, and behavioral functions also decline.

Is AAC helpful for people living with Primary Progressive Aphasia?

Yes, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) can benefit individuals diagnosed with Primary Progressive Aphasia.

AAC offers a way for people with PPA to communicate as their speech and language abilities decline over time. AAC can empower both the person living with PPA and their care partners by helping them to communicate more effectively.

What to Do When Starting an AAC Device Trial

CLINICAL SUGGESTIONS

Complete language testing

- Find your client's communication-related strengths and weaknesses
- Determine strategies and tools to trial in therapy
- Establish your client's current baseline language and communication function

To do this, you can use a combination of:

- Standardized aphasia batteries
- The Progressive Aphasia Severity Scale (PASS; Sapolsky, et al., 2014)
- Motor speech and cognitive screeners (because any changes in these areas during a future re-assessment may also indicate the progression of PPA).

Consider the possibility of message banking

We recommend message banking with AAC as early as possible. Adding your patient's own voice to their device allows for personalization, which is a main factor in device attachment and ongoing use.

Functional assessment and goal setting

Your patient's goals should be individualized to what they care about the most. For example, if your patient loves to talk about football, you know you'll need to have phrases like "**Go Steelers!**" and "**What channel is the game on**?" pre-programmed into the device.

EDUCATION SUGGESTIONS

Offer education and resources on PPA

PPA is rare, and it can take time for patients and families to accept this diagnosis. Take time to answer questions and share common symptoms, how PPA progresses, and your role in caring for the person with PPA. You can also offer information about educational resources (like aphasia.com) and free support groups (like joininaphasia.com).

Provide communication partner training

Conversations are a two-way street! You can train your client's communication partners on helpful strategies like:

- Writing down key words
- Gesturing
- Drawing
- Using pictures to support your message
- Asking clarifying questions
- Eliminating distractions

Each of these strategies can be helpful in communication with a person with PPA — with or without AAC.

Explain the benefits of AAC for people with PPA

Your patient deserves to have their voice heard — and a tool like high-tech AAC can help them get their messages out there. Research shows AAC can decrease frustration and improve functional communication.

Goal Management for PPA and AAC

Note: The goals below are intended as examples only. They are not meant to be a substitute for a comprehensive evaluation and individualized treatment plans.

EXAMPLES OF GOALS FOR PPA AND AAC

- Client will use personal AAC device to make functional needs (e.g., food, water, bathroom) known in 8 out of 10 opportunities across different settings (e.g home, therapy room).
- Client's care partner will demonstrate the ability to turn on the AAC device, create new cards, edit pre-existing cards, and charge the device with 95% accuracy.
- Client's care partner will implement supportive strategies in conversation (i.e. navigating to a particular topic to improve comprehension, writing key words in Draw app) with AAC device for assistance in 8 out of 10 opportunities.
- Client will use personal AAC device to express pain, illness, or mood in 8 out of 10 opportunities across different settings (e.g. home, doctors office)
- Client will use personal AAC device to support activities of daily living (e.g. step by step videos of brushing teeth) with completion of task in in 8 out of 10 opportunities.
- Client will use personal AAC device to support conversation and memory retrieval during social activities by sharing personal photos, videos, and voice recordings in 75% of opportunities across different settings (E.g. home, friend's house, support group).
- Client will supplement communication by using their personal AAC device to repair communication breakdowns and use a self-cueing strategy in 80% of opportunities in the home setting.
- Client will use their personal AAC device to self-cue a telephone script during a structured task (i.e. calling the pharmacy to ask if a prescription is ready) with 3 or fewer communication breakdowns during the interaction.
- Client will independently navigate between "**Fast Talk**," "**My Info**," and "**My Health**" to answer personal health-related questions during a doctor's visit with 3 or fewer communication breakdowns during the interaction.
- Client will repeat 3-5 word sentences with 95% accuracy in order to complete message banking on the AAC device and increase client's ability to communicate at home and in the community.
- The client's care partner will demonstrate the ability to create a voice recording card with 95% accuracy so that they can assist their loved one in message banking on their personal AAC device.
- Client will demonstrate the ability to use a combination of word retrieval strategies, conversational scripts, and AAC device with 90%+ accuracy and minimal cues from care partner in order to improve independence in communicating across environments.

Tips for Your Lingraphica Trial

Collaborate with our team

Reach out at lingraphica.com/contact-us or **888-274-2742**.

We are here any time you need for any barriers that pop up and are ready to problem solve!

Be patient

It is important to let your clients know that their AAC device is a tool for them to use when communication breakdowns occur.

Like any new tool, it can take time to learn how to use their device most effectively.

Message banking

Creating messages in the patient's own voice can increase meaning and ownership.

Most patients see

"…stronger maintenance of the condition when implementing compensatory treatments and tools."

Fried-Oken 2008

In other words, AAC use can help maintain communication skills in people with PPA.

Many patients will require support with the device

Involving care partners to provide maintenance on the device (charging it, turning it on, leaving it out and open) will lead to a more successful trial.

Prepare for future memory needs

You can use the device as a digital memory book.

Store memories, names, messages from family members, and life stories. This can be great for creating attachment to the device and buy-in.

(See the next page for customization ideas!)

Customization Ideas

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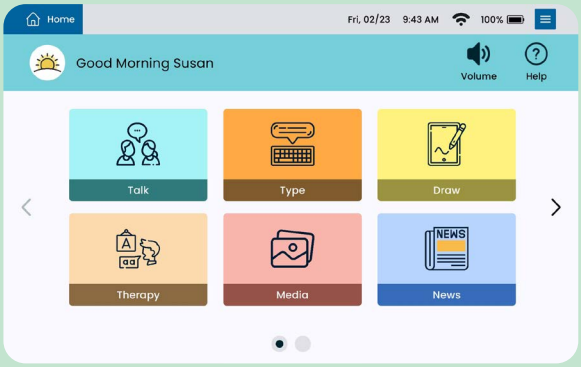
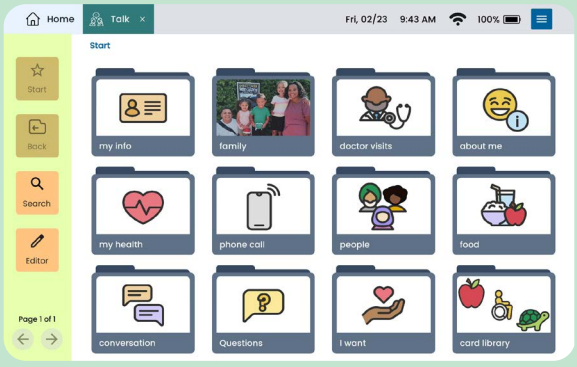
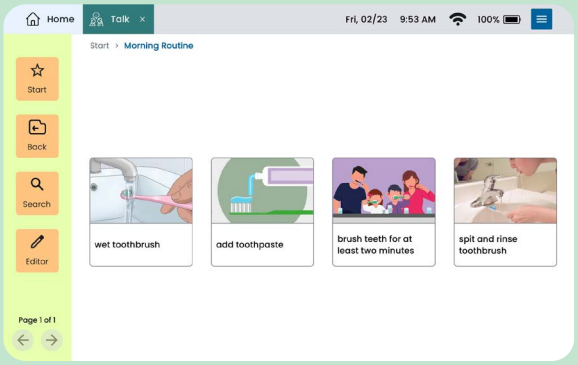


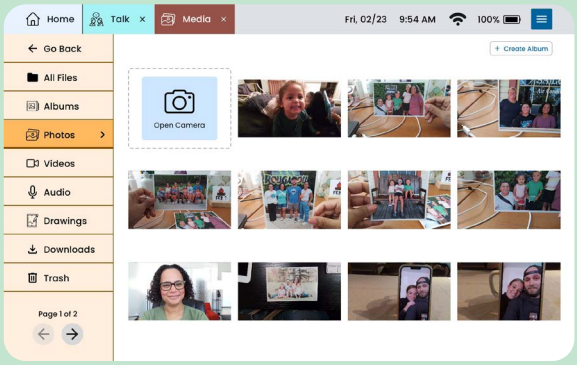
Personalize the Home page
to display the user’s preferred apps



Customize Talk
to engage in daily activities



Use Talk Folders
to support the user during each step of a daily activity



Use Media
to reminisce on photos, videos, and more

Visit our website to learn more!

lingraphica.com/aac-devices/ppa-aac-device