Turn Dedicated AAC Devices Into High Powered Pencils and Computer Keyboards!!!!!

(Gretchen Hanser MS, OTR/L & Deanna Wagner MS/CCC-SLP, updated 9/2003)

Why?

How many AAC users get to write without major motor issues limiting their ability to be involved in the writing process??? Dictation is OK, and sometimes the only thing, but when do these students get to create their own paper product??? Are we helping the AAC user to explore their language and develop motor memory on their AAC device when we give them something completely separate to enter text with on the computer (i.e. alternative keyboard)?? How about using their AAC device as the pencil?

How?

For DynaVox & DynaMyte, you can use one of the following:

- DynaBeam (available from DynaVox Systems)
- Serial Keys
- AAC Keys

For Pathfinder, Deltatalker, Vanguard & Vantage, you can use one of the following:

- T-TAM (available from Prentke Romich Company)
- Serial Keys
- AAC Keys

What is Serial Keys?

If you don't have access to a DynaBeam or T-TAM, Serial Keys is a free utility that allows the AAC device to act as a keyboard sending text. It automatically comes in PCs and can be found under Accessibility Options. For Macs, it can be easily downloaded for free.

What is AAC Keys?

If you don't have access to a DynaBeam or T-TAM, AAC Keys is another free utility that allows the AAC device to act as a keyboard sending text. **It is only for PCs**; it works with Windows 95, 98, ME, 2000, NT, & XP. It can be downloaded from: www.aacinstitute.org

***Important to note that doing a Memory Transfer and Using Serial/AAC Keys are 2 DIFFERENT functions. Whenever you go to do a Memory Transfer, you MUST turn Serial/AAC Keys off. While these are two separate functions, you can use the same cable.

Sharpen Some Pencils:Get Your DynaVox/Myte Ready to Write

You'll need a cable to connect the device to the computer. Can use one of the following depending on what kind of port you are plugging in to:

- DynaVox 4 Cable with adapter
- DynaVox 9 Cable
- If using a serial port: RS232C-Female to Female 9 Pin Cable & Null Modem Adapter Available at electronics/computer stores. Radio Shack Cable #26-152B, $12.99, & Null Modem Adapter #26-264B, $5.99

Setup Your DynaVox/DynaMyte (Can also refer to DynaVox Knowledge Base!!)

Adjust Settings In Input/Output Device Settings:

1. Go to Setup Menu
2. Press Input/Output Device Settings
3. Press Modem Port Button until the a low Baud Rate appears (300-2400 works well-select the same rate used on the computer.)
   File Transfer should be set on Y Modem
4. Press Set File Transfer Port to Serial 1
5. Turn Serial Port Handshaking OFF
6. Press OK to get out of Input/Output Device Settings
7. Press OK to close down Setup Menu

Make an Alternate Output Button

This Alternate Output Button is your on/off button for sending text to the computer. DynaVox Systems recommends that when you are NOT writing-Alternate Output should be turned OFF.

Go To a Page where student is likely to begin writing from-visually locate a place for a new button.

1. Go to Setup Menu and Press Edit Page
2. Select button to edit or draw new one.
3. Press Modify
4. Press Change Button Type-Select Command Button
5. Press Modify Command-Select alternate output
6. Press OK to close all windows and Save changes

OK-Ready to Write???

1. With both computer & device OFF, Plug in cables and attach DynaVox/DynaMyte.
2. Restart computer, with Dynavox/DynaMyte OFF.
3. Once computer is on, turn DynaVox/DynaMyte ON.
4. Go to the page with the Alternate Output Button (You'll use this button and menu to turn on and off the ability to send text. So this is the ONE thing that you and your student would need to do regularly.)
5. Press Alternate Output
6. Press Output-When you're ready to write- Press Serial 1

7. Press OK and try it!! Be sure to try it with things in the Message Window.

When You Are Done Writing-Be Sure to Go Back and Turn Alternate Output OFF

1. Press Alternate Output
2. Press Output-When you're ready to write- Press NONE
3. Press OK

Other Things to Know About Alternate Output

There are other options in the Alternate Output Window:

Use: Plus Speech-speaks message upon entry or
Instead of Speech-sends text silently

Send Audio Feedback: On/Off-sends auditory cues

Send Button Feedback: On/Off-sends button labels-may want that turned off!!!

For the beginning writer, we would suggest the following settings:

Use: Plus Speech
Audio Feedback: OFF
Button Feedback: OFF

Troubleshooting tip from DynaVox Systems: If you are using the null modem adapter and serial cable and it is NOT working, DynaVox suggests that you orient the cable so that the null modem adapter is plugged into the actual Com Port on the computer.

Other Tip to Know: When going the poor man's route, you make some sacrifices. When sending text using Serial or AAC Keys, the DynaVox/Myte sends the commands: **Control + M**. If you are using any software that responds to these commands, someone will need to assist and cancel these commands.

Sharpen Some Pencils: Get Your Vanguard, Vantage, Pathfinder, Liberator or Deltatalker Ready to Write

You'll need a cable to connect the device to the computer. Can use one of the following depending on what port you are plugging into:

- PRC Memory Transfer Cable
- If using a serial port: RS232C-Female to Female 9 Pin Cable & Null Modem Adapter
  Available at electronics/computer stores. Radio Shack Cable #26-152B, $12.99, & Null Modem Adapter #26-264B, $5.99

Setup Your PRC Device

Adjust Settings In Toolbox:

1. Go to Toolbox
2. Press Output Menu Settings
3. Set RS232 Output to ON

4. Set OUTPUT Mode to IMMEDIATE
5. Press Baud Rate until it matches the speed you set on your computer (300 or 1200)
6. Press OK to get out of the Output menu and close the Toolbox

Teach student to do independently/keeps them out of Toolbox
In Activity Row, there is a Tools Icon: Computer On/Off

Character Pacing: Useful for larger amounts of texts, such as things that have been stored in Notebooks. (should be ON for larger)

Use the TOOLS activity row to turn Computer Output on/off:

1. Press the "Choose Activity" key on the keyboard.
2. Select the "TOOLS" activity from the activity row.
3. Be sure to turn the Computer Output off when you are finished.

Setup the Paper: Get Your Computer Ready for Writing

If using a MacIntosh:

The MacIntosh computer does not come with Serial Keys, so it needs to be downloaded. Updated copies are available for System 7-9. Versions of Serial Keys are also still available for older Macs.

Serial Keys Download for the MacIntosh Computer
(works for Macs with System 7-9, site says it does not work with 10)
http://trace.wisc.edu/world/computer_access/mac/sk_soft.html

Serial Keys for MacIntosh Requirements (updated May 2001)
http://trace.wisc.edu/world/computer_access/mac/macskreq.htm

For older Macs, a serial printer cable can be used.

For newer Macs with USB ports, such as the iMac or G4, a USB to serial adaptor is needed (Keyspan Adaptor). Note that the Keyspan will only work with OS 8.6 or higher.

If using a PC:

Plan A: AAC Keys

Download AAC keys from www.aacinstitute.org

Plan B: Serial Keys

Setting up Serial Keys on the PC

1. Go to Settings, then Control Panel, then Accessibility Options.
2. Click General and uncheck Automatic Reset-Turn off accessibility features after idle
   (You will pull your hair out if you forget this step!!!)
3. Check support Serial Keys***
4. Click Settings
   - Select which Com Port you are plugged into on the PC
   - Select the Baud Rate. (For writing would use lower numbers-make note of it as it needs to be the same as on the Dynavox ~300-2400).
5. Click OK on Settings Window and Click Apply on General Window.
6. Shutdown computer.

*** If you get a fatal error message or bomb when you do this-it is because you have Windows 95B. There is a conflict between 95B and Serial Keys. Not to fear, a Serial Keys Patch can be downloaded to straighten out this conflict with Windows 95B. It is worth a try!!!! http://trace.wisc.edu/world/computer_access/win95/vbregfix.htm

What Happens When I've Done EVERYTHING & It Still Doesn't Work?

Plan C:

Download a new copy of Serial Keys for the PC
http://www.ace-centre.org.uk/html/softdemo.html

Frequently Asked Questions about Serial Keys for Mac & PC

http://trace.wisc.edu/docs/quick_sheets/qs32.html