

TECH TIPS FOR COMMUNICATION SCRIPTS/STORIES

(WAGNER & MUSSELWHITE, 2007)

Social scripts (e.g., joke-telling, chit chat, ordering fast food) and life stories (e.g., what happened at camp, our funny cooking) offer powerful opportunities to connect with others (Burkhart & Musselwhite, 2001; 2007). Individuals who are AAC users often use 'step-listing' devices such as:

- Step-by-Step: www.ablenetinc.com
- Sequencer: www.adaptivation.com
- Stepper: www.attainmentinc.com
- Hip Step-Talkder: www.enablingdevices.com

However, many AAC users have dedicated devices that they use daily, and would like to have some of their scripts stored on those devices, so that they are available across settings and times.

Having pre-programmed sentences can be very important when interacting with unfamiliar communication partners in community locations. Often, people do not have the time to wait for word-by-word message construction. However, it is important for the AAC user to develop skills in creating their own good sentences and not just regurgitating fully formed thoughts that someone else composed. Our answer is student-created scripts. Students help construct sentences that can be called up easily in a specific situation.

The script for ordering fast food is straightforward. First, the student always uses a greeting, like "Hi, how are you?" This helps the person behind the counter get used to the voice output of the device before they try communicating the vitally important specifics of the fast food order. Then we have the all-important "I want..." sentence. Finally, we end with a polite, "Thank you." This is our easiest script. It can be successful impromptu with practice. However, it can be even more effective when sentences are composed ahead of time, and each of the parts is read once sentence at a time. This is also our strategy for interviewing.

"Read sentence and advance" is an underutilized function available on many communication devices. The main principle is sentence creation, and then setting up the cursor to begin at the top of the script.



Pathfinder (Prentke Romich Company): Use the "Page Up" tool to get the cursor to go to the beginning of the message before you start speaking. "Read Sentence" is typically located in the upper left hand corner (B1), next to "Speak Display (A1)." We find that reading back the entire display can be challenging for communication partners, who often have difficulty following long bouts of synthesized speech without breaks. You may consider swapping keys, or just changing the "Speak Display" key with the "Read Sentence and Advance" tool. (Toolbox -> Assign Key -> Select A1 key -> Minspeak Assignment = <Insert Tool> Read Sentence; Spelling Assignment = <Insert Tool> Read Sentence -> OK).

Vanguard/Vantage/ECO (Prentke Romich Company):

"Speak Next Sentence" is a great tool to include in the "Quick Hit" activity



row. By default, the row looks like this:



We would like to suggest that "Speak Next Sentence" could arguably be more important than the comma for quick access to communication. (Since the comma is something we use more often in writing than in speaking, and we can get to it from an alphabet page.) Steps: Go To Toolbox; Modify

Activity = Quick Hit; Modify Item Within Activity = ; Clear Key Contents; Spell Text for Message = Insert Tool - Speak Next Sentence; Move Item Right; OK. Now your activity row will look like this:



DynaVox/DynaMyte 3100: When using word-based vocabulary like Gateway, it is important that our users have an opportunity to make their own sentences, especially the "I want ..." request. Once they have created their script for ordering, they need to be able to read it back at the counter one sentence at a time. A

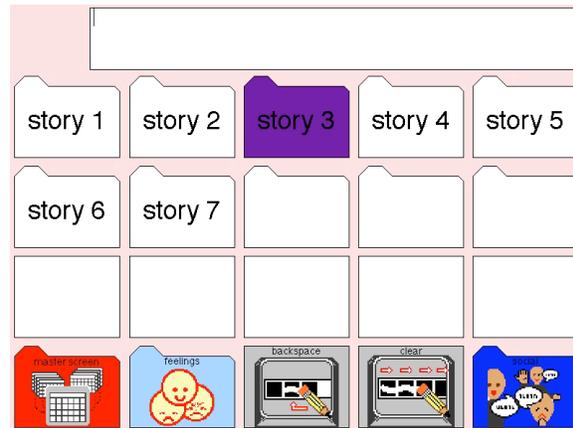


"Document Up" Command Button can be used to get the cursor to the top of the script before starting the readback function. The Command Button, "Speak sentence and move to next" can be used to read sentence by sentence. These buttons are created just like other command buttons, such as "Clear Display."

Steps: Dynavox Setup; Edit Page; Select Button to Modify; Press Modify; Change Button Type = Command Button; Modify Command = Speak sentence and move to next; OK; OK; Save Changes,



If your students have activity-specific displays with whole sentences, you can also program each sentence on a Link Button, and teach a left to right conversation sequence across a page. If they are having trouble following the sequence, a conversational script page can be copied multiple times, with all but one message cleared, then linked

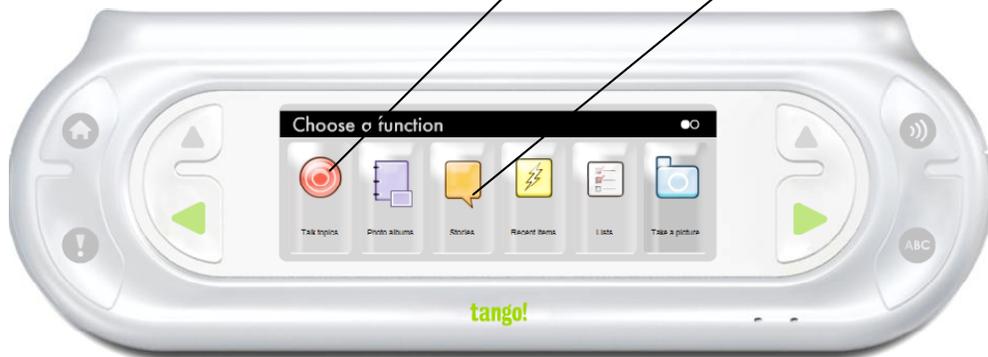


together sequentially (i.e., Story Page 1 has a one sentence message on the dark button #1 with a Page Link to Story Page 2; Story Page 2 has a dark button #2 that has a Page Link to Story Page 3; etc.) This can also provide opportunities for other comments and quick chat pop-up vocabulary.

DV4/MT4 and V devices (DynaVox): These devices work similar to the 3100 models. Look for the keyboard pages, and open the editor:



tango! (Blink-Twice): The tango! has many built-in scripts by Musselwhite & Burkhart (1 for each of the 30 Talk Topics, plus additional samples in the 'Stories' set). To locate existing scripts, go to 'Talk Topics' or 'Stories.'



Each of the talk topics (e.g., Dressing, Bedtime), has a Story pre-recorded.



Stories can easily be customized as follows:

- 1) Go to the desired story (e.g., Bedtime story). Decide which button to modify. For example, Button # 2 says: 'Ask me what kind of story. Scary, silly, an adventure story, or a fairy tale'. If your child **hates** fairy tales, you might want to replace that with superheroes.



- 2) Get into Programming Mode (press & release ! & ABC buttons)
- 3) Choose EDIT EXISTING (you'll be taken back to your story to pick your button)
- 4) Press button # 2
- 5) You'll have another set of choices. Choose EDIT AUDIO PHRASE
- 6) Now use the recording screen to Re-do the message (ex: 'Ask me what kind of story. Scary, silly, an adventure story, or superheroes.'
- 7) If desired, use Voice Morph (e.g., Woman to Boy), then Save Audio

Recording a New Story:

- 1) Press HOME
- 2) Choose STORIES
- 3) If this is your first story, press Button # 2 (Story Wizard Tutorial), to hear step-by-step instructions on how to create a story
- 4) Or, press Button # 1, Story Wizard, and follow the instructions!

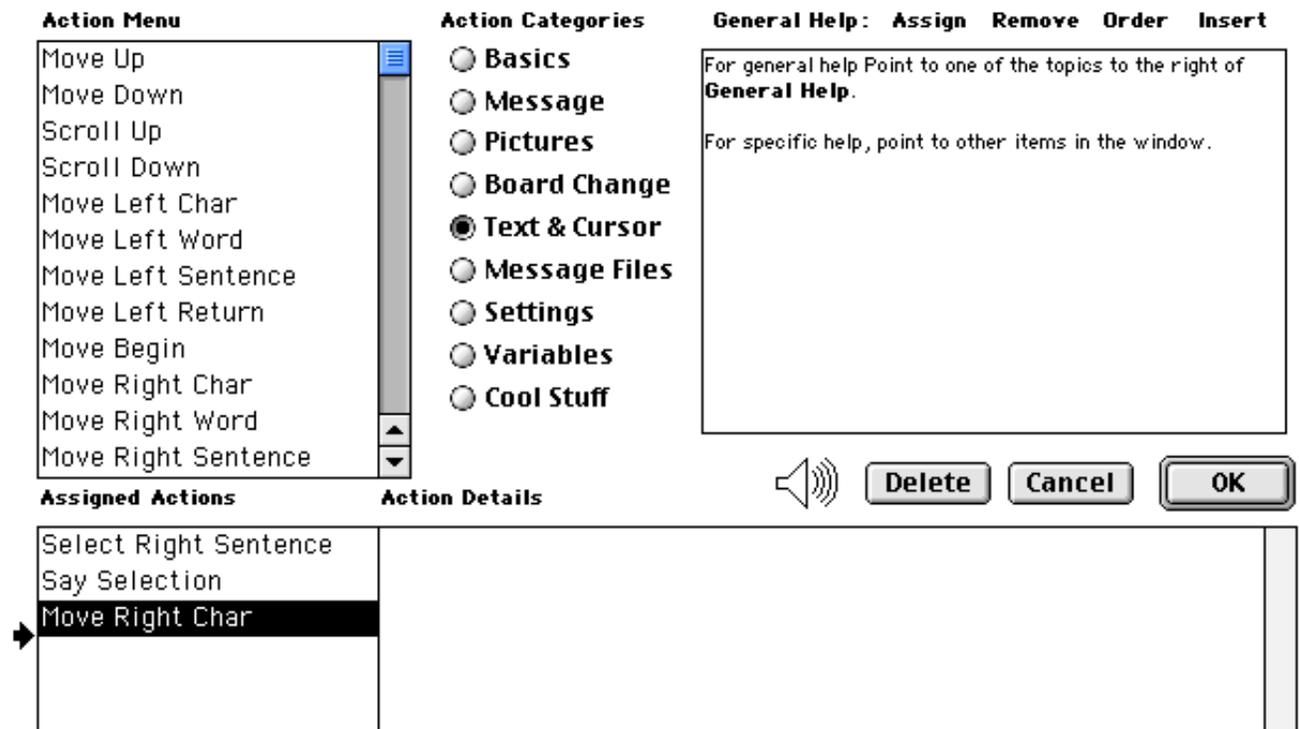
Photo Album Stories:

Photo albums can be used as stories, especially for events, vacations, and field trips!! For example, your class made smoothies, you child participated in a Pinewood Derby, your family went on a camping trip, or the afterschool group went to the Stuffington Bear Factory. All of these are great opportunities for taking photos and telling a story. Try this:

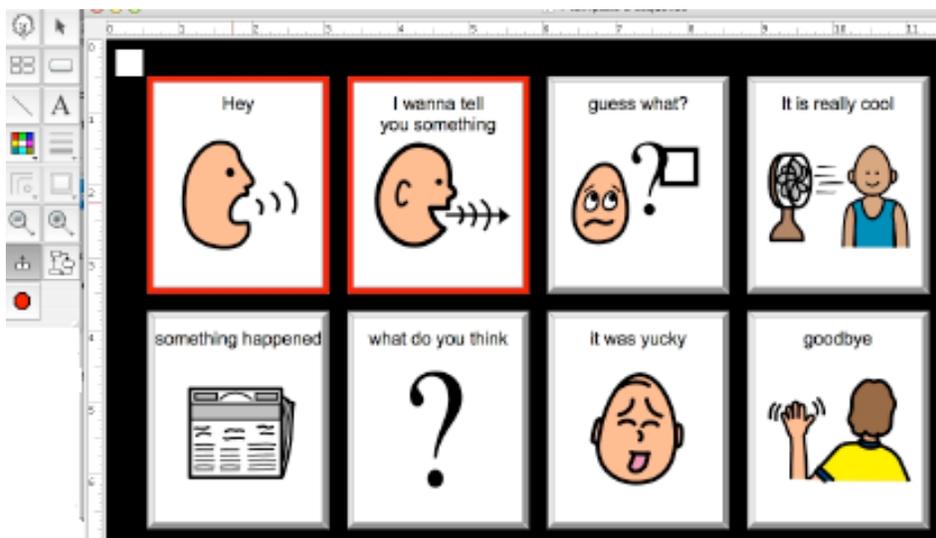
- 1) Press HOME
- 2) Choose PHOTO ALBUMS
- 3) If this is your photo album, press Button # 2 (Tutorial on Photo Albums) to hear step-by-step instructions on how to create a photo album
- 4) When you make your album, just record an audio message that tells the story, one step at a time.

Speaking Dynamically Pro (Mayer-Johnson Company)

Option I: You will need to create an assigned action sequence for a button on the page that reads each sentence from the Message Display. First, be sure to provide a means to move the cursor to the top of the message display (like using an up arrow or "Move Begin" action). Then, program a button with the following action sequence: from the Text & Cursor Category, choose "Select Right Sentence;" from the Message Category, choose "Say Selection;" finally, from the Text & Cursor Category, choose "Move Right Char."



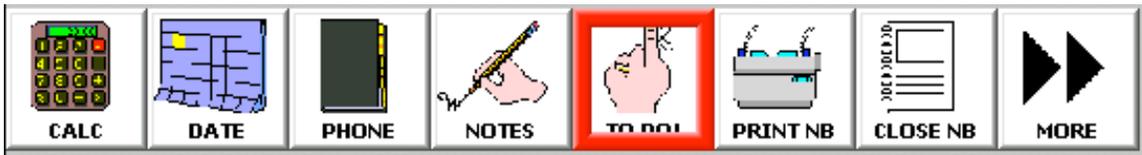
Speaking Dynamically Pro Option II: If you are using pre-programmed sentences on a page, you can follow the example above for DynaVox users who use left-to-right messages either on a single page or across pages that are linked together sequentially. For switch users, use a single page and set the Scan Next options in the Scan Tools for the page to step forward to the next button automatically after the message is played. For 2-switch scanners, this means that the user can activate switch #2 sequentially without having to touch switch #1 again.



SAVING CONVERSATION SCRIPTS AS FILES

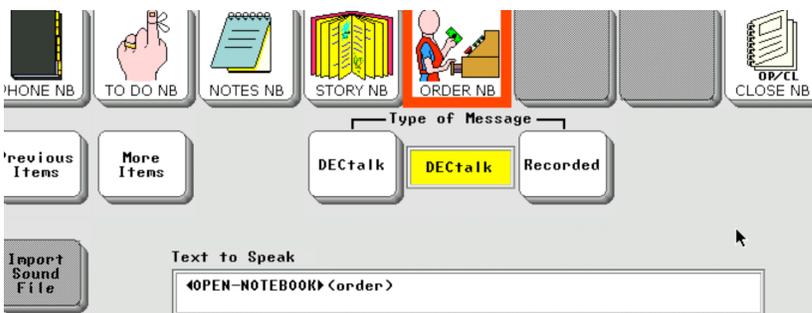
Student creation of sentences within a script can go a long way toward helping them develop language. However, it can also be important to have these scripts saved and available for use on future days without having to re-create everything every time. For this function, we can use files (or notebooks).

Pathfinder: Save files using the Notebook Menu. When you open a notebook, the cursor is located at the end of the notebook, ready for additional messages to be added. You can get to the Notebook Menu from the ToolBox, or use buttons in an activity row. You may want to use the notebook called "Notes" or "To Do", which can be opened from the activity row DeskMate:



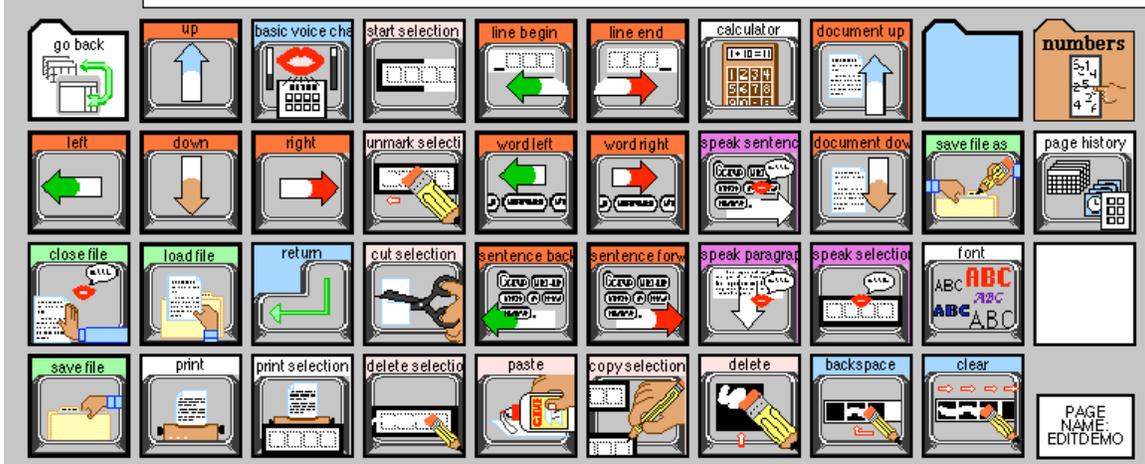
Use the "Page Up" button in the upper right hand corner of the Pathfinder keyboard to move the cursor to the beginning of the notebook, then "SpeakSentence" as indicated above.

Vanguard/Vantage/ECO: Follow the same idea as for the Pathfinder. Create your message using Minspeak and spelling, as you would normally. Then go to the ToolBox - Notebook Menu, and Save Notebook with a name you choose. Next, you may want to create an activity row with a series of buttons for opening specific notebooks, as well as a "Close Notebook" tool. To modify an activity row (e.g., "Tools" activity), you can follow these steps: Modify Activity; Modify Item Within Activity; Spell Text for Message; Insert Tool = Open Notebook; select notebook from list; OK.



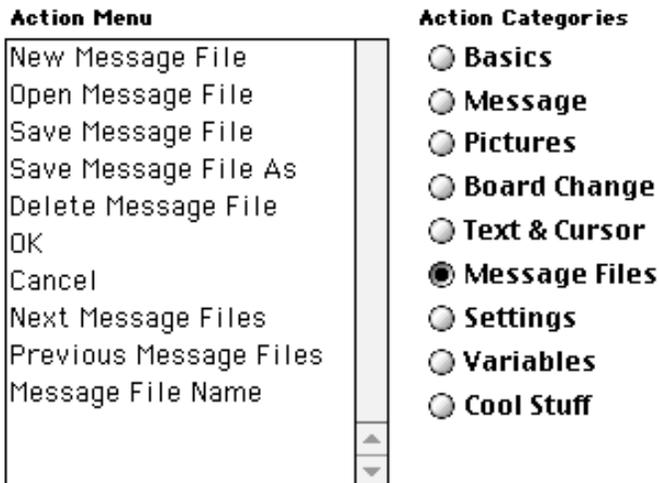
Remember instructions above for using the "Quick Hits" activity row to read back the notebook one sentence at a time.

DynaVox: Command Buttons "Load File", "Close File", "Chat Mode."



Any text in the message window can be saved as a file, using a Command Button called "Save File." Once the button is selected, you will be prompted to give your file a name. When you load (open) a file on a DynaVox 3100, Series 4 or V product, the cursor starts at the beginning of the file, ready for readback. You can then use the "Speak Sentence and Move to Next" command button (or add the Behavior to a button on another page) for readback. If you add a Command Button called "Chat Mode" to the page, then the messages selected in Chat Mode do not go into the message window and won't affect your file. The "Chat Mode" button is a toggle, and you select it a second time to turn off Chat Mode.

Speaking Dynamically Pro: The Action Category "Message Files" includes functions for "Open Message File," "Save Message File", "Save Message File As," and "Open Next Message File." Put these functions on separate buttons, and then program another button for the readback function as indicated above.



References

Musselwhite, C. & Burkhart, L. (2001). *Can We Chat? Co-Planned Sequenced Social Scripts (A Make It / Take It Book of Ideas and Adaptations)*. Litchfield Park, AZ: AAC Intervention.

Musselwhite, C. & Burkhart, L. (2004). *Sequenced Social Scripts: Companion CD to Can We Chat? Co-Planned Sequenced Social Scripts*. Litchfield Park, AZ: AAC Intervention.

Both items are available from:

www.aacintervention.com or www.lburkhart.com

Device info/resources:

Prentke Romich Knowledge Base <http://support.prentrom.com>

DynaVox Technologies Knowledge Base <http://dynavoxsys.custhelp.com>

Tango! www.blink-twice.com

Mayer-Johnson Support <http://mayer-johnson.custhelp.com>