

Attainment's

pictures that talk



Juli Trautman Pearson • Harvey Pressman



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Pictures That Talk

By Juli Trautman Pearson and Harvey Pressman
Edited by Elizabeth Ragsdale, Joni Nygard, and Tom Kinney
Graphic design by Elizabeth Ragsdale
Cover photography by Sarah Elizabeth Sprague
Translation by Alicia Garcia

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Attainment Company, Inc.
PO Box 930160
Verona, WI 53593-0160
1-800-327-4269
www.AttainmentCompany.com



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About the Editors

Juli Trautman Pearson is a speech pathologist who specializes in augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) with an emphasis on adults with neurogenic disorders. She currently works in Boulder, Colorado, at Boulder Community Hospital and Mapleton Rehab Center, with a special emphasis on AAC in the acute-care setting. Previously she worked at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, North Carolina, and assisted in the development of their Assistive Technology Center and Aphasia Center. Having earned her master's degree from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, she has presented at national conferences and published papers on AAC, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), and aphasia.



Harvey Pressman is managing editor at Augmentative Communication, Inc., and president of the Central Coast Children's Foundation. He served as technology editor at *Exceptional Parent Magazine*, was a founding board member of the Alliance for Technology Access (ATA), and has directed demonstration programs in educational technology, employment of welfare recipients and people with disabilities, urban education, and youth employment. He is the author or coauthor of some 15 books and scores of journal articles in these areas, as well as a former college professor and Peace Corps official.





Introduction

There's an old saying that goes: "To steal ideas from one person is called plagiarism; to steal ideas from many is called research."¹ In compiling the ideas in this book, we have done a great deal of research. This book is, in fact, the very embodiment of the notion that "all of us are smarter than one of us."

The concept of a Talking Photo Album (TPA) idea book for people with disabilities originated when a six-year-old (Aaron Pressman) had the idea that he should show his new TPA to his grandmother (Sarah Blackstone). Sarah, in turn, had the idea that this inexpensive, mass market product could serve scores of useful purposes for people with complex communication needs. So Sarah and her husband (Harvey Pressman) got the idea of gathering a bunch of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) experts together at a conference (using wine and cheese as bait), and had them write up a bunch of ideas that eventually became the *AAC Idea Book*.²

Some 20,000 albums later, Harvey realized (duh!) that the TPA could be used for purposes well beyond the field of AAC. What was needed was an assistive technology (AT) book that could provide

ideas for adapting the album to the needs of the elderly, struggling students, and people with a wide variety of disabling conditions. So he found a coauthor, Juli Trautman Pearson, who had a wide array of good ideas in her head (and lots of colleagues and friends with good ideas). Together, Juli and Harvey set out to create a vastly expanded and broadened version of the original idea book.

The book you have in your hand (or on your screen) is thus a new, improved, and more nutritious and satisfying version of the original. It includes the "best of" from the first book, but has about three times as many ideas, covering a much wider range of disabilities and purposes. We've also greatly beefed up **Hints for Use** (page 13) to help readers overcome the technical problems, and perhaps reduce the frustrations, in using the album.

We've designed this book to be flipped through and used one "chunk" at a time. In each of the five chapters you'll find ideas for using the TPA (or a similar device), and we also provide leads to additional resources. Each idea includes a description, the target population, specific benefits of using the idea, and tips for implementation. You'll also find examples

of scripted text and graphics. In each sample, the graphic or unquoted text represents what would appear on a page of the TPA, while the text in quotation marks is an example of a recorded message you might use with the graphic. Bracketed text in italics suggests sounds to record or images to include on the TPA pages. Each example is designed not only to stand alone, but to spark your creative juices for devising similar ideas.

To add texture and utility to the book, we've also included sidebars that incorporate an eclectic variety of personal stories, specific ideas for implementation, quotations, references for finding images, and resources that can help implement and extend the ideas.

We've chosen to focus on ideas and strategies that can:

- help individuals enhance their school success,
- support social interaction skills,
- foster independence, and
- improve communication between families and professionals.

For example, **Sequenced Social Scripts** (page 54) demonstrates ways individuals can use the TPA to carry on age-appropriate social conversations, using wit and piquing the interest of their peers. **How to Assist with Daily Tasks** (page 84) can be used to remind personal care assistants (PCAs) of the individual's schedule, needs, routines, and so forth, giving the TPA user more control over daily life and PCAs increased knowledge about the person's preferences and needs.

With English as a second language (ESL) playing such a large factor in today's schools, we've included ideas that promote family-professional communication across language barriers. All school age students may benefit from the ideas involving classroom learning (e.g., ideas for using TPAs for a field trip report). There are also ideas that can provide support to students who are slipping through the cracks because of restricted literacy skills.

We've framed our ideas around the TPA because of its extreme affordability (under \$30), ease of use, and versatility. One individual may use three or four TPAs for different purposes. For example, Suzanne, who has cerebral palsy, uses one as a **Cartoon Conversation Launcher** (page 32) for conveying her witty personality in social situations, a second for **Telephone Access** (page 80), and a third to tell PCAs **How to Assist with Daily Tasks** (page 84). The practicality of the TPA allows us to think bigger about opportunities for using a digitized device to enhance someone's life. (We've even heard of clinical staff meetings where it's been used to initiate brainstorming sessions.)

Also of note, the TPA is general enough that one device can be used for a whole classroom of kids. For example, **A Language Activity a Day** (page 140) can be used to start the day and get students engaged in classroom Q & A. Adding images to the TPA requires no technical skill because you can use photographs, cutouts, symbols, drawings, photocopies, newspaper clippings, note cards, or whatever else works.

With the TPA you can record four minutes of speech, ten seconds at a time, in any language. As our compilation of some 60 ideas illustrates, it can be used for a vast array of purposes. Although we've chosen the TPA as a framework for our ideas, readers should be aware that these ideas can easily be adapted to many other digitized devices, such as GoTalk® (Attainment), One by Four Talker (Attainment), Macaw (Zygo), Chatbox (Saltillo), and Easy Talk (Saltillo).

The TPA was designed as a commercially available product for adding voice to the photos in an album. (The one that first appeared in stores included a demo of a child sending her grandma a picture from her first day at school.) It was not originally designed for use in schools or with folks with disabilities. Nevertheless, we've chosen the TPA because of its significant potential benefits from a small investment.

The TPA has some limitations, such as difficulty keeping the pages open and limited voice quality. It can also occasionally be frustrating, especially for beginning users. For example, the batteries are packaged outside of the device, and a tiny Phillips head screwdriver (like the ones used to repair eyeglasses) is required to open the battery door. To minimize frustration, we've included some tips we've learned along the way (see **Hints for Use**, page 13).

Whatever population you work with, we hope that you find some of these ideas useful and that they also help you generate your own ideas for using TPAs and other digitized speech devices to enhance learning, independence, social

interaction, and family-professional communication. You may find yourself adapting an idea initially intended for one purpose and using it for another. For example, **Life Story in Words and Pictures** (page 30) was initially conceived for folks with progressive neurological diseases who eventually will lose their speech. This idea has also been used, however, with elderly parents to preserve their stories for generations to come.

Last but not least, we want to acknowledge and thank the many creative people who contributed their ideas to this book (see **Contributors**, page 177). Without the willing contributions of scores of people who rely on AT or help others use it, this collaborative venture could never have come to fruition. Special thanks go out to individuals who have reviewed ideas, made suggestions for improvements, recruited others to make contributions, provided thoughts on layout, and added hints for use. We also want to acknowledge the countless contributions from Sarah Blackstone, who coauthored the original *AAC Idea Book* and helped us make so many of the ideas in this book more useful. Many thanks also to Joni Nygard, Elizabeth Ragsdale, and the rest of the editing and publishing staff at Attainment Company for providing professional illustrations, Spanish translations, and ideas for improvement; for being so cooperative in allowing us to participate in the design of the book; and for being so much fun to work with.

*Juli Trautman Pearson
Harvey Pressman*



Hints for Use

The Talking Photo Album has become a popular AT and education tool because of its affordability, recording capabilities (24 pages with 10 seconds of recording time on each page), and versatility for individuals with a wide range of abilities. It does have some disadvantages, however, because it wasn't designed specifically as an AT tool. These include voice quality issues, pages that do not lay flat, few alternative access options for individuals who cannot manually manipulate the pages, and limited durability. To make the TPA easier to use with more diverse populations, we've come up with the following tips and hints.

Keeping the TPA open

- Keep pages open with a weighted book mark (Figure 1).
- Place the TPA on a book stand butler (Figure 2).
- Use rubber bands and spacers (e.g., foam board or thick squares of cardboard with double-sided adhesive tape). Figure 3 shows a spacer attached directly to the back of a button so it's easier to hold the page and press the button. Figure 4 shows multiple rubber bands holding the pages open (use one rubber band per every 4–5 pages for best results).



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

Figure 5 shows how the rubber bands hold the pages down while the spacers between each page allow for easier manipulation.

- When the book is not in use, wind the rubber bands around the front cover. As each page is opened it can be threaded through a rubber band.
- Place Velcro® on the page corners so that when a page is turned it will stick to the previous page.



Figure 5

Helping individuals manipulate the book

- Place a solid wedge (page fluffer) behind each page. Foam board, a washer, or a penny may all be helpful; clear packing tape works well as an adhesive.
- Place a paper clip taped with strong, clear packing tape on each page to help with turning pages.
- Glue foam board squares to each page to help separate pages for easier turning.
- Use tabs (see Figure 6) to better turn or locate pages. Use thick tabs with strong adhesive and reinforce with packing tape as needed.
- If necessary, demonstrate how to activate the button and encourage the individual to practice exerting sufficient pressure to operate the TPA.



Figure 6

Helping individuals with significant physical disabilities use the book

- Provide two symbols or text messages of appropriate size (table tent size works great) as follows: (1) "Turn the page" and (2) "Push the button for me" (see Figure 7). Individuals can then indicate to a partner, through pointing or eye gaze, what they want to communicate. The first page or two of the book can be programmed to introduce the partner and outline the strategy used to share information in the book. ("I'm _____ and this is my friend _____. I can't hit that tiny button by myself, so she'll help me. I look at symbols to tell her when I'm ready to go on. Ready to see what I did this summer?")



Figure 7

- Use two single message devices (e.g., Big Mack by AbleNet or Personal Talker by Attainment), paired with the two symbols described above, as an easier activation target to direct the action of a partner. Program the first page or two of the book as described earlier.
- Number each page in the TPA that has a message on it, and use a separate device with a numbers overlay that the individual can access. For example, individuals can use their own AAC device, a simple word/picture board (with numbers and actions), or a digitized device such as a GoTalk® by Attainment Company or Message Mate™ by Words+. Program the numbers 1–24 into the device and in one row add core messages such as: “Press the button for me please,” or “Next page.” Individuals can then direct their partner to “go to page 4—that’s a good one.”

Maximizing voice quality

- Record in a quiet place without background noise.
- Position the TPA speaker a few inches from your mouth when recording.
- Speak as clearly and naturally as possible. Avoid yelling or speaking too rapidly or too slowly.
- Speak immediately after pressing the Record button to avoid a delay.
- Practice the message ahead of time to ensure it will fit in the time frame and sound as natural as possible.
- Record the voice in the gender and age appropriate for the individual using the TPA.
- If possible have an individual with a strong, clear voice (such as a music teacher) record the message.
- Listen to each message after it’s recorded to ensure it sounds as it should; re-record if needed.
- Check with the user of the TPA to make sure the person is comfortable with how the messages sound.

Maximizing content

- If possible create the book with the user to ensure it reflects the interests and needs of the person.
- Make sure the complexity of the words and pictures matches the user’s skills.

- Use humor, teasing, social comments, and slang appropriate for the user.
- For individuals with limited reading skills, paste text messages below the symbols or pictures.
- Print the text clearly in a large font.
- Behind the text or image on each page, add a 4" x 6" index card printed with the recorded message. If the TPA breaks, you'll still have the message.

Helping individuals with visual or cognitive deficits locate the button

- Use colored stickers. You can hole punch a brightly colored adhesive sticker to get the appropriate size.
- Use tabs to highlight the button on each page.
- Use a red, blue, or green permanent marker to circle the button.
- If users cannot comprehend that they should press either the top or the bottom of the page, simplify the book by using only the top or bottom buttons. Place a sheet of black paper on the pages that aren't used.

Organizing messages for easy access

- Consider using tabs (see Figure 6).
- Plan a logical organization for the user before creating the book (e.g., chronological order with certain greetings in the front, middle, and back).

Getting ready to use the TPA

- For individuals unfamiliar with using recorded messages, role play to teach the set-up and fine-tune the process.
- Make backup copies of the pages in the order they appear in the book, in case one gets lost or damaged.

Finding a device for a specific need

- Apply these ideas to a digitized device that may better meet the needs of the individual or situation, such as:
 - Pocket GoTalk® by Attainment
 - Speak Easy by Ablenet
 - Super Talker by Ablenet
 - Ultimate 8 by Tash
 - MessageMate™ by Words+
 - Hawk series by Adamlab
 - Tech Speak™/Tech Talk™ by AMDi
 - Digital Voice Recorder (available at office supply stores)
- Visit <http://www.augcominc.com/links.html> for a list of vendors.

Locating images on the Web

- www.google.com (click on the “images” link)
- www.microsoft.com (search for “clip art”)
- www.altavista.com (click on “images” link)
- www.istockphoto.com/
- www.freefoto.com
- www.clipart.com
- www.fotosearch.com/
- www.theteachersguide.com/

Using images from the Web

- Download or copy the image from the Web (refer to the Help feature in your Web browser if you need help downloading images).
- Place the image in your word processing, page layout, or presentation program.
- Move or resize the picture as desired.
- Refer to the Help feature in your software for additional instructions and tips for working with images.

Do's and don'ts for communicating with folks who rely on AAC

Individuals who rely on AAC have as much to say as the rest of us and the same desire to be treated as intelligent, personable, and able communicators. We've collaborated with people who use AAC and those who regularly communicate with them to come up with the following do's and don'ts. These ideas can be used to train communication partners unfamiliar with AAC; they can also be used for group training in environments such as the classroom or workplace. More than 30 ideas are presented, so pick and choose the ones that best fit your need or use these ideas to come up with your own.

Do . . .

- Learn when to predict what I'm saying and when to hear me out.
- Pause and wait for me to construct a message.
- Give me an opportunity to ask you questions or make comments. I'm an active communicator just like you.
- Be honest! If you don't understand what I say, please tell me. Ask me to tell you again, perhaps in a different way.
- Talk directly to me, not my companion.
- Pay close attention to my facial expressions and gestures.
- Show empathy by matching my mood when speaking.
- Make eye contact while I'm talking and speak at eye level whenever possible.
- Introduce yourself to me.
- Ask me to show you how I communicate (how I indicate yes and no; if I use a communication board or other device).
- Learn to understand and acknowledge all of my communication forms.
- Make a guess based on what I've already communicated if I'm having trouble getting my point across.
- Look at me when I'm communicating to help me look at you.
- Apply the Golden Rule to how you communicate with me.



Don't . . .

- Assume I don't have opinions about sports, politics, art, etc.
- Assume all I want to talk about is my basic wants and needs (e.g., going to the bathroom or drinking juice).
- Stand over me so I have to look up at you.
- Pretend you know what I'm saying if you don't understand.
- Talk about me in front of me.
- Shout at me as loudly as possible, as though I must have a hearing problem if I'm unable to speak.
- Speak to me slowly, in simple monosyllabic words, the way you might speak to a three year old.
- Take wild guesses at what I'm about to say while I'm composing a statement on my voice output communication aid, without asking my permission to do so.
- Finish my thoughts without my permission.
- Do other things (like walk out of the room) while I'm keying in a response or composing an utterance.
- Make me use an AAC device as a first mode of communication, if that's not my preference.
- Feel as if you have to keep talking if there's silence.
- Be uncomfortable with a different pattern of interaction or way of communication.
- Think of the device as amazing. The device is boring; the person using it is amazing.
- Turn off or take away the device.
- Change the subject while I'm keying in a response.
- Touch my device, unless I ask you to.
- Refer to the device as a video game of some type.
- Assume I'm worried about being misunderstood.
- Make wild faces at me, thinking it will help me read your lips.
- Dumb down your vocabulary.



An illustration of a hand holding a tablet. The tablet screen displays a large red number '1' and the text 'Increasing Communication and Social Networking'. The background is light gray with a large, faint number '1' in the upper left corner. The tablet has a red border and a play button icon in the top right corner. The hand is white with red outlines.

1

Increasing Communication and Social Networking

Jokes for Folks

Sharing humor and wit are powerful social tools that allow people to engage with others in a positive way and demonstrate their communication competency. For this idea a partner can help gather jokes from websites, books, pop culture, newspapers, and so forth. The written and recorded joke, along with a picture, go on the left page; the recorded punch line and a large question mark are placed on the right page. When children hear new jokes, they can ask the person who tells the joke to add it to their album. Then they can share it later with others.



benefits

- Empowers kids by revealing their social wit.
- Allows them to reveal the answer since it's not written anywhere.
- Allows them to make others laugh.
- Helps children learn more about using abstract language through the use of puns.

tips

- Consider making the first page an introduction: "Do you want to hear a good joke?"
- Make some pages that encourage interaction: "Have you heard any good jokes lately?" or "Will you add that joke to my book so I can tell it later?"
- Encourage children to decide which jokes they want to put in their book.
- Look on these websites for some good jokes:
 - <http://www.bconnex.net/~kidworld/weekjoke.htm>
 - <http://www.humormatters.com/kidsjoke.htm>

Jokes for Folks

My Joke Book

What does a frog like to eat at McDonalds?



?

"A hamburger and French flies"

Why did the scientist put a knocker on his door?



?

"He was hoping to win the No-Bell prize."

What do you call a motorcycle that a witch rides?



?

"A broom-broom stick"