



**W**hile some augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device users are content to turn on a device, type a few words letter by letter, and speak when spoken to, there are many times users are not taking advantage of ways to participate in conversations that are available to them. Beyond just typing letter by letter on the keyboard with a finger or two or ten, there are features which can drastically improve upon the time

it takes to get a message out. These are generally considered **speed enhancement techniques**.

We want to show several methods to utilize speech generating devices more effectively, thus encouraging users to engage in conversations of all kinds. Using a text-to-speech system such as the Polyana with Persona, you can learn about its features and take advantage of what it can do. Set up the system, test to see if it meets your needs, and make changes to maximize the usefulness of the system.

## Speed Enhancement Techniques

### Word Completion and Prediction

Together these can reduce the number of keystrokes it takes to type out words. When you begin to spell a word, the device guesses which word you are typing. It will display a list of words so you don't have to type out the entire word yourself. This is **word completion**. Select the predicted word and it is completed along with a following space. Its companion is **word prediction**. The Polyana keeps track of word sequences and is able to predict which word you are going to type based on the word you just completed.

### Abbreviation/Expansion (AbEx)

Another speed technique is **abbreviation/expansion**. The user enters an acronym which the device interprets into a longer phrase. Persona is taught that "HH" equals "Hello, how are you?" Then the user just has to type **HH <space>** and the machine replaces it with the full text. I often use **CC** for "cup of coffee", or **MN** for "my name is Adam", or **A1** for my address, **P1** and **P2** for my phone numbers. You need to be careful in choosing an acronym so you don't choose an abbreviation which could otherwise be a word on its own. You wouldn't want to use **TO** for "time out" because "to" is such a common word that would no longer be available to you. In Persona, go to Edit AbEx to create your own shortcuts.

### Speech Exceptions (SpEx)

In some cases you might also use speech exceptions in lieu of abbreviation/expansion. **Speech exceptions** are intended to let the user create phonetic ways of pronouncing words so certain words sound the way they are intended instead of the way the synthesizer interprets the word. Instead of letting the device spell out the phrase from an AbEx acronym, you can teach it to speak an alternative expression, which reduces the time to get out the phrase. I could use my initials to always speak my name, or use the initials **ST** to speak "Stop! Don't do that!" without spending the time it takes to expand the entire phrase onto a display screen and then speak as is done during an abbreviation/expansion.

### Stored Phrases

Persona also lets you **store phrases** or messages which you can locate and speak. This works well for repetitive expressions which you use often enough that it makes sense to save them. In some cases these are grouped in categories or topics making them more accessible within the context of the conversation. (Ask us how.) Go into the phrase bank where the repetitive messages are stored in a long list. Add New phrases to your list, or modify or delete the ones you have already stored. You look for the phrase you want to speak alphabetically as you begin to type the sentence. Or you could scroll up and down the list until you found the stored phrase you were looking for.

### Dialogue Scripts

Another method allows you to save **dialogue scripts** for upcoming conversations. Let's say I wanted to order a pizza. I could prepare my side of the conversation by typing out sentences that I expect to need during the conversation, and save the dialogue as a file. When I am ready to have the conversation, I open the file and speak what I saved. I can also type new thoughts during the conversation.

When preparing for **phone calls** it is important to consider the person on the other end of the line. If you call them, you need to quickly tell him/her that you are using a device to speak, that it may take you a while to respond, and most of all that this is not a prank call so please don't hang up! If you receive a call, you need to answer the call and quickly speak a greeting.

### Short Hand

You can also use **short hand** to reduce the number of keystrokes required to speak messages. You can use letters, numbers, or spell phonetically to get the sound of the message across. Think license plate spelling.

**R U tired?**

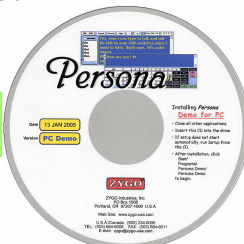
**S I M.**

**I C U brot videos.**

**I 8 b4 u cald.**

The goal is to speak the message, not to show that you are able to spell correctly.

### Persona demonstration CD



Contact ZYGO to receive a free Persona demonstration CD.