

Frequently Asked Questions about Core on the DynaVox Compass Software

1. What is Core?

Core is a small set of basic, often used words that can be combined to create unique messages. Core is systematically introduced so the user has an appropriate and manageable number of words that increases at subsequent steps, while not changing position as new vocabulary is added.

2. Why do we start with only 6 words, and why are they arranged like that?

The plan for introducing Core with a small subset of words was developed to allow new users to learn the basics of using Core, including both semantic and syntactic use, before adding additional content to the set. Our goal was to start with a group of words that can be used alone or with fringe vocabulary in word lists to create novel messages without overwhelming a new user with too many words. Additional vocabulary will be systematically added to build a more robust set at each step. As words are added, you'll note some of the spaces are blank. This was designed intentionally so that words won't shift as new vocabulary is added.

3. Can I move the words around?

While the technology would technically allow you to adjust position, we'd strongly encourage that you don't adjust word position or order because it has already been set up optimally to reflect research.

4. Can I substitute in different words?

Again, the technology would technically allow you to make adjustments such as word changes, but we'd encourage that you do not substitute words. These words have been identified in research (of Karen Erikson et al) to best represent the words we use most frequently. As you progress to later steps, a few blank spots become available for very custom words. In all, you'll have access to 7 blank spots.

5. How do I know when to add more words?

You will know best when it is appropriate to move to the next step in Core and add additional vocabulary. One guide during first steps might be to follow the path of Core Word Lessons and once the user has completed lessons for the first 6 words, add the next 6, etc. As you continue to model use of the core words and also see the user accessing them while communicating, you and/or the team will know that it is time to give them access to more. Don't hesitate to share this decision making process with the user him/herself, asking if it feels manageable to add additional vocabulary to the page.

6. How can I use these words along with other tools?

The incredible power of Core is truly unlocked when used in conjunction with other tools. For instance, you have the basic structural components to a message in your Core words, but the flavor is really added by using fringe vocabulary (word lists). You could use Core (Step 2) to develop the message: "I can go," but when you follow that up with more information found in word lists, your message can get even more specific: "I can go to the store tomorrow."

7. How do the Core Word Lesson Plans work?

The Core Lessons were developed to help provide a structured opportunity for users to practice using the Core words both in language and literacy activities. Lessons are accompanied by books we've written with heavy focus on each of the words. These books were created specifically with our Core strategy in mind and maximize use of the target words in fun and creative texts paired with images to support comprehension and engagement. The plans are set up so that one word is targeted in a single lesson, usually delivered over the course of 5 days. This can be adjusted to meet your needs. Activities are included both for in class or therapy and at home.

8. What if they aren't using Core outside of the lessons?

That's ok! The lessons are actually a fantastic place to start introducing Core. You might find that between the opportunities for practice that come along with lessons, paired with the partner augmented input (modeling) you are providing using Core, the user might start to initiate use of Core in more settings than just instructional time. If not, that's still great. The positive practice within the lessons will still provide lasting support of their language and literacy. Another option will be to use the extension activities in real life situations.

9. Is this meant for a specific grade level?

No, this was developed to support the language level of the individual and does not correspond to a grade level.

10. Does Core use symbols?

The default setting in Core is to include symbols but these can be easily turned off at individual preference. We strongly suggest that you consider turning them off to allow the individual to learn the sight word, rather than the symbol.

11. How do the steps in Core tie in to the Ability Levels?

We default to certain steps at each Ability Level, but you can always adjust this independent from the Ability Level. We know that some people have more or less experience using Core, so we therefore made it possible for you to change core step regardless of ability level.