

**The Responsive Augmentative and Alternative Communication
Style Scale (RAACS) Version 3
Instruction Manual and Coding Scheme**

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Adapted from the work of Ebba Almsenius and Louise Karlsson (2008)
Elin Lennartson and Katarina Sörensson (2010)

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Introduction

The Responsive Augmentative and Alternative Communication Style Scale (RAACS) Version 3 was developed for the purpose of assessing parents' communicative styles with children with communication difficulties. The development of the instrument was part of a larger evaluation of the ComAlong parental course, which was developed over several years within the Swedish project AKKtiv: Augmentative and Alternative Communication Early Intervention. ComAlong targets parents of children with communication difficulties and aims to enhance their knowledge of communication and different kinds of communication support.

Terminology

Communication. This includes spoken language, body communication (gestures, movements, eye gaze, physical actions, play that involves turn taking, and utterances and messages produced by natural speech or augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) such as speech-generating devices). Communication can be intentional or unintentional. A typically developing child is more intentional in his or her way of communicating than a child with a disability who is at an earlier stage of physical development and communication.

Imitation. Parents typically imitate children at earlier stages of physical development and communication. By imitating the child's vocalizations, body movements, and gestures, the parent may stimulate turn taking, joint attention, and so on.

Repetition. Repetition refers to the way a parent may repeat the child's signed, spoken, or digitized utterances. The parent repeats in order to expand on the child's communication and/or to emphasize and confirm that she or he has understood the child. For example, the child says, "ball" and the parent repeats, "yes ball."

Instructions for Using RAACS Version 3

You should code a maximum of 10 minutes of each film. The coding is done from the beginning of the film until 00:10:00. Films that are shorter in duration than 10 minutes will be coded from the beginning to the end (you will calculate the means).

1. Read the instructions that follow and the coding scheme that begins on page 4 carefully,

so that you feel confident about what you are going to assess.

2. Assess Statements 1 – 7 (in bold), which concern the parents' communicative behaviour.
Note: Most of these statements include examples of how the communicative behaviour may be realized by the parent; it is the statement in bold that you should assess!
3. Fill in the identifying information at the top of page 7 (i.e., film code, activity, participants).
4. Watch the film.
5. Watch the film again, from the beginning. Code Statements 1 to 7, minute-by-minute. Minute 1 in the coding scheme corresponds to minute 0-1 in the film; minute 2 corresponds to minute 1-2 in the film, and so on.
6. Statements 1-7 should be coded according to the 3-point scale specified for each item. Score 0, 1, or 2, depending on the extent to which the parent displays the behaviour during the minute (refer to examples provided). If the communicative behavior (the statement) does not occur during the minute you are coding, write 0 in the box. The rules for scoring an item with a 1 or 2 vary for each behaviour. You can watch the film as many times as you want! **Note:** Be aware that some examples of behaviours may occur in relation to several statements (e.g., “imitate” occurs in relation to Statements 1 and 5) .
7. Make a global rating of Statements 8 and 9: “The parent adapts and is engaged” and “The parent adjusts to the communicative level of the child.” Base your rating on your overall impression of the parent's communicative style. Use the 3-point scale to determine to what degree the parent fulfills the statements: **1** (*Never*) means the parent does not at all display the suggested approach/behaviour, **2** (*Sometimes*) means the parent at times shows the approach/behaviour, and **3** (*Often*) means the parent often shows the approach/behaviour.
8. Obtain the sum of Statements 1 through 7. Calculate the mean for each statement by dividing the sum by the number of coded minutes.
9. Add the means of Statements 1-7 with the sum of Statements 8 and 9.
10. On the last page, there is room for immediate observations and reflections regarding the film and/or coding process.

RAACS Version 3 Coding Scheme

For Statements 1 – 7, score behaviour minute-by-minute, using the 3-point scale specified for each item. For Statements 8 and 9 score globally, according to the following 3-point scale: **1** = *Never*, **2** = *Sometimes*, **3** = *Often*

1. The parent attends to and confirms the child's communication by, for example:

- Using facial gestures and body communication
- Imitating vocalizations, larger body movements and gestures, facial expressions, etc.
- Repeating signed, spoken, and digitized utterances
- Labelling the child's physical and communicative actions
- Asking and answering questions
- Commenting
- Following the child's lead during play/activity

SCALE: 0. Not observed
1. Behaviour occurs once or twice
2. Behaviour occurs at least three times

2. The parent adjusts physically to the child by, for example:

- Being close to the child
- Turning to the child
- Sitting on the floor or otherwise being at the same level as the child
- Relating to an activity in a physically adequate way

SCALE: 0. Not observed
1. Parent at the same physical level as child
2. Parent at the same physical level as child and adapts own physical placement according to the activity, in an adequate way

3. The parent gives the child space to communicate by, for example:

- Observing and waiting expectantly
- Maintaining an easy pace so that the child has lots of time to initiate and respond
- Listening – giving the child enough time to communicate

SCALE: 0. Not observed

1. Parent is quiet in a situation where communication from the child is expected
2. Parent is quiet, in a situation where communication from the child is expected, and shows the child that an initiation or response is expected

4. The parent clarifies his or her own communication by, for example:

- Emphasizing important words
- Using varied intonation
- Using short utterances
- Using uncomplicated language
- Using body communication
- Making use of objects or AAC present in the physical environment
- Repeating own utterances

SCALE: 0. Not observed

1. Parent clarifies own communication in only one way (e.g., uses simple grammar)
2. Parent uses two or more strategies to clarify own communication (e.g., uses simple grammar and a clarifying intonation, or AAC)

5. The parent communicates according to the child's focus of interest or conversational topic by, for example:

- Following in the play/activity
- Commenting, telling, and explaining
- Imitating
- Asking and answering questions

SCALE: 0. Not observed

1. Parent comments on child's play without adapting to child's interest
 2. Parent follows child's play and comments or imitates according to child's interest
-

6. The parent expands on the child's communication by, for example:

- Putting the child's communication into words by speaking orally or using a communication aid
- Repeating the child's utterances and correcting pronunciation, manual signs, and grammar
- Repeating and developing the content of the child's communication

SCALE: 0. Not observed

1. Behaviour occurs once or twice
 2. Behaviour occurs at least three times
-

7. The parent uses AAC (e.g., objects, manual signs, pictures, communication boards, or speech-generating devices)

SCALE: 0. Not observed

1. Behaviour occurs once or twice
 2. Behaviour occurs at least three times
-

8. The parent adapts and is engaged

1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often

9. The parent adjusts to the communicative level of the child

1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often

Film Code _____
Activity _____
Participants _____

Score Statements 1 – 7 minute-by-minute, according to the 3-point scale for each item in the Coding Scheme. Score Statements 8 and 9 globally, according to the 3-point scale:
1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often. Obtain sum of Statements 1 – 7, calculate the means by dividing by number of coded minutes. Add the means from Statements 1 – 7 and the sum of Statement 8 and 9 to get the overall RAACS score.

STATEMENTS	MINUTE										S	M	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10			
1. The parent attends to and confirms the child’s communication													
2. The parent adjusts physically to the child													
3. The parent gives the child space to communicate													
4. The parent clarifies his or her own communication													
5. The parent communicates according to the child’s focus of interest or conversational topic													
6. The parent expands on the child’s communication													
7. The parent uses AAC													
8. The parent adapts and is engaged	1 <i>Never</i> _____ 2 <i>Sometimes</i> _____ 3 <i>Often</i> _____												
9. The parent adjusts to the communicative level of the child	1 <i>Never</i> _____ 2 <i>Sometimes</i> _____ 3 <i>Often</i> _____												
Overall RAACS Score _____													

Immediate observations and reflections concerning the film and/or coding:
