ALPHACORE MANUAL

AlphaCore is designed to meet the communication needs

of literate adults with changing physical abilities like those with ALS.
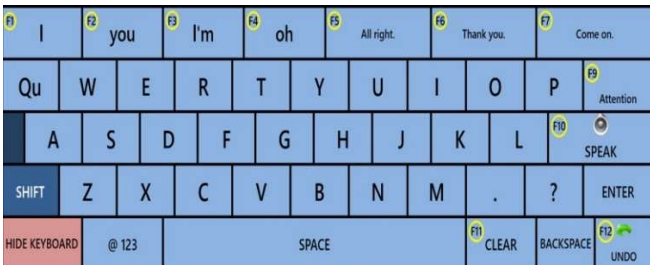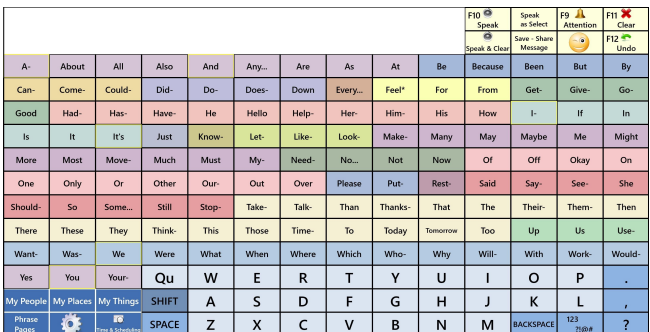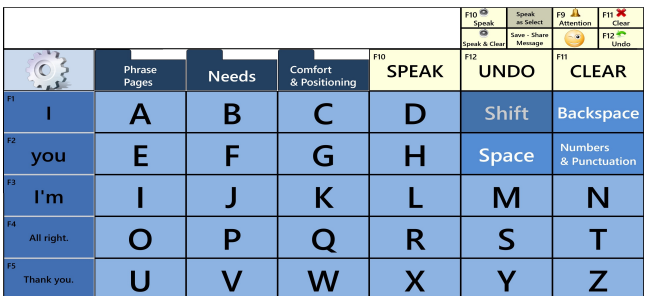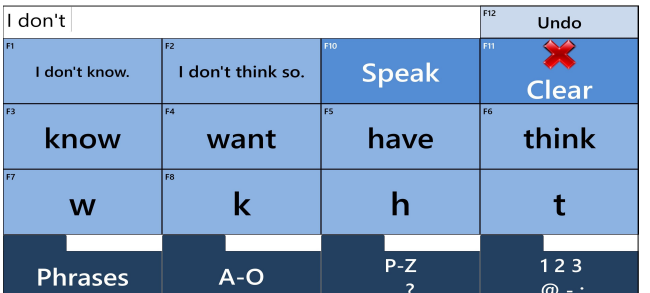
Contents

4 Layouts

AlphaCore includes 4 Layouts. Each maximizes communication efficiency and speed for people with different abilities.   Users can transition from a layout designed for keyboard typists to layouts that speed communication using a mouse, head tracker or even eye tracking technology.

Layout Options

LAYOUT	IMAGE	PURPOSE (Which keyboard is best for you?)
TouchType Keyboard		A great keyboard for people who quickly type with a **touch screen** or a **Bluetooth Keyboard**. The TouchType Keyboard eliminates the need to continuously lift hands off a Bluetooth keyboard to press high usage buttons on the screen like "Clear", "Speak", an Attention Chime, word-prediction and phrase-prediction. These can all be activated with F-keys on the Bluetooth keyboard. (See Tips if F-Keys are not activated on your external keyboard)
AlphaCore		Increases communication rate for people using **mouse, joystick, touchpad, head trackers** and even some accurate **eye trackers**. Speeds communication by providing alphabetically organized, high-frequency words known as core vocabulary. This small set of words account for 75% of what we say. As you construct a message, core words most likely to appear next in your sentence become highlighted on this screen.
Large Keyboard		Facilitates easier targeting for **mouse, head tracker** or **eye tracker** users**.** The Large Keyboard is great for those who need larger font or just want a simple keyboard layout.
Extra Large Keyboard		Enables people who need extra big buttons to target accurately and consistently. Can be helpful for people who are having trouble targeting with **eye tracking**. This ingenious 16 location keyboard utilizes next-letter, next-word and next-phrase prediction to speed communication and reduce effort.

Phrase Pages

No matter which keyboard a person chooses, AlphaCore provides well designed *Phrase Pages* that have been developed with years of input from users and caregivers about the phrases that are useful in daily interactions. These pages are accessed by selecting the dark blue **Topic** tabs. *Phrase Pages* can be used as they are or customized to meet your unique needs, situations and communication style.

Message Window →	Good Morning. How was your drive?				F10 ⦿ Speak / ⦿ Speak & Clear	Speak as Select / Save - Share Message	F9 🙏 Attention / 😊	F11 ❌ Clear / F12 ↩ Undo	← Helper Buttons
	Greetings	Communication Tips	News & Current Topics	Questions & Continuers	Needs	My Phrases	More Topic Pages-->	← Phrase Page Topics
	Hi	Good Morning.	Nice to meet you	I'm --name	Good to see you	🔍 You look... (Describing)	🍺 Want a drink? (Drinks)	
	❓ I have a question.	How are you doing?	What have you been up to?	Have you been...? (Activities)	How was your ...? (Event)	👥 How is? (People)	How's it going?	
	I'm doing OK.	😊😟😐 I feel... (Feelings)	😊😟😐 I've been feeling... (Feeling)	I've been doing... (Activities)	🔍 It's (Describing)	🔍 (Describing)	Tell me about it	← Message Buttons
	😊😟😐 (Feelings)	Okay	Great	Good	So-So	Terrible	And you?	
	Goodbye	Goodnight	I better be going	Great talking with you!	Nice to see you	Have a great day!	When will I see you again?	
	AlphaCore		Keyboard		Return to Last Page	Yes/No/Maybe	Please/Thanks/Welcome	

"**Greetings**" **Phrase Page**

Page Organization

Message Buttons

The fastest way to deliver a message is by selecting a *Message Button* that contains a stored message. *Message Buttons* can speak a message in a synthesized voice or play messages recorded in your own voice (see Message Banking, p 11). *Message Buttons* are typically light blue except for buttons containing questions which are lavender. Instructions for storing your own messages on *Message Button* start on page 5 of this manual. Instructions for adding your own recorded messages start on page 11.

Topics

Message Buttons are organized by Topics that appear as dark blue tabs at the top of the page. A second set of *Phrase Pages* appear when the "More Topic Pages" is selected. When a *Phrase Page* is open its tab turns light blue to alert you to the *Phrase Page* that is currently selected.

Phrase Pages Include the Following Topics:

First Phrase Set:

Greetings	Communication Tips	News & Current Topics	Questions & Continuers	Needs	My Phrases	More Topic Pages-->

More Phrases:

Affection & Humor	Email	Text/IM	Phone	Comfort & Positioning	My Phrases 2	<---First Topic Pages

Message Window

The *Message Window* is the long white rectangular box at the top of every page. As you select letters, words or messages they will appear in the *Message Window*. If you want your messages spoken as they enter the *Message Window,* toggle **on** (darkened) the "Speak as Select" yellow *Helper Button*. If you want to compose your message and then speak the message all at once toggle **off** the "Speak as Select" *Helper Button*.

Darkens when toggled On

F10 Speak	Speak as Select	F9 Attention	F11 Clear
Speak & Clear	Save - Share Message		F12 Undo

Message Window

Selected Topic tab is light blue

Greetings	Communication Tips	News & Current Topics	Questions & Continuers	Needs	My Phrases	More Topic Pages-->
Hold On!	I Have Something to Add	Not Finished	I'm Ready With My Message	Please be Patient...	Thanks For Your Patience	Excuse Me
Why I Use Speech Device	My Hearing & Thinking are Fine		"Info about my Low Tech System"	Let's Use My Low Tech System	Directions for My Low Tech System	When I am Ready w/Message
Let Me Give You Some TIPS	Try to Guess	Don't Guess	Ask YES/NO Questions	Read my Screen	Eye Level	"Personal Tip"
Let's Start Over		Oops! Mistake	Teary but Fine	Would It Help If I Spelled It?	PHONETIC ALPHABET (A as in Apple)	Talk Another Time Need Rest
Do You Need A Repeat?			+ Need That Message In Speech Device		YES Looks Like This	No Looks Like This
AlphaCore		Keyboard		Return to Last Page	Yes/No/Maybe	Please/Thanks/Welcome

"Communication Tips" Phrase Page

Helper Buttons

The 8 yellow buttons that appear to the right of the Message Window are frequently used *Helper Buttons.* These Include:

- **Speak** : Speaks aloud any message contained in the *Message Window*.

- **Speak as Select**: Allows you to decide when your messages are spoken. This button should be toggled **on** (darkened) if you want the device to say each word or phrase on a button as soon as you select it. *Speak as Select* should be toggled **off** if you want to construct the message first and then speak the entire message all at once by selecting the "*Speak"* button.

- **Attention** : A soft chime that is helpful in getting people's attention or letting people know you are ready with a message to add to the conversation.

- **Clear** : Clears the *Message Window*. If you accidentally clear your *Message Window*, simply select the **Undo** button. This will bring back your message or undo a chain of previous selections one by one.

- **Undo** : Deletes or undoes your last selection and can continue to undo a chain of previous selections one by one.

- **Speak & Clear** : Saves the step of needing to clear after each message is spoken.

- **Save -Share Message**: Provides a dropdown menu with options for the text contained in your *Message Window*. Text can be saved to *Message Buttons*, shared for Emails, or copied to documents.

- **My Sounds dropdown menu** : Features buttons with the sounds of laughter, sighs, eh-hem and other useful interjections. Sounds that you or someone else record can be added to this dropdown menu. Instructions for having your own recordings play begin on page 11.

Settings : All AlphaCore settings can be reached by selecting the Settings icon.

Settings icons are **located** on the **AlphaCore** main page (bottom left), **Large Keyboard** page, and on the **My Phrases page in the Extra Large Keyboard**.

To Store a Message

There are two ways to store custom messages in AlphaCore. Below are instructions for storing a message as a *Message Button* or as an *Abbreviation Expansion*.

Customize a Message Button

Phrase Pages contain *Message Buttons* for storing your frequent requests, greetings, expressions, etc.   Each *Message Button* has a "label" (the words written on the button) and a "message" (the word spoken by the button). Often people choose a short version of a message to serve as the button's label. This keeps a page simple and makes it easier to find the message you are looking for.

Example: **Label**: Tissue   **Message**: May I have a tissue please.

To customize a *Message Button*:

1. Type within the *Message Window* the message that you would like to store on a button.
2. Go to the *Phrase Page* that contains the button you want to edit or add the message to.

Save-Share Message Button

3. Select the "Save-Share Message" button located in the group of yellow Helper Buttons at the top right corner of the screen.

A drop down Menu will appear:

- Select the "**Save to Button**" if you would like your message to serve as both a spoken message and the written label on the button.

- Select the "**Message Only**" if you only want to customize the spoken message of the button but not the label.

- Select "**Label Only**" if you only want to customize the label written on your button but not the message it speaks.

Save-Share Message drop down Menu

4. An orange dotted line will appear around any *Message Button* that can be modified with a new label and/or message.

**Orange Dotted Lines Highlight *Message Buttons* That Can Be Modified**

5. Choose any orange highlighted *Message Button* you want to modify and select it.

6. If you **don't** want to modify any button, simply select the "Save to Button" again to toggle it off. Note: You can click the "Close" button without toggling the "Save to Button" off. This enables you to select buttons behind the drop down menu.

Create an Abbreviation Expansion

Abbreviation Expansions are short codes that when typed followed by a "**Space**" will expand into a full message. For example, the code "hh" followed by a "Space" will expand into "Hi, how are you?"

To create an Abbreviation Expansion:

1. Open AlphaCore Settings [gear icon] → Manage Expansions
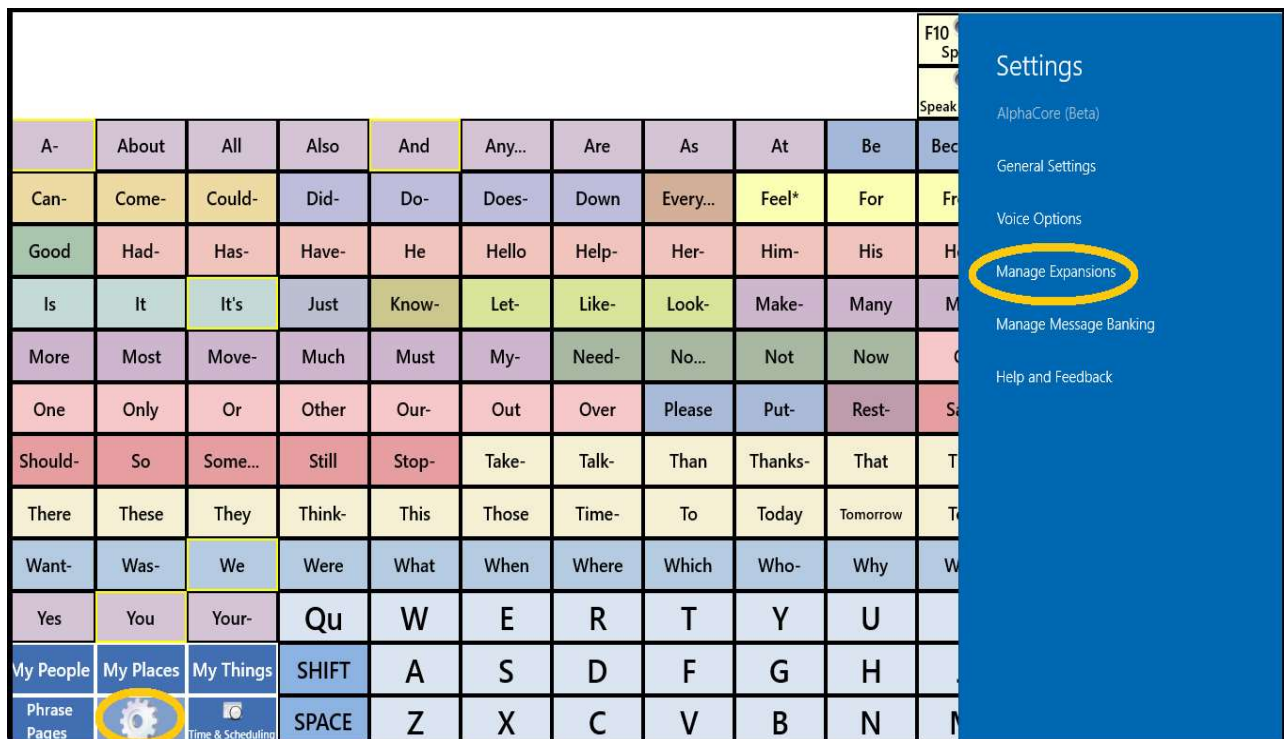
Setting in AlphaCore

2. Type a short letter code (i.e. abbreviation key) in the box on the left labeled "Expansion".
3. Type the full message in the box on the right labeled "Text".
4. Select the "Add" button.

General Settings

To Change the Voice

AlphaCore uses voices that are installed and accessible through the Text to Speech settings in Windows. To change the voice that is used in AlphaCore:

1. Open AlphaCore Settings [gear icon] → Voice Options
2. Use the drop down menu to choose voice and speech rate. Use the "Preview" button to listen to that voice.

To Change Volume

1. Modify sound settings in Windows by tapping the speaker icon on the right side of the taskbar. [speaker icon 98] If you don't see the speaker icon click the [^ icon] taskbar button to show more items.

To Change Font Size

1. Open AlphaCore Settings [gear icon] → General Settings
2. Use slider bar to change **Message *Button* Text Size** or ***Message Window* Text Size.**

To Set up Your Layout

You have 4 layout options with AlphaCore. Each is designed for people with different abilities (see page 1). To set your layout, follow the directions below.

1. Open AlphaCore Settings [gear icon] → General Settings
2. Set your Home Page Layout and Keyboard Layout according to the Layout Chart (next page).
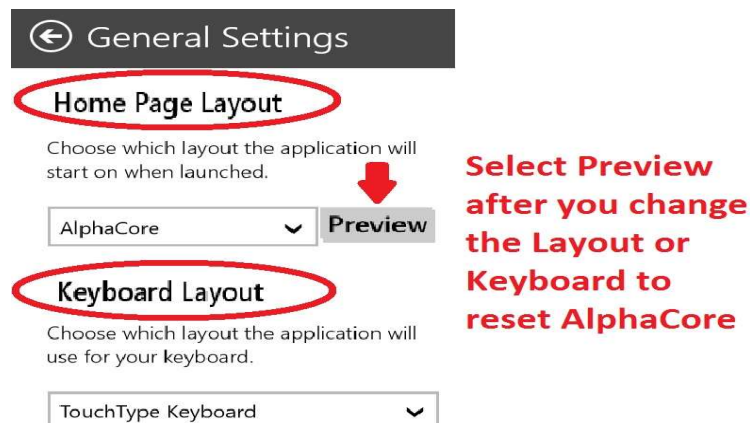
General Settings Menu

3. Select the "**Preview**" button to reset your layout.

Layout Set Up Chart

LAYOUT	IMAGE	HOME PAGE Layout	KEYBOARD Layout
TouchType Keyboard*		AlphaCore	TouchType Keyboard
AlphaCore		AlphaCore	TouchType or Large Keyboard
Large Keyboard*		AlphaCore	Large Keyboard
Extra Large Keyboard		Extra Large Keyboard	Unimportant

*To open the **TouchType Keyboard** or **Large Keyboard** go to any *Phrase Page* and select the "Keyboard" button at the bottom of the page.

Dwell Selection

Dwell Selection provides an alternative way to "click" in order to make selections. Rather than hitting a left click, users hover the mouse pointer over a target for a set amount of time. A shrinking red dot will appear. If the user holds the pointer within a button until the red dot disappears, the button will be selected. To avoid accidental activations there is a **Pause** button next to the Message Window that deactivates the screen. The Pause button only appears when *Dwell Selection* is turned on.

Tip: Users should keep the pointer within their last selected button until ready to make another selection. The pointer can also be moved to the *Message Window* (not selectable) between selections.

Eye tracking software comes with its own *Dwell Selection* function. When using eye tracking hardware, we recommend you deactivate the *Dwell Selection* checkbox in AlphaCore and use the *Dwell Selection* feature of the eye tracking software. Depending on the brand of eye tracking software, *Dwell Selection* may be referred to as Hover Selection or Pause Selection.

Turning On/Off Dwell Selection in AlphaCore

1. Open AlphaCore Settings → General Settings.
2. Locate the check box within General Settings labeled "Enable Dwell Selection."
3. If you wish to have the red, dwell -selection dot appear on the screens, check the box.
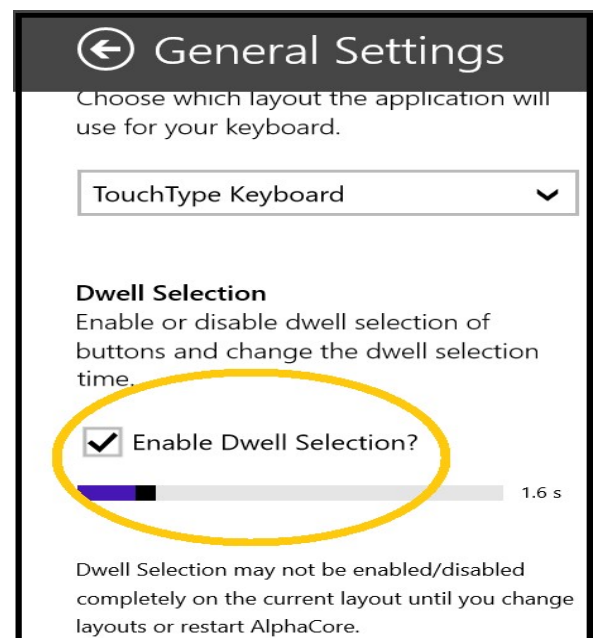
Adjust Timing of Dwell Selection

1. Open AlphaCore Settings → General Settings.
2. Locate the checkbox within General Settings labeled "Enable Dwell Selection."
3. Under that checkbox you will see a slider bar. This allows you to set the dwell time. To get started set it to 1.6 seconds.   Increase the number on the slider bar if you need more time to make a selection and decrease the number to speed up selection rate.

Message Banking: Using Voice Recordings in AlphaCore

To create a more personal communication experience, many people record their own voice or ask a friend or relative to record important messages for them (e.g., "I love you", "It's so good to see you", "Hold on!", laugher, heavy sigh, etc.).

AlphaCore will plays these recordings when you type the message into the *Message Window*. Your recording will also play if your recording's name is stored as the "Message" on a *Message Button* (see page 5) or as the "Text" of an Abbreviation Expansions (see page 7).

Message Banking is a Windows app we designed to guide you through the steps of Message Banking. The app provides suggested messages as well as the option to record your own novel messages. Recordings made with Message Banking are easy to load as a single zip folder into AlphaCore.

All "suggested messages" from the Message Banking App are already stored in *AlphaCore* on *Message Buttons*. Therefore, once you have imported your Message Banking Zip, *AlphaCore*'s Message Buttons will automatically play any suggested message that you recorded (e.g., "I love you") without any customization to the button.

Instructions for Uploading Your Voice Files If You Used the Message Banking Windows App

How to **Export** Messages from Message Banking

Message Banking's Toolbar

1. If you have made but not exported your Message Banking App recordings, open the Message Banking App.

2. Select the export button on the toolbar at the bottom of the app.   Select a location to save the zip folder.   This could be on a USB storage drive if you want to move the zip folder to a different computer/SGD.

How to **Import** Messages from Message Banking into AlphaCore

1. Do not unzip (i.e. extract) this zip folder if you will be using the messages in the AlphaCore App.

2. Open the AlphaCore App.

3. Open AlphaCore Settings → Manage Message Banking
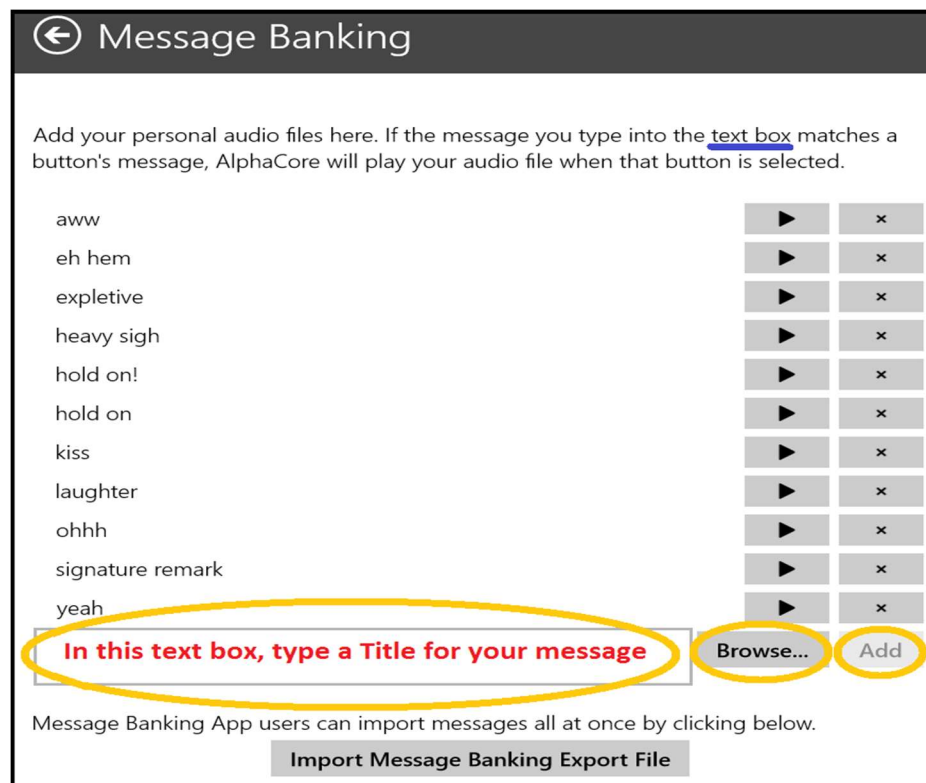
Message Banking Menu

4. Select the "IMPORT Message Banking Export.zip".
5. Browse to find the folder labeled "Message Banking Export.zip"
6. Click on this folder and select Open.
7. Close the Message Banking Menu by tapping outside of it.
8. Your recordings are installed in AlphaCore now and will show up the next time you open the "Manage Message Banking" Settings Menu. They will also be played when you select the corresponding *Message Buttons* or type the message in the Message Window.

Instructions for Uploading Your Audio Files If You Did Not Use Message Banking Windows App

If you recorded .WAV or .MP3 audio files without using the Message Banking App you can integrate them into AlphaCore by following these steps.

1. Create a new folder entitled "My Banked Messages" on the desktop of the computer, SGD, or tablet on which you are running the AlphaCore App.
2. Transfer all your message files into this new "My Banked Messages" folder (To transfer you can use a USB storage drive or Email them to the device running AlphaCore in a zipped folder).
3. Open the AlphaCore App.

4. Open AlphaCore Settings ⚙ → Manage Message Banking.
5. Within the text box that says "Message", type a Title for a message you recorded.

Message Banking

Add your personal audio files here. If the message you type into the text box matches a button's message, AlphaCore will play your audio file when that button is selected.

aww	▶	×
eh hem	▶	×
expletive	▶	×
heavy sigh	▶	×
hold on!	▶	×
hold on	▶	×
kiss	▶	×
laughter	▶	×
ohhh	▶	×
signature remark	▶	×
yeah	▶	×

In this text box, type a Title for your message   Browse...   Add

Message Banking App users can import messages all at once by clicking below.

Import Message Banking Export File

Adding Your Recordings to AlphaCore

6. Then select the "Browse…" button to locate that recording.
7. Navigate to your "My Banked Messages" folder on your Desktop and select/click on the recording.
8. Select the "**Add**" button next to your message.

Now AlphaCore will speak your recorded message when you type this text into the *Message Window* or select a *Message Button* that inserts this text into the *Message Window*.

You will want to create Message Buttons for each of your recordings so you can play them with a single selection. When you do, be certain the "message" of the button is exactly the same as the message you added as the "Title" in the text box in Message Banking Settings.

💡 **Tip:** Copy and paste the Title of a recording into the Message Button's messages for a perfect match. Recordings will not play if the button's message is not identical to the Title written in the text box in Manage Message Banking.

Updating and Backing up AlphaCore

AlphaCore will provide free updates from time to time that will not alter any of your customizations. By default, the updates should happen automatically when you are connected to the internet. If you have turned off automatic updates, don't regularly connect to the internet, or simply want to manually check for updates, here are the steps:

Steps for Updating

1. Go to the Windows Store by clicking on the Windows Store tile .
2. Locate Downloads and Updates in your Personal Settings next to the Search Window.

Personal Settings

3. Select "Check for Updates"
4. If an AlphaCore Icon appears in the Updates Available list, select it and select "Update".

Steps for Backing Up or Exporting Your Personalizations

AlphaCore has built in functions to manually import and export all user settings and personalization. This will allow you to easily move your settings between copies of AlphaCore or backup your settings. To get to the Import and Export commands:

1. Open AlphaCore Settings → General Settings.
2. Scroll to the bottom of the General settings page. There you will find a button to Import, Export and Reset AlphaCore

Sharing Messages (Email, TM, Twitter, etc.)

You can compose Emails, Texts, Twitter and Facebook messages in the AlphaCore Message Window.

To Share:

1. Compose your message in the AlphaCore Message Window.
2. Open the Windows Onscreen Keyboard so you can add an address. See Tip on page 16.

3. Select the "Save-Share Message" button located in the group of yellow Helper Buttons at the top right corner of the screen.   If you are using the Extra Large Keyboard, the "Save-Share Message" button is located on the Phrase Pages.

A drop down Menu will appear:

4. Select the Share button.
5. The Share Sidebar Menu will appear.

6. If you select any of the options (Mail, Twitter, etc.) the text from your Message Window will appear in the body of your selected correspondence.
7. Use your Windows Onscreen Keyboard to type in the contact address. Stored addresses from your Address Book should be available.

Tip: The Windows Onscreen Keyboard enables you to enter text outside of the AlphaCore App. Its size is adjustable. You will want to pin it to your Task Bar for easy access. To do this:

1. Type "Onscreen Keyboard "into your Windows Search window (Your Search window is located in your taskbar and may be represented with a magnifying glass icon or labeled "Ask me anything")
2. When it pops up, Right Click on it to open options and select Pin to taskbar.

Dwell Select Tip: If you use the Dwell Select setting in AlphaCore you will need to download and use a Dwell Select or Hover Select software to use programs outside of AlphaCore. We have tested and recommend **Dwell Clicker2**. Its Mouse Menu can be positioned on the taskbar (out of the way).

Dwell Clicker2 Mouse Menu

Fits in Taskbar (out of the way)

Tips for Different Access Methods

💡 **Touchscreen User Tip**

Eliminate pesky Windows Onscreen Keyboard Popups when using AlphaCore with Touchscreen

You may want to stop the Windows Onscreen Keyboard from automatically popping up and blocking AlphaCore each time you touch the screen. The keyboard icon will continue to be available in the taskbar bottom/right screen but will need to be selected to bring up the Windows Onscreen Keyboard.

To do this:

1. Type "Services" into your Windows Search window (Your Search window is located in your taskbar and may be represented with a magnifying glass icon or labeled "Ask me anything")
2. Press "Enter"
3. Scroll down to "Touch Keyboard and Handwriting Panel" and select it.
4. Select "Stop."

💡 **Keyboard User Tip**

Eliminate need to hit Fn key to activate F-Keys (clear, speak, alert) in AlphaCore

Some tablets and keyboards ship with the F-Keys set as a default to Media Actions rather than F-Keys (on the keyboard below these "actions" are represented as the blue icons on the F-keys). This setting requires you select two keys (Fn key + the F-Key) to perform the F-Key functions of AlphaCore like F10 to Speak and F11 to Clear. You can change the setting so F-Keys can be directly activated with only one keyboard selection.

The F-Keys in Some Tablets Are Set to Function as Multimedia Keys but Can Be Switched Back to F-Keys

How manufacturers allow you to enable a single press of F-Keys varies.

For **Surface Tablet:** Toggle Fn Lock by holding the Fn Key and pressing Caps Lock simultaneously.

For **Many Dell Tablets**: Restart your Windows computer and when it starts booting, press the F2 key to enter the BIOS settings.   Press the Advanced tab and double-click on Function key behavior. Change the setting from *Multimedia key* to *Function key*.

To learn the proper way to fix this on your tablet, use an Internet search. Type in the make and model of your tablet along with the words "how to change multimedia keys to function keys."

 Play Message Buttons and Navigate in AlphaCore from Keyboard by using Ctrl key.

There is no need to reach up to the touchscreen to activate your message buttons on navigate. When you select the Ctrl key, a number appears on every button on the screen. By selecting Ctrl and the number on the button you will activate it.

 Mouse or Mouse-Alternative User Tip

The Windows Onscreen Keyboard (included on all Windows computers) enables you to enter text outside of the AlphaCore App. Its size is adjustable. Pin it to your Task Bar for easy access. See these instructions on page 16.

💡 Dwell Selector Tip

If you use the Dwell Select setting in AlphaCore you will need to use a Dwell Select or Hover Select software to use programs outside of AlphaCore. We have tested and recommend **Dwell Clicker2**. Its Mouse Menu can be positioned on the taskbar (out of the way).

Dwell Clicker 2 Running Alongside AlphaCore to Enable Dwell Select or Mouse Commands Outside of AlphaCore