

# Using Strategies that Work: Early Childhood

STAR Autism Support

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## STAR Autism Support (SAS)

- ★ **Evidence-based** curricula and resources
- ★ **Training and support** for educational staff
- ★ Focus on school and district **capacity** to serve students with autism and other developmental disabilities
- ★ Comprehensive approach across all grade levels: **Pre-K through Post-Secondary**

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    graph LR
      A[Evidence-Based Curricula] --> B[Staff Training and Support]
      B --> C[Student Growth and Progress]
  
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## TEA Grant Goals

1. Implement innovative services that improve functional and/or academic outcomes for students with autism ages 3 - 9
2. Design effective, scalable models that can be replicated in other areas of the state.
3. Implement evidence-based strategies
4. Incorporate supports to increase fidelity and consistent implementation in the classroom
5. Provide professional development in a model that ensures sustainability

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## Agenda

Time	Agenda Item
8:30-9:30	Understanding Autism and Strategies that Work
9:30-10:15	Helping Student Understand Language
10:15-10:30	Break
10:30-11:15	Encouraging Communication
11:15-12:00	Fostering Play Skills
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-1:30	Fine Motor Skills Development
1:30-1:45	Break
1:45-2:30	Teaching Routines and Putting it All Together

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## Goals of Our Session

- ★ Learn strategies to improve your student's understanding of language and language concepts
- ★ Identify your student's level of communication and practice strategies to increase communication skills
- ★ Explore effective strategies to teach your child play and social skills
- ★ Review developmental milestones for fine motor skills development and develop tools to support students
- ★ Discuss classroom routines and learn how to create consistent classroom routines
- ★ Leave with a variety of resources and practical tools to use in your classroom immediately!

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## Autism Spectrum Disorders

**Students with autism:**


- ★ Have a range of abilities, strengths, and weaknesses
- ★ May communicate, interact, behave, and learn in ways that are different from most other children
- ★ Children with autism can learn, but may need to be taught using specific strategies

Free online courses to learn more about autism:  
<https://www.txautism.net/>

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## Students Have Strengths

- ★ Amazing abilities to persist and not give up
- ★ Attention to detail
- ★ Superior analytical skills
- ★ Extraordinary point of view
- ★ Honest and dependable



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## Why Does Our Language Matter?

### Identity-First Language

★ "In the autism community, many self-advocates and their allies prefer terminology such as 'Autistic,' 'Autistic person,' or 'Autistic individual' because we understand autism as an inherent part of an individual's identity."

<https://autisticadvocacy.org/about-asan/identity-first-language/>


### Person-First Language

★ "People-first language is used to communicate appropriately and respectfully with and about an individual with a disability. People-first language emphasizes the person first, not the disability."

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/materials/factsheets/fs-communicating-with-people.html>


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## Let's Hear It From an Expert




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## Possible Challenges in Early Childhood Classrooms




Environment Changes




Motor Skills or Motor Planning




Social Skills/Group Activities



Unusual Responses to Sensory Information



Communication Challenges



Speed of Acquisition of New Skills

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## Communication Challenges

★ Some students may have:

- ★ Slower language development
- ★ Different speech patterns or voice tone
- ★ Repetitive speech or echolalia
- ★ Difficulty following directions or understanding what others are saying
- ★ Limited vocabulary or understanding that things or people have different names (i.e. labels of objects or people)


*How can you help? Today, we will learn strategies to improve your student's understanding of language and language concepts.*

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## Play and Social Skills

★ Some students may have challenges:

- ★ Understanding what other people are thinking, perspective taking, or social situations
- ★ Difficulty paying attention to other's actions or facial expressions
- ★ Limited play skills or expanded play skills – may play with toys differently
- ★ Challenges initiating play or knowing how to play with others



*How can you help? Today, we will explore effective strategies to teach your student play and social skills.*

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## Environment Changes

- Some students may have difficulty changing activities. It may appear that they are not listening or ignoring your cues to transition.
- Sometimes changes in routines can cause confusion, which may be shown through different behaviors. Examples:
  - New classrooms
  - Substitute teachers
  - Someone sitting in a different chair

*How can you help? Today, we will discuss classroom routines and learn how to create consistent classroom routines to help your students.*

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## Skill Acquisition

- Some students may more skills in one areas and less skills in other areas.
- It is important to remember that all students with autism can learn new skills but may need to be taught in a different way.
- Students with autism are individuals and skills till likely range from one student to the next.

*How can you help? Today, we will focus on fine motor skill development. If you have a student with deficits in another area, consider breaking down the skills into small pieces and taking time to teach the student apart from the large group for short bursts of time.*

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## Unusual Responses to Sensory Information

- Some students may:
  - Avoid certain textures in things like clothing
  - Respond with behaviors to loud noises
  - Have a limited amount of preferred foods
  - Show heightened reactions to sights and sounds

*How can you help? Be aware and observe the environment. Teach students to communicate if something is not preferred and reinforce them when they tolerate new sensory experiences.*

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## Let's Hear From More Experts

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## Our Targets for Today

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## Identify Evidence-Based Practices

National Standards Report: Phase 1 and 2

- Pattern of findings suggest that treatments from the behavioral literature have the strongest research support at this time
- Identified 14 established interventions
- Comprehensive behavioral packages have the most evidence

[www.nationalautismcenter.org](http://www.nationalautismcenter.org)

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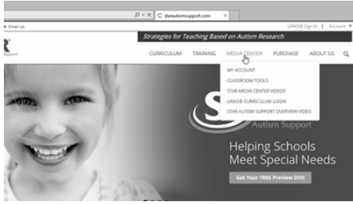
## Teachers Need Tools



- ★ Comprehensive Curricula for students with ASD
- ★ Visual Supports
- ★ Progress Monitoring
- ★ IEP Goals
- ★ Training for General Educators
- ★ Self-Assessment on Quality Program Indicators
- ★ Fidelity of Implementation Checklists
- ★ Lesson Plans
- ★ Technology
- ★ Addressing Common Core and State Standards
- ★ Transition Planning Across Grade Levels
- ★ Post-Secondary Supports

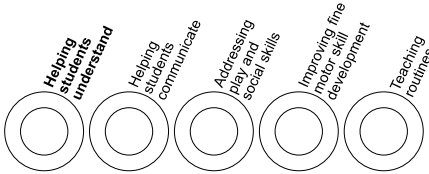
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## The STAR Media Center



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## Target 1: Helping Students Understand



- Helping students understand
- Helping students communicate
- Addressing play and social skills
- Improving fine motor skill development
- Teaching routines

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## Types of Language

- ★ Receptive Language
  - ★ Understanding what others are saying
  - ★ Children learn a large base of receptive labels and phrases before learning to communicate expressively
- ★ Expressive Language
  - ★ Communicating wants, needs, and thoughts to others
  - ★ Includes spoken language, pictures, augmentative or alternative communication or a combination

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## Challenges in Receptive Language

- ★ It may appear like your student is not listening or ignoring directions.
- ★ Some children do not yet know the names of objects in their environment, which makes following directions a challenge!
- ★ Remember that children with receptive language impairments are often not "choosing" to ignore you. Instead, they might not understand the language you are using.



*You can help! Adults must change how they talk to children to help them understand what we want them to do.*

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## Building Receptive Language Skills

★ Cognitive skills are developed through attention, memory, and thinking. Here are some important foundational skills students need to learn:


Non-Verbal Imitation	Following Verbal Directions	Understanding of Language
Watching and imitating others' actions is an essential component for children to learn new skills. Through this process children learn "what to do" and the "names of their actions."	Caregivers and teachers ask children to follow many different verbal directions every day. Some examples of verbal directions include, "Come here," "Get the phone," and "Put on your coat."	Children need to learn the names of many things, including nouns, verbs, and people. When children learn the names of items in their environment, they will be able to follow more complex directions.

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## What Is Non-Verbal Imitation?

☆ All of us learn through modeling. When someone models an action for a child, the child can then try and perform the action by imitating the person.


"Do this"  
(model putting on your shoes)




Gesture/Prompt  
(point to shoes, hand shoes to child)



Child puts on shoes and parent says, "You put on your shoes"



"Great job!"




*Help your student practice imitation in the classroom during daily routines such as hand motions during arrival, circle time, or play time.*

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## Teaching Non-verbal Imitation




Think about items you could teach using this lesson that might increase success in the arrival routine.

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## Teaching Imitation in Routines



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## Ideas to Help Your Student with Non-Verbal Imitation

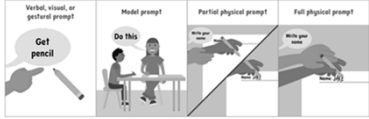
1	2	3
<p>Get your student's attention: Say "do this" and model an action or activity (clapping hands, dumping blocks from a container, opening a book, etc.)</p>	<p>Reinforce your student immediately for completing the action. Label the action and say, "good job" and give them a tangible reinforcer (toy, snack item, token).</p>	<p>At first, help your student by physically prompting, and then slowly fade out your help.</p>

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## How Can You Help? Try Prompting

- ☆ Some students may need help learning to imitate
- ☆ First, get the student's attention and say the cue one time
- ☆ Use the least intrusive prompt necessary to increase success and avoid prompt dependence
- ☆ Fade prompts as quickly as possible



Least-to-most



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## Practice: Non-Verbal Imitation

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Identify an action to teach.  
For example, clapping hands, touching head, or motions for songs like wheels on the bus.

Use the cue, "Do this" and model the action.

When your partner completes the action, say the name of the action and provide a tangible reward.

Remember: In the classroom, your student may need prompting to learn to imitate. Provide praise and rewards even when prompting is needed as the student is learning.


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## Auditory Activity: Listening to Directions

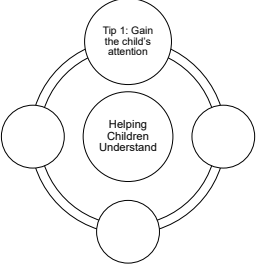
During this activity, think about:

- How did you react to this activity?
  - What did you do to stay calm?
  - How did you try to focus?
  - Did it feel successful?
- What could the teacher do differently next time to set up this activity for success (proactive strategies)?



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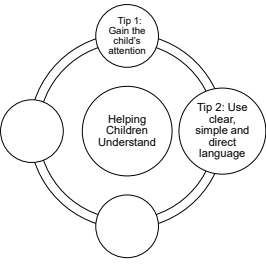
## Tip 1: Following Verbal Directions



- Before giving a command, get the student's attention. Say their name or a simple attending command like "Look at me."
- Practice getting their attention by holding a reinforcing toy or item close to your face while saying their name or say, "Look at me." When they turn their head, give them the toy and verbal praise!

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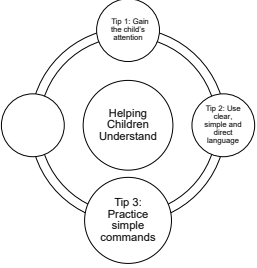
## Tip 2: Following Verbal Directions



- Tell the student "what to do" versus "what not to do"**
  - "Walk with me" versus "Stop running"
- Simplify your language**
  - Use consistent language like "stop," "wait," and "walk with me"
  - Keep in short-use only a few words at a time
  - Use only the important words
- Be direct (avoid indirect questions or statements)**
  - Do not phrase your request as a question, such as "Should we go wash our hands?"
- Say it once, then help the student understand in another way**
  - Use visual supports, gesture cues or prompting

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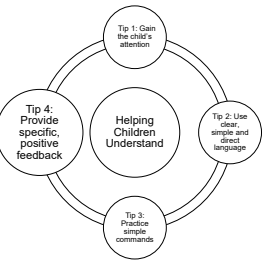
## Tip 3: Following Verbal Directions



- Start with one or two direct, simple instructions**
  - "Come here" when you are within 2 ft
  - "Get X" when the student is 2 ft away from item
  - "Put in" as point to a block next to a box
- Be repetitive – you may need to practice directions**
- Increase the complexity of the command after several correct responses**
  - "Come here" from 5 to 10 ft away
  - "Walk with me" in a variety of places
  - "Go to the table and get X"

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## Tip 4: Following Verbal Directions



- Give reinforcement after the student follows the command, even if you provided help**
- Whenever possible, use natural reinforcement by following with a preferred item or activity.**
  - If the student is thirsty, say "give me the cup" and then immediately give them water
- Be specific in your praise by labeling the specific behavior**
  - "Great job getting your shoes"
  - "Nice walking with me"
  - "Good work putting toys away"

*Giving specific feedback and reinforcement will encourage your student to follow your directions again!*

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Instead of this...	Say this...
"It is lunch time. Do you want to come sit at the table and choose something to eat?"	"Lunch time. Sit down at table."
"You need to get your backpack right now because it is time to go to school."	"Get shoes."
"Are you ready to go to the table?"	"Go to the table."
"No hitting!"	"Hands down."
"Don't throw your toys."	"Put toys in bin."
"Stop running!"	"Walk with me."
"Stop looking at that way."	"Look at me."

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### Visual Supports


Help children understand expectations:

- What am I supposed to do?
- Where should I go?
- When will I be done?
- What happens next?

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### Using Visuals – Examples

<p><b>1</b></p> <p>Get your student's attention and give a simple command, like "Put on jacket."</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p>Show a picture of a jacket.</p> 	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>At first, help your student by physically prompting, and then slowly fade out your help.</p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>Reinforce your student immediately for completing the action. Label the action and give verbal praise. For example, "Good job putting on your jacket!"</p>
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### Using Visual Strips – Examples

<p><b>1</b></p> <p>Help your students learn routines by posting visual strips. Point to each picture and label the action.</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p>At first, help your student by physically prompting, and then slowly fade out your help.</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>Reinforce your student immediately for completing the action. Label the action and give verbal praise. For example, "Good job turning on the water!"</p>
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### Using a Visual Strip - Example

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### Use Common Language

- ★ Tell students "what to do" versus "what not to do"
- ★ Use consistent words:
  - ★ "Wait"
  - ★ "Stop"
  - ★ "Walk with me"
  - ★ "Come here"
- ★ Let them know when they get it right:
  - ★ "Nice walking!"
  - ★ "Great listening!"
- ★ Be patient! Some students need practice many times before they become independent

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### Video Example: Receptive Actions on a Walk

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## Complex Receptive Language Skills

- ★ Vocabulary building
  - ★ Name objects and people as student's interact with them by labeling
  - ★ Read books, point to pictures, label the nouns and actions in the book
- ★ Following more complex verbal directions
  - ★ Try giving your student simple two-step direction (e.g., "Get your backpack and coat")
  - ★ As your student is successful, increase the complexity of the direction ("Go to the kitchen, get a cup, and get me a glass of water.")
  - ★ Practice these directions when there is minimal distractions
- ★ Understanding prepositions, descriptors, and pronouns
  - ★ Use prepositions, descriptors, and pronouns when you give your student directions to follow (e.g., "Get the red block on the shelf").

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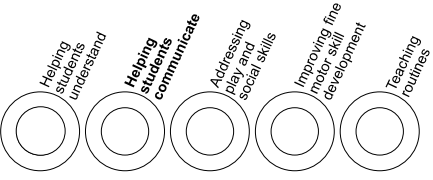
## Wrapping Up Receptive Language

- ★ It's important to increase your student's non-verbal imitation skills as a foundation for building more complex skills
- ★ Using straight-forward, simple language will help teach student to follow verbal directions
- ★ Integrating skill development into daily routines and play time is a fun way to enjoy learning together



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## Target 2: Helping Student Communicate



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## Building Communication Skills

Many preschool-aged students are building foundational skills to further develop their communication:

Receptive Language <i>Understanding Words and Language</i>	Expressive Language <i>Using Words and Language</i>	Practice <i>Using Skills in Different Settings</i>
The ability to comprehend language involves attention, listening, and processing. Some foundational skills your student is learning at school are: attention, following directions, receptive vocabulary, and understanding questions and directions.	The ability to communicate in order to convey meaning to others involves using both verbal and non-verbal strategies to express wants and needs. At school, your student may be working on speech development: using sounds to create words and sentences.	Once your student has mastered a new skill, they will be able to practice it during individual and group routines at school and home.

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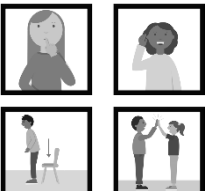
## Communication and Speech What's the Difference?

- ★ Speech
  - ★ Involves the sounds people makes to form words. Using speech or verbal language is one way that people communicate.
- ★ Echolalia
  - ★ Some students may repeat words or phrases either immediately or at a later time.
  - ★ We can help students use echolalia by teaching them that their words get them access to things in their environment.
- ★ Communication
  - ★ Communication is the act of getting others' attention, requesting items, and interacting with others.
  - ★ Communication can be both verbal and non-verbal.

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## Children Who Have Not Yet Developed Speech

- ★ Many children will develop verbal language skills but some children with autism may never develop functional verbal language.
- ★ Pictures and more complex communication systems can be used to communicate.
- ★ Research shows that these systems decrease frustration and increase opportunities for functional verbal language to develop.
- ★ If your student is working with a speech therapist, they may suggest some of these systems to be used in the classroom.




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## How Can You Help?

- Remember: communication can be very **hard** for your student!
- In order to be able to talk, the student will need to learn:
  - Receptive Language
    - Learning the names of objects, people, and concepts
  - Expressive Language
    - Understanding how to imitate words and to spontaneously use verbal language
  - Motivation
    - Learning that talking is useful, fun, and gets them things they want. This is sometimes referred to as the "confidence" to talk.



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## Teaching Expressive Language: Four Steps



<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
Identify your student's current level of language.	Motivate the student to communicate.	Help the student communicate by providing prompts or modeling.	Respond to their attempts to communicate.

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## Step 1: Identifying Current Level

Student's level	Which skills are being developed?	What are they learning?
Readiness Level	Attending, increasing gestures, increasing sounds to request (not yet imitating)	"Making gestures and sounds will help me get what I want."
Imitation	Repeating a part of a word or an entire word after an adult models the word	"Imitating the adult gets me what I want."






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## Step 1: Identifying Current Level

Student's level	Which skills are being developed?	What are they learning?
Spontaneous	Saying the word/phrase without an adult prompt or model	"I can ask for what I want."
Phrases	Using three or more words strung together to make requests	"When I use a sentence, I get what I want."
More Complex Language Skills	Using language skills to communicate in more complex ways.	Advanced language concepts including commenting, describing, complex sentences, and asking questions. Communication is fun!





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## Step 2: Motivate the Student to Communicate

- Find a time where you can work with the student in a small group or independently
- Place preferred items in places so that the child can see the items, but cannot access them (i.e., in clear containers or on a shelf that your student cannot reach)
- Playfully, block access to the toy
- Hold the toy out of reach
- Control access to the toy



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## Step 3: Help the Student Communicate

- Model the language you want the student to use
  - If you want them to say "want bubbles" then say "want bubbles" while looking at your student with the bubbles in your hand
- Remember the student's current language level and model language at a level that is appropriate for them
  - Model only one word for students working on babbling, sound pairing and spontaneous words (e.g. "bubbles", "go")
  - Use 2-3 words for students working on requesting using phrases


Example:	Teacher hold the bubbles and bubble wand.	Teacher says, "Want bubbles."	Student says, "Want bubbles."	Teacher blows the bubbles.
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## Step 4: Respond to Communication

- ★ Reinforce **good attempts**
  - ✦ Avoid forcing the student to say something better or clearer
  - ✦ After 2-3 attempts, accept an appropriate response like pointing, reaching, or looking at the item
- ★ Reinforcement should be **immediate**
  - ✦ Immediate after the student communicates, give them access to the material they requested
- ★ Reinforce by giving them the item they requested
  - ✦ When the child says "bubu" or "bubbles," blow the bubbles



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## Teaching Requesting: Readiness/Beginning Communication Skills

### Strategies for Building Readiness and Beginning Communication Skills


- ★ Reward the student for:
  - ★ Looking at you
  - ★ Looking at toys you hold in front of them
  - ★ Looking at items/foods of interest
- ★ Promote use of gestures to request, such as:
  - ★ Gesturing "up" to be picked up
  - ★ Pointing at something they want
- ★ When the student uses a sound to request, be sure to give them the item immediately
  - ★ Play with an item they want, make it look fun, and if they use a sound to request, *give them the item!* Remember: your student is successful if they make any kind of sound to request—this is a building block for learning imitation.

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## Teaching Requesting: Imitation of Sounds/Words


### Strategies for Teaching Imitation of Sounds and Words

- ★ Continue to reward the child for joint attention
- ★ Reinforce imitation of sounds or words to request. Reward your student for:
  - ★ Saying one part of the word OR
  - ★ Saying the whole word
- ★ Teach imitation during daily activities
  - ★ Gesture:
    - ✦ First teach waving "Hi" and "Bye" when meeting or saying goodbye
  - ★ Imitation:
    - ✦ When greeting someone, teach the student to imitate the word, "Hi"
    - ✦ When someone is leaving, teach the student to imitate the word, "Bye"



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## Teaching Requesting: Imitation to Request



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## Participant Practice

- ★ Participants will be divided into groups of 2-3 to practice imitation skills
- ★ Use pictures as "pretend" toys
- ★ Follow the example provided
- ★ Switch roles



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## Video Example



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## Language Practice

**Set-up/get student playing with items**

- ★ Teacher: Show student choices of toys, say, "I have car and bear," and wait
- ★ Student: Reach and imitate a single word
- ★ Student: Hold the selected picture and "play"
- ★ Teacher: Say, "My turn" and pretends to take the toy to prepare for language trial

<p><b>Cue:</b> Teacher holds up toy and says name of toy. "Car"</p>	<p><b>Response:</b> Student imitates single word. "Car"</p>	<p><b>Consequence:</b> Teacher pretends to give car to student. Student gets to play with the toy.</p>	<p><b>Pause:</b> Observe and prepare for the next trial.</p>
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**\*\*Switch roles\*\***

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## Teaching Requesting via Spontaneous Language Words

- ★ Reinforce your student for saying a word without an adult prompt or model
- ★ Encourage attempts to use words spontaneously (on their own without adult help)
- ★ Provide an imitative prompt for the word 2 or 3 times, and then see if the child will spontaneously say the word on the next attempt
  - ★ First, model saying "car" for 3 turns. On the 4th turn, hold the car in front of the child, but do not provide the verbal prompt. See if the child will say "car" spontaneously



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## Encouraging Spontaneous Words




**Expressive Language**  
Initial Requesting

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## Teaching Requesting Using Phrases


- ★ Reinforce the student for using more than one word to request
- ★ The goal is for the student to say three or more words strung together to make requests
  - ★ They could use the phrase: "I want X."
  - ★ Start by teaching your student to say two words: "Want X"
  - ★ Once "Want X" is stable, teach the child to say the three-word phrase, "I want X"



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## Teaching Phrases to Request




**Expressive Language**  
Phrases for Requests

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## Encouraging More Complex Language

- ★ Encourage your student to:
  - ★ Use other ways to request, such as:
    - ★ "May I have X?"
    - ★ "My turn."
    - ★ "Can I use the X."
  - ★ Describe their play actions
    - ★ "I am building a tower."
  - ★ Comment to others during play
    - ★ "Wow, this is fun!"
    - ★ "You built a tower."
  - ★ Begin to have conversational exchanges
    - ★ "What are you doing?"
    - ★ "Do you want to play with me?"



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## Encouraging More Complex Language



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## Create Opportunities During Snack

- ✦ Provide a preferred food item wrapped or in a closed clear container:
  - Model the word, "Open" and pause.
  - When the student imitates a part of the word or the whole word ("Open"), assist them to open the container or unwrap the food
- ✦ Hold up the food item your student wants and say the name of the food:
  - When they imitate a part of the word or the whole word, give them access to the food item
  - If they are not able to imitate a sound or the word, ask them to "look at you" or say, "Hands down" and give them the food item
- ✦ If your student says a sound or the whole word, repeat the name of the food to help them learn the name and to teach correct articulation



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## Video Example: Snack



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## Wrapping Up Expressive Language

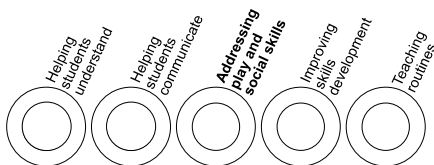
- ✦ Recognize the difference between speech and communication
- ✦ Identify options for communication if your student has not yet developed speech
- ✦ Learn and practice strategies to increase your communication skills including:
  - Readiness skills
  - Imitation skills
  - Spontaneous language
  - Phrases
  - Complex language skills



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## Target 3: Addressing Play and Social Skills



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## Play and Social Skills Can Be Hard to Master

### Some children may have . . .

- ✦ Difficulty understanding what others are thinking.
- ✦ Challenges paying attention to others, making eye contact, or engaging socially, which can be sometimes be misinterpreted as offensive behavior.
- ✦ Limited imitation skills in games, play, or social routines.
- ✦ Prefer to play away from groups or join in activities with others




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## Teaching Strategies for Play Skills

1. Direct Teaching
  - ✦ Use strategies to specifically teach readiness skills for play
2. Create Play Routines
  - ✦ Break down play activities into smaller steps by using activity scripts
3. Enlist Other Children/Peers
  - ✦ Train peers to help teach and model play skills



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## Teaching Strategies for Play Skills



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## Direct Teaching Strategy

Motivation	Create Opportunities	Teach	Positive Reinforcement
Be a careful observer of the child's interests. Pinpoint the games and activities that the child finds fun. Consider attention span: Activities that keep the child interested for only a few minutes are a great place to start.	Make yourself part of your student's play; this will create naturalistic teaching opportunities.	Use different strategies to teach play.	Provide reinforcement and feedback when your student engages in appropriate play.

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## Step 1: Motivation

- ✦ Find a time where you can work with the student in a small group or independently
- ✦ Place preferred items in places so that the child can see the items, but cannot access them (i.e., in clear containers or on a shelf that your student cannot reach)
- ✦ Observe your student during free play and identify what toys the gravitate towards.
- ✦ Many children enjoy cause and effect toys, bubbles, sensory items (sand, water, clay, etc.).




**Hint: Use the same toy box/bin to teach language and play! Teach these skills simultaneously or alternate targets each day.**

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## Step 2: Create Opportunities

1. Allow the child to choose the activity or offer toy and activity choices that:
  - ✦ Have multiple parts/pieces (i.e. blowing bubbles requires both the bubble wand and the bubble liquid to work)
  - ✦ Require adult assistance (i.e. difficult to turn on, need help putting together)
2. Playfully block the child's play to get their attention and motivate them to learn new ways to play.
  - ✦ Bubbles: You hold onto the bubble wand with a closed bubble container.
  - ✦ Cause and effect: Playfully block the switch.
  - ✦ A train set: Give a few pieces of the track and withhold additional pieces.
3. Be animated and excited about the activity!



**Find a balance: Interrupt your student's play just enough to motivate them to respond, but not so much that they lose interest. This contributes to what is called "shared control."**

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## Step 3: Teach

**Use strategies to teach the child "what to do"**


- ✦ **Wait:** Give time for the child to respond (a few seconds), but not too much time so they lose attention
- ✦ **Verbal Direction:** Tell them what "to do" using a one or two-step command: Limit language and focus on important words
- ✦ **Gestures:** Point or gesture to call the child's attention to the activity/toy
- ✦ **Expressions:** Use facial expressions or body language to communicate what's next
- ✦ **Model:** Say, "Do this" and what you want the child to do
- ✦ **Prompt:** Provide full or partial physical help – use the same prompting we learned earlier!

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## Step 4: Positive Reinforcement

Provide feedback by immediately giving access to the motivator:

- ★ Reinforce good attempts
- ★ Reinforce small steps
- ★ Reinforce even when you need to help



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## Identify Readiness Skills to Teach


- Attention**
  - ★ Skills that will help your student maintain attention:
    - Eye contact, waiting, sitting, and responding to their name
- Joint Attention**
  - ★ Sharing an activity or toy with another person: Joint attention requires the child to focus on both the play partner and the toy or activity at the same time
    - Skills needed include looking at the same object, pointing to or sharing an object of interest as well as shifting their gaze between the object and a play partner
- Turn-Taking**
  - ★ Setting the stage for play with others
- Imitating Actions of Others**
  - ★ Skills that will open the door to different types of play
- Following Directions**
  - ★ Building skills for play and beyond

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## Teaching Joint Attention: Example


**Motivation:**

Cheyenne loves the light up spinner. Her teacher turns it on and plays with it. Cheyenne reaches for it.




**Create an Opportunity:**

The teacher says, "Wow! Look at how fast it spins!" while looking excitedly at the spinner.



**Teach/Reinforce:**


Cheyenne looks at the spinner and then the teacher's face. The teacher gives her access to the spinner.



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## Teaching Joint Attention in Routines


- ★ Place preferred items near the student (but not in direct view). Say, "Look" while pointing at the item.
- ★ Once the child looks at the item, reward them for following your gesture (pointing) by giving them access to the item.
- ★ Find highly preferred items with multiple parts and pieces but provide only part of the item.
  - ★ **Example:** Give the student Play-Doh® and place the "tools" (rolling pin, cookie cutters) in a closed container nearby.
  - ★ Say, "Look!" and point at the container.
  - ★ When the child looks, play together with the Play-Doh® and tools!



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## Teaching Joint Attention in Routines

- ★ Use exaggerated facial expressions and exclamations (i.e. "Wow, it's an airplane!") to bring attention to your face and to encourage your student to shift their gaze between preferred items and your face.
- ★ Prompt the child to share their experiences with others.
  - ★ **Example:** During art, physically prompt the child to share their picture with peer by modeling or giving a simple direction.
  - ★ At first, the child may need additional reinforcement (i.e. a small treat or preferred item) while you model a phrase for the peer.
  - ★ Say something like, "Wow! That is cool!"
  - ★ Over time, fade the additional reinforcement and the child will be reinforced by the feedback from peers.



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## Teaching Imitation

Step	Task
1	Choose a skill you want your student to do (i.e. building with blocks, driving a toy car, playing a game).
2	Gain the child's attention by saying "look at me" or hold a reinforcing item.
3	Say "do this" or "watch me" and model the skill you want the child to perform.
4	Wait for the child to imitate your action.
5	If after a couple of tries the child does not imitate, provide a prompt.
6	After the child responds, even with your help, provide reinforcement/access to the item.

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## Teaching Play Commands

- Once the student can imitate your actions with a variety of toys, teach them to follow simple play commands.
- When the student is playing, get their attention
- Give a simple command
- If after a couple of tries the child does not follow the command, provide a model or a physical prompt
- Examples of play commands include:
  - "Put the block on top"
  - "Drive the car"
  - "Feed the baby"




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## Teaching One-Step Directions: Real-World Example


**Motivation:**

Raul spends much of his time stacking blocks and knocking the blocks over.



**Create an Opportunity:**

Raul's teacher builds a tower with the blocks. He says, "Put the block on top."




**Teach/Reinforce:**

Raul picks up a block and throws it. The teacher gets a new block and physically helps him stack the block on the tower. Once Raul puts the block on top, his teacher says, "Let's knock the tower over." After it's knocked over, he repeats the sequence, providing less and less direction over time.


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## Teaching Turn-Taking and Sharing

- Hold out your hand and say, "My Turn." Start with a toy the child has less interest in.
- At first, make your turn very short. Gradually lengthen your time with the item and add in items of more interest.
- After the child is able to give up the toy or item consistently, have other staff members use the same words so the child has practice turn-taking.
- Use this technique with items. For example, when cleaning up markers at group time or handing over instruments at circle time.









You can use a picture of "My Turn" to help your student understand!



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## Create Play Routines

Teach your student to play functionally with toys/games using an activity script based on their level (pictures or words). Splitting up play sequences into easy-to-follow steps will help your student build foundational play skills.





Find Mr. Potato Head	Add eyes	Add ears	Add nose	Add mouth	Add arms
					

Mr. Potato Head Sequence Strip © STMA Autism Support 2019 Parent Training Resources

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## Create Play Routines


Teach the student to play with other children using an activity script based on their level (pictures or words). Simulating play with peers is a fun way to practice play skills and build confidence.

Choose game	Get equipment	Go to game	Play game
			

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## Cooperative Play


- Once readiness skills are mastered, students will be more likely to play with other children in groups.
- Play alongside the child and one or two other children. Use modeling (imitation), offer directions to follow, and utilize play activity scripts to increase success.
- Play games and initiate activities that require more people to play (i.e. tag, catch, or simple board games).
- Slowly fade yourself out of the play activity as the child becomes more confident.
- Remember: playing with other children, sharing, and turn-taking can be challenging for your student. Reinforce small steps!



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## Enlist the Help of Peers


- ★ Teach peers a few simple strategies:
  - ★ How to get the child's attention before talking to them
  - ★ How to use visuals/gestures to help the child understand
  - ★ How to simplify the activity/game to help the child participate
- ★ Use video modeling
  - ★ Film other children playing with a toy/game appropriately. Show the student the video, using it as an example for appropriate play.



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## Expand Your Student's Play


- ★ Foster more complex skills as your student practices playing:
  - ★ Initiating play with others
  - ★ Accepting "No" from peers and adults
  - ★ Winning and losing
- ★ Teach routines for winning and losing so your student knows what to do in each scenario:
  - ★ When they win: shake hands or high five the other players and say, "Good game"
  - ★ When they lose: say, "Maybe next time" and shake hands or high five the other players
  - ★ Provide a tangible reward when your student loses and follows this routine



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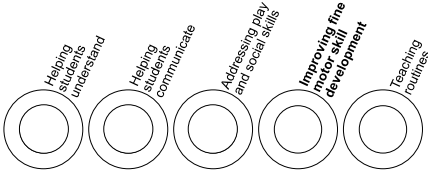
## Wrapping Up Play and Social Skills

- ★ It's important to remember that learning play and social skills can be challenging
- ★ There are strategies you can use to build these skills.
- ★ Practicing direct teaching, creating individual routines for games and activities, and using reinforcement can help your student develop play and social skills.



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## Target 4: Improving Fine Motor Skill Development



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## What Are Fine Motor Skills?

- ★ Fine motor skills are defined as the ability to make movements with the small muscles in our hands, wrists, and fingers.

**Why are fine motor skills important?**

- ★ These skills are important for everyday activities, as well as play and leisure.

**Fine Motor Skill Development**

- ★ Fine motor skills develop in a logical sequence.
- ★ Developmental milestones are observed during childhood.
- ★ This session will focus on fine motor development in early childhood classrooms.

**Activities Requiring Fine Motor Skills:**

- ★ Zipping a coat
- ★ Eating with utensils
- ★ Picking up a crayon or marker
- ★ Buttoning clothes
- ★ Cutting
- ★ Pasting
- ★ Writing

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## Age Ranges

- ★ **2-3 Years:** Within this age range, your student should be able to:
  - ★ String large beads
  - ★ Hold a crayon with thumb and finger
  - ★ Complete simple actions with clay (e.g. roll, squeeze, pound)
  - ★ Pick up scissors and make the snipping motion
  - ★ Eat independently
- ★ **3-4 Years:** Within this age range, your student student be able to:
  - ★ Copy simple shapes
  - ★ Cut with paper
  - ★ Use their non-dominant hand to hold paper in place
- ★ **4-5 Years:** Within this age range, your student should be able to:
  - ★ Write their name
  - ★ Cut continuously
  - ★ Dress/undress independently

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## Age Ranges

- ★ **5-6 Years:** Within this age range, your student should be able to:
  - ★ Use appropriate three-fingered grasp of writing utensils
  - ★ Color within the lines
  - ★ Paste/glue appropriately
  - ★ Draw basic pictures
- ★ **6-7 Years:** Within this age range, your student should be able to:
  - ★ Tie their shoelaces
  - ★ Show endurance for writing
  - ★ Write consistently on the line

## School-Based Fine Motor Activities

- ★ Some common activities in early childhood and primary classrooms are:
  - ★ Scribbling
  - ★ Coloring
  - ★ Tracing
  - ★ Cutting/pasting



## Steps for Teaching Fine Motor Skills

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
Say "do this" and model the skill for your student	Encourage your student to imitate your action	Assist the child with the skill, if needed	Provide reinforcement

## Learning to Scribble/Mark on Paper

- ★ Model putting the crayon to paper. Make a simple mark. Assist your student to make a mark. Provide a reinforcer.
- ★ As your student is able to make a simple mark, begin to model scribbling for 3-5 seconds. Reinforce your student's scribbling, even if prompted.
- ★ Continue until your student can scribble for at least 10 seconds.



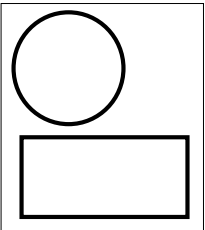
## Adaptations

- ★ Bigger crayons or writing utensils can be helpful to teach the task of picking up the crayon and scribbling.
- ★ If you are specifically targeting proper grasp, smaller (or broken) crayons promote a correct grasp by forcing students to use their thumb and index finger to grasp the crayon.




## Learning to Color Within Lines

- ★ Once your student is able to scribble for at least 10 seconds, begin to teach attention to task (e.g. coloring within the lines).
- ★ To do this, give your student a simple shape to begin coloring, and increase the shape's border width for a visual cue. For example, if you are coloring a square, take a black marker and outline the square to make the border wider and easier to see.
- ★ Model coloring with the lines.
- ★ Give your student the crayon and assist them to color within the lines if needed. Provide a reinforcer.



## Learning Scissor Use

- First, teach correct handling of scissors.
- Model picking up the scissors with an appropriate grip.
- Assist your student to hold the scissors and provide reinforcement.




- Next, model the snipping motion with the scissors, without bringing the scissors to paper.
- Assist your student to make a snipping motion and provide reinforcement.
- Next, model making a simple cut with paper and encourage your student to imitate your action.
- Once your student can make simple cuts, proceed to modeling continuous cutting.
- Encourage imitation, provide reinforcement, and once they are successful with this skill, proceed to modeling cutting a simple shape.

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## Pasting and Other School-Based Tasks

- Teach pasting the same way that you taught coloring and cutting. Model, encourage imitation, assist if needed, and provide reinforcement.
- With modeling, error correction, and consistent practice, your student can learn to independently complete a variety of school-based fine motor tasks!



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## Leveled Fine Motor Activities

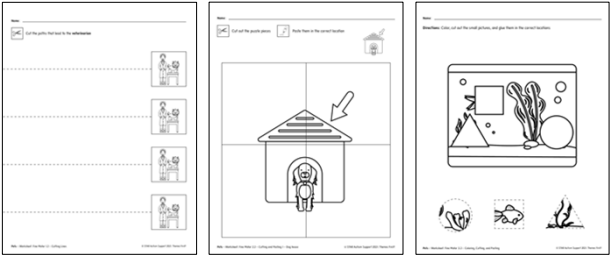


LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Coloring Pictures</li> <li>1.2 Cutting Lines</li> <li>1.3 Pom-Pom Matching</li> <li>1.4 Stamping Letters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.1 Connecting Dots 1</li> <li>2.2 Cutting and Pasting 1</li> <li>2.3 Lacing</li> <li>2.4 Tracing and Writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3.1 Connecting Dots 2</li> <li>3.2 Coloring, Cutting, and Pasting</li> <li>3.3 Alphabet Clay Mats</li> <li>3.4 Copying and Writing</li> </ul>

New thematic activities released each month!

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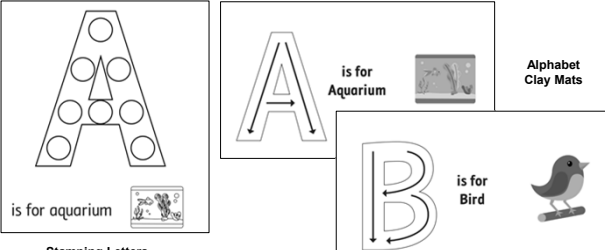
## Leveled Cutting and Pasting Activities



Level 1      Level 2      Level 3

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## Motivating and Engaging Materials




Stamping Letters

Alphabet Clay Mats

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## Teaching Fine Motor Through Play


- Examples of toys that promote fine motor development:
  - Picking up small items and placing in a container
  - Simple puzzles
  - Sorting tasks
  - Stringing beads
  - Stacking blocks
  - Using stickers
  - Gluing cotton balls or pom poms
  - Using bingo dauber or ink stamps
  - Playing with clay, putty, or Play-Doh®



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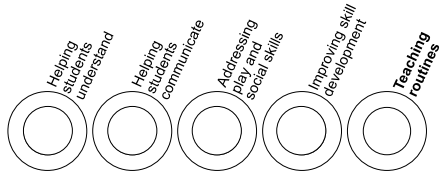
## Wrapping Up Fine Motor Skills

- ★ Fine motor skills develop in a logical sequence and are important in children's ability to perform every-day functional tasks
- ★ Breaking down fine motor tasks down into small steps, teaching the step, and reinforcing success will help your student succeed
- ★ Use play as a way to teach important fine motor skills – keep it fun and motivating!



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## Target 5: Teaching Routines



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## Common Routine Questions


- What is a routine?**
  - Predictable activities that have a chain of behaviors and a functional outcome
  - Common examples: bathroom, washing hands, eating a meal, bedtime
- Why do some children struggle with routines?**
  - The unique learning needs of children with ASD and other developmental delays make it difficult for them to develop the skills needed for a routine
  - It is common for children to have difficulty with changes in routines
- How can teaching routines help?**
  - Teaching children common, daily routines can help them develop independence
  - When children understand a routine and know what to expect, they are often excellent rule followers

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## Why Are Routines Important?

**Routines...**

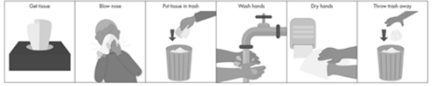
- ★ Provide structure and predictability to the day
- ★ Tell children "what to do"
- ★ Help children understand adult expectations
- ★ Teach important self-care skills needed for independence throughout their life



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## What Is Considered a Routine?


- ★ Routines are the activities your child does throughout the day such as:
  - ★ Arriving at school
  - ★ Using the restroom
  - ★ Transitioning
  - ★ Playing with a peer
  - ★ Occupying free time
  - ★ Recess
  - ★ Washing hands
  - ★ Circle time
  - ★ Completing a simple art activity
- ★ All routines have a series of steps that occur in a sequence
- ★ These steps identify the behaviors you want your student to perform
- ★ Once you've identified these behaviors, you can teach the skills needed to perform routines successfully!
- ★ For example, the steps of a blowing your nose routine might be...



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## Breakout Discussion

- ★ Discuss your daily classroom routines.
- ★ Identify one routine that a specific student needs the most support to complete.
  - ★ When does someone need to assist the student the entire time? Or most of the time?
  - ★ What routine does the student exhibit behaviors that can be perceived as challenging?
  - ★ What routine does the student not participate in yet?



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## Using Routines to Address Behavior

Routines can teach replacement behaviors to reduce challenging behaviors.  
 Sam has a hard time transitioning from free-play to circle time.


- ★ **Antecedent (the trigger)**
  - Teacher says, "Clean-up. It's time for circle" and most of the peers begin to clean-up.
- ★ **Behavior**
  - Sam continues playing and does not start cleaning up his toys.
- ★ **Consequence (event maintaining the behavior)**
  - Previously, Sam cried and threw himself on the floor when the teacher helped him clean-up. This time, the teacher let Sam continue to play while the other students went to circle time.

What routine does Sam need to learn?

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## How Can Visual Schedules Help?


- ★ Focus on relevant information
- ★ Understand what is expected
  - ★ Where do I go?
  - ★ What do I do when I get there?
  - ★ When is it over?
  - ★ What do I do next?
- ★ Decrease anxiety
- ★ Reduce challenging behavior
- ★ Increase independence



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## Set-Up a Transition Routine

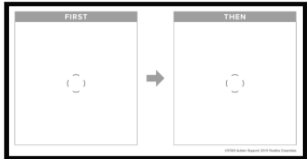
1. Choose schedule icons
2. Place schedules in consistent location
3. Identify schedules with names and pictures
4. Create "Check schedule" cues
5. Label areas in each location and create docking stations
6. Choose a timer



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## First, Then

- ★ In addition to a visual schedule, some students will need specific supports to complete undesired tasks
- ★ **First**
  - ★ The desired behavior – What you want the student "to do"
- ★ **Then**
  - ★ A reinforcer – Can include a tangible reward or a reinforcing event



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## Routine Example: Transition



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## Changes in Transition Schedule

- ★ Have a daily schedule posted. Highlight changes from typical routine.
- ★ Discuss or create a "story" about unexpected events before they occur to help children prepare and know what they can do to.
- ★ Provide visual and/or verbal warnings prior to transitions, loud noises, bright lights, etc.
- ★ Practice new or avoided tasks in a smaller group.



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### Additional Routine Supports

Arrival and Transition

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### Additional Routine Supports

Standing in Line and Standing Six Feet Apart

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### Recess Routine

Add Visual Supports

Choice Sequence

Choice Options

Student Makes Choices

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### Recess Routine

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### The STAR Media Center Routine Essentials

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### Wrapping Up

- ✧ Consistent daily routines can tell your child "what to do" and reduce challenging behavior
- ✧ Breaking down routines into simple steps makes these sequences more manageable for children
- ✧ Routines create teachable moments to for children to learn important communication skills
- ✧ When teaching steps of a routine, use prompting and positive feedback for success

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## Putting It All Together

Helping students understand

Helping students communicate

Addressing play and social skills

Improving fine motor skill development

Teaching routines

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## Reminders

- ★ Students with autism have strengths! All students are unique and can learn but will learn differently!
- ★ When using these strategies, it is important to use them consistently and with all staff members who interact with the child.
- ★ Teaching new behaviors often requires us to break down behaviors into small steps, teach the new behavior, and reinforce the behavior so that it continues to happen!
- ★ We are thankful to have great educators like you who want to learn more about how to teach a variety of students!

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## Let's Keep in Touch...

- ★ Follow us for classroom ideas, articles or news in our field, workshop and product announcements!
- ★ Have you listened to our podcast, Autism Annex? Tune into for monthly episodes for stories, insights, and resources for families, teachers, caregivers, and autistic people. Scan to listen to our first episode, Inside STAR Autism Support!

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## Thank you for joining!

For more information: [www.starautismsupport.com](http://www.starautismsupport.com)

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