

# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behavior

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# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Table of Contents

### Overview

Frequently Asked Questions.....	1-2
Tips for Changing Behavior .....	3
Using Extinction Effectively .....	4
Using Reinforcement Effectively.....	5-6

### Behaviors

Self-Stimulatory Behavior .....	7-8
Attention, Attending, and Eye Contact.....	9-11
Flapping.....	12-13
Jumping.....	14-15
Out of Seat .....	16-17
Self-Talking.....	18-19

# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Can a child's challenging behavior go away or lessen over time?

- Yes, but reducing challenging behavior takes time and consistency. There is no “quick fix” or magic way to immediately eliminate challenging behavior. By practicing the ABCs of behavior, adults can learn to increase appropriate behavior and decrease challenging behavior.
- The most effective way to address behavior challenges is for adults to change their behavior. Adults must teach the child what to do instead, a replacement behavior. The replacement behavior serves the same function as the challenging behavior.

### 2. What is behavior?

- Behavior is anything the child says or does. Behavior includes both desired actions and undesired actions.
- Desired behavior examples include walking on the sidewalk, saying “I want cookie,” raising hand, or taking turns.
- Challenging behavior examples include hitting, kicking, yelling, running, or laying on ground.

### 3. What are some important basic behavior terms and vocabulary I should know?

- **Antecedent:** What happens immediately before the behavior occurs.
- **Behavior:** Anything the child says or does.
- **Consequence:** What happens immediately after or in response to the behavior. Common types of consequences are reinforcement, extinction, and punishment.
- **Function:** The “purpose” or reason for a behavior. There are four common functions of behavior:
  - **Attention:** Behavior results in gaining access to awareness. Example: A child wants their teacher to come over to them, so they cry in order to get their teacher’s attention.
  - **Tangible:** Behavior results in getting access to toys/activities. Example: A child wants their favorite toy car, so they reach with their hands toward the toy bin.
  - **Escape:** Behavior results in getting out of non-preferred tasks or activities. Example: A child does not want to go in the sensory room, so he lays down in the hallway and kicks his feet. His teacher takes him back to the classroom, which allowed him to escape the non-preferred task (sensory room).
  - **Automatic:** Behavior results in pleasure and reinforcement. Behaviors with this function are typically categorized as “sensory” behaviors. Example: A child likes how it feels to rock his head from side to side. The child does this in all environments, including when playing with others and when alone.
- **Replacement Behavior:** A socially appropriate behavior that is taught to a child to replace a current challenging behavior. The replacement behavior serves the same function as the challenging behavior.

### 4. Why do children with autism and developmental delays have challenging behavior?

- Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and developmental delays typically have challenging behavior because they are trying to communicate something, and communication is difficult. Children do not always know how to tell others what they want or need.
- Children do not always understand verbal directions and verbal information can be confusing (“I don’t understand what you are asking me to do.”)
- It is hard for children to pay attention and shift their focus of attention when asked (“I don’t want to leave the park and go to the next activity.”)
- Sensory difficulties can have a large impact on behavior. (“Sensitivity to sounds, lights and other stimuli can affect the way I react.”)

# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Frequently Asked Questions

### 5. How do I appropriately define a challenging behavior?

- A behavioral definition should be measurable and observable. It should be specific and not include an opinion of the child or behavior.
- **Measurable:** This means to describe the behavior in a clear and data-driven way.
  - For example, “During circle, the child jumps out of his chair and runs around the room 4-6 times,” instead of, “The child has emotional problems.”
  - For example, “The child screams loudly one time whenever a non-preferred adult approaches him,” instead of, “The child acts crazy to adults.”
- **Observable:** This means a person can see what the behavior looks like. Behaviors can be defined in an observable way by describing what they look like.
  - For example, “The child cries when sitting in the chair at DT time” is better than, “The child is sad in DT”
  - For example, “The child jumps up and runs to their schedule during transition” is better than, “The child is too energetic when transitioning.”

### 6. Why should I focus on a child’s strengths when addressing challenging behavior?

- It is not enough to identify a child’s problems. Recognizing and teaching to a child’s strengths will help decrease challenging behavior.
- Many children with autism and developmental delays can follow and enjoy a structured routine. Providing children with consistent predictable routines will decrease challenging behavior. For children who are too reliant on predictability and may be too rigid, structure and routine can teach them to be more flexible!
- Many children with autism have a good memory which can help with setting up rules that are incompatible with challenging behaviors.

### 7. How can I change a child’s challenging behavior?

- Work as a team with other adults interacting with the child. All adults working with the child should address the behavior in the same way. Response consistency leads to long-term behavior change.
- This packet will provide additional information for using effective strategies to address challenging behavior.

# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Tips for Changing Behavior

### Decreasing Challenging Behavior

#### Stay structured and predictable

- Environmental structure and staff consistency adds predictability which allows the child to focus on communicating, instead of their environment.
- Maintain a consistent classroom schedule so the child knows what to expect, what's next, and when they get a reinforcing activity.
- Pair visual supports with common language (hands down, sit down, walk with me) as often as possible.

#### Respond to challenging behavior effectively and consistently

- Maintain a neutral facial expression, body language, and voice tone when responding to challenging behaviors.
- Create opportunities for small, positive steps toward replacement behaviors, and reinforce them frequently.
- Be consistent. All teachers working with the child should respond to the challenging behavior in the same way!

#### Avoid reinforcing the challenging behavior

- Create and stick to a plan for responding to behavior.
- Avoid “in the moment” changes.
- When a challenging behavior occurs, tell the child what to do, instead of what not to do.
- Limit teacher attention to the challenging behavior.

#### Identify a replacement behavior

- When a child has a challenging behavior, think, “What do I want this child to do instead?”
- Maintain realistic expectations for the child. The replacement behavior can and should be simple.
- Define the replacement behavior—what exactly does it look like?
  - “Child puts hands in lap,” instead of, “child doesn’t pinch”
  - “Child stands up,” instead of, “child checks schedule”

#### Be prepared to deal with escalation

- Have a plan that outlines how everyone will respond when a challenging behavior occurs. When starting a behavior intervention, the frequency, intensity or duration of a behavior may increase at first, because the child is learning a new skill. Remember:
  - Remain calm
  - Prepare staff to consistently respond to the behavior
  - Document what the changes look like
  - Prepare the environment to minimize extra attention, including remove items that may be thrown when the escalation started
  - Response consistency leads to long-term behavior change

### Increasing Desired Behavior

#### Use visuals, environmental supports, and prompting effectively

- Pair your verbal direction with a visual. Fade verbal direction over time.
- Whenever possible, use nonverbal prompts to guide the child. Fade prompting over time by using a most-to-least prompting system to guide the child to exhibit the replacement behavior.

#### Tell children what to do correctly

- Be clear and concise. Use as few words as possible when telling children what to do.
  - “Stand up,” instead of, “You need to get off the floor”
  - “Hands down,” instead of, “stop hitting and put your hands in your lap”
- Pair verbal direction of what to do with a visual, whenever possible.

#### Teach skills using the curriculum

- Keep the lesson assessment updated.
- Identify and teach lessons that teach identified replacement behaviors.
- Embed generalization opportunities for replacement behaviors into all routines. Use the Routine Planning Form to plan for these practice opportunities.

#### Teach children skills that directly compete with challenging behavior

- Provide reinforcement for skills children engage in that are incompatible with or cannot occur simultaneously with their inappropriate behavior.
  - For example, if a child engages in hand flapping, teach them skills such as creating play dough objects during free time or holding a book or pencil during academic work time

#### Use effective reinforcement

- Pair tangible reinforcement with specific, verbal praise that tells the child exactly what they did right.
  - “Good job putting hands down” or “nice work walking to schedule”
- Always reinforce immediately following a replacement behavior. Provide reinforcement for desired behaviors throughout all activities in the day.
- Learn more about using reinforcement effectively on the “Reinforcement Tips” page.

# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Using Extinction Effectively

### General Information

Extinction can be a very challenging but effective intervention to implement. To fully understand and implement extinction procedures, read and review the principles of reinforcement in the reinforcement information sheets before starting any extinction procedures. Key understandings of using extinction include:

- Extinction is withholding reinforcement from the child.
- In order to implement extinction effectively, the adult must know what is reinforcing the child's challenging behavior.
- Extinction is most effective when it is implemented as a plan instead of on-the-fly, and all adults involved with the intervention should be on the same page and stay consistent.
- Extinction is not appropriate when safety is a concern. For example, if a child runs toward traffic in order to gain attention from an adult, or if they are self-injuring, ignoring these behaviors is not appropriate.

When using extinction, it is likely that the target challenging behavior will likely get worse (sometimes much worse) before it gets better. This is called an extinction burst and happens most often immediately following the introduction of the extinction procedure. Over time, the child might try the previously reinforced behavior(s) occasionally to see if they might work again. However, with careful planning and implementation with fidelity, extinction can be effective over time.

### Using Extinction Effectively

When the Function of Behavior is Attention	When the Function of Behavior is Task Avoidance
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ignoring the child is effective when the child is seeking attention. When using ignoring as an extinction procedure, remember to always pay attention to when the child exhibits the appropriate replacement behavior. For example, if a child yells out or talks out of turn in order to gain the teacher's attention, it can be ignored but when the child exhibits the appropriate replacement behaviors, such as raising hand, being quiet, or waiting to talk immediately reinforce!</li><li>2. When ignoring behaviors, be very aware of your own physical behavior. Remember, the adult's body language and eye contact or proximity to the child can inadvertently provide attention to the challenging behavior. If possible, limit eye contact, facial expressions, and obvious body language whenever possible.</li><li>3. If safety is not a concern, it is okay to walk away from a challenging behavior if you think your presence is reinforcing that behavior. For example, if your daughter is screaming and crying on the couch because you turned the TV off, it is okay to walk away and used planned ignoring until she is calm.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. At times it is important to ignore the challenging behavior but continue to maintain task expectation of the child. For example, if a child is laying on the floor to avoid completing a task, don't provide attention for laying on the floor (focusing on the behavior), but do tell the child "color the picture " (focusing on what the child should be doing).</li><li>2. Remember to reinforce the child for small steps moving towards engaging in appropriate behavior.</li><li>3. Do not verbally respond to challenging behavior. For example, don't say, "Stop hitting me," or, "You don't get your prize until you do your work," when a child is hitting to escape a task.</li></ol>
<p><b>Real-world example:</b></p> <p>Alan screams when a Peppa Pig song is played because in the past, when he screamed, the teacher turned the song off. Now, the teacher ignores the screaming behavior and over time he stops screaming during Peppa Pig songs. For the first several days, when the teacher begins ignoring Alan's screams (and does not turn off the song), he screams louder and longer. The teacher continues ignoring the screaming and gradually he screams less and less. Overtime Alan learns that screaming will not result in the song being turned off.</p>	<p><b>Real-world example:</b></p> <p>During a DT session, a teacher places a cup, bowl and spoon in front of Sara. Sara immediately throws the items on the floor. The teacher quickly places another red bowl in front of Sara and simultaneously says "hands down" (holding the red bowl out of reach of the child) and reinforces Sara for hands down. This provides attention to the desired behavior (hands down) while simultaneously ignoring the challenging behavior (throwing). Over time, Sara immediately complies when the teacher says, "hands down," and the teacher gradually places all three items in front of Sara and Sara learns that throwing will not get her out of the task.</p>

# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Using Reinforcement Effectively



### Make it Powerful

#### Reinforcement must mean something to the person earning it

- Reinforcement can be very powerful. It increases the likelihood of a behavior happening again.
- Select reinforcers by observing and noting what the child likes and dislikes. Complete a reinforcement assessment or see what the child navigates to naturally.
- Offer 2-5 choices between toys, foods, or activities, etc. and allow the child to make a selection.
- Assess the likes and dislikes of the child frequently, as reinforcers may change over time.
- Ensure the reinforcer is an item the child wants. A powerful reinforcer is one the child is motivated to work for.



### Make it Earned

#### Use reinforcement conditionally—only after a desired behavior occurs

- Identify a specific, desired behavior to reinforce. Choose behaviors that the child can be successful at (skills learned in DT or PRT) or the identified replacement behavior.
- Select a desired behavior that cannot occur at the same time as the challenging behavior (competing behavior).
- Do not wait until the behavior starts to occur to take out the reinforcer. Have the reinforcer ready before the challenging behavior occurs.
- Break down more difficult replacement behaviors into smaller steps so the child can be successful gradually. At first, you may expect the child to do only part of the target behavior.
- Reinforce good attempts, even if you had to help the child.



### Make it Immediate

#### Provide reinforcement immediately and with consistency

- Identify how often to provide reinforcement (each step of routine, after entire routine, etc.)
- For new behaviors, provide reinforcement each time the child is successful.
- Reinforcement is most effective when offered upfront, instead of after the challenging behavior occurs. Use “first, then” language to offer reinforcement for expected behavior. For example, “first stand up, then cookie.”
- Provide the reinforcer within 3-5 seconds of the desired behavior. The child may not understand the connection if there is too much time between the desired behavior and reinforcement.
- Be prepared by having reinforcers and tokens easily available.



### Make it Sustainable

#### Maintain the reinforcer value and fade reinforcement over time

- Reinforcers given too frequently can lose their reinforcing value. If possible, restrict access to reinforcer during other times of the day so the child stays motivated to work for the reinforcer.
- Offer choices, even if the child selects the same item.
- Pair reinforcement with specific verbal praise—tell the child what it is they are doing right (e.g. “Good sitting!”).
- Pair reinforcement with a visual cue. Use a visual to show children what they are working for, if using a token board, place a visual of expected behavior on the board.
- As the children learns new behaviors, gradually raise your expectations. Fade reinforcement over time, but continue to provide social praise!
- **NOTE:** Do pair the token with a social reward (good job or great) so that the child connects the token with verbal praise. Gradually fade the token so the child learns that social praise is a positive thing. Do not say the word “reward” when giving the student a token or tangible reinforcer in an effort.

# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Using Reinforcement Effectively: Real World Examples



### Make it Powerful

**Before:** Ying is a 3 year old girl with Autism Spectrum Disorder who attends a Level 1 classroom. Recently, Ying has been exhibiting some challenging behaviors during small group time. Ying has started to get out of her seat and wander the classroom during group time, rather than stay at the table. Additionally, Ying has started to push the small group items away whenever it is her turn. Ying's parents noted that she loves to eat seaweed, so her teachers have been doing a nice job of bringing seaweed to the small group area to reinforce her for sitting. However, after she earns the first seaweed, her behaviors continue for the rest of the group.

**Now:** Ying's teachers start to see that seaweed might be something that Ying likes, but not necessarily something she wants to work for. One of her teachers noticed that Ying gets excited whenever the bubbles are brought out at circle. Her teachers determine that bubbles might be more reinforcing for Ying than the seaweed, so they start to offer that as a choice during group time. Her teachers have also started to complete a performance assessment on Ying to help identify additional reinforcers they can use to address her challenging behavior.



### Make it Earned

**Before:** Zhang is a 5 year old Level 3 child, but recently he has been having difficulties during circle. At first, he is able to sit and look at the teacher. However, after a few minutes of circle, he starts to hit the other children next to him and stand up out of his seat. This is making it really difficult for the teachers in the classroom, because they have to keep getting up from circle to go get the token board and his skittles. However, once the teachers have the token board and say "hands down" or "sit down," Zhang is able to follow their commands to earn the skittles. Then, the next day, Zhang hits again!

**Now:** Zhang's teachers remember the importance of catching Zhang being good. They realize their mistake—they have presented the token board and skittles only after Zhang starts to hit or get out of his seat. This actually might be reinforcing the hitting behavior, because the teachers are presenting the token board immediately following the hitting. Now, the teachers have started to bring Zhang's token board and skittles to circle. They start providing him with tokens during the transition from table time to circle, and give him tokens for "good sitting" and "good hands down" right when he arrives in the circle area. This has started to teach Zhang that the sitting and hands down are what earns him the reinforcement.



### Make it Immediate

**Before:** Gao is a 5 year old Level 2 child. He is doing well in DT and PRT, but routines are more difficult. The transition routine is especially challenging for him. Each time he has to transition, he lays on the ground, kicks his feet and cries. The teachers have been using backward chaining to prompt him through the transition routine. His teachers are also providing him, the light spinner, as reinforcement whenever he arrives at the next transition. He seems to want the spinner, but he still continues to have the challenges behaviors during most transitions.

**Now:** Gao's teachers realize that providing reinforcement at the end of the transition routine is not enough. They consider that they may need to provide more frequent reinforcement throughout the transition routine to support more positive behavior. Gao's teachers decide to review the transition routine steps, and determine they need to provide reinforcement for each step of the routine. Once Gao's teachers start providing tokens for each individual routine step, Gao understands that performing the steps of the routine independently will earn him reinforcement. After a few weeks, his teachers are able to fade the reinforcement to every third step of the routine. Eventually, Gao performs the entire transition routine independently, and earns reinforcement once he arrives at the next activity.



### Make it Sustainable

**Before:** Yan is a 3 year old girl in a Level 1 classroom. When Yan arrived at the center, the coach and teachers completed a performance assessment for Yan and identified that her highly preferred reinforcer is the stackable robot toys. During DT, Yan's teachers ensure the robot toys are readily available in the reinforcer bin. Unfortunately, Yan is in errorless learning in many of her DT lessons, and is especially difficult to motivate in PRT. Yan's teachers are unsure why she is making such slow progress in her DT lessons.

**Now:** One of Yan's teachers realizes that Yan also loves to play with the robot toys during table time. They notice that Yan chooses to play with the robot toys each day during table time, and that she is highly motivated by them during the start of the day. In an effort to use this powerful reinforcer to teach DT/PRT lessons, Yan's teachers restrict access to the robot toys and only provide them during her 1:1 teaching time. They also place a picture of the robot toys on the token board during DT time, so Yan can see what she is working for. With restricted access, Yan is more motivated by her robot toys and they act as a more powerful learning tool in DT time. With a more effective motivator, Yan begins to make more consistent progress during 1:1 teaching times!



# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Self-Stimulatory Behavior

### General Information

Self-stimulatory behavior is commonly also referred to as self-stim, stimming, or automatic reinforcement. There are many kinds of self-stim behavior. Some common examples are flapping hands; rocking back and forth or side to side; plugging ears; making vocalizations, including screaming or yelling; pushing one or both eyes with a finger; spinning self or items; or the atypical use of toys, such as watching the wheels on a toy car spin racing the car on the floor. In some cases, self-stimulating behaviors can help cope and self-regulate with an external stimulus. If a child is averse to loud environments, they might plug their ears, rock back and forth or hum, or vocalize more loudly or frequently than they ordinarily do.

### How common is self-stim behavior?

It is very common! Self-stim behaviors occur often for many people, even typically developing children and adults, such as tapping a pencil, fidgeting with a watch, or cracking knuckles. Self-stim behavior is one of the four functions of behavior, along with access to tangible, escape, and attention.

### Can self-stimming change, lessen, or go away?

Yes. However, it can be difficult to change these behaviors and change may occur over a long period of time. Self-stim can be enjoyable for a person without serving as a function of behavior, such as wanting access to an item or activity, or wanting to escape an item or activity. Due to this, it can be challenging for adults to always know when self-stimming is happening in order to provide intervention or redirect the behavior. For example, a child might still flap their hands when alone in their bedroom for enjoyment.

### Defining Self-Stimulatory Behaviors

Self-stimming behaviors can involve a wide range and frequency of behaviors, so it is important to define the behavior of concern. Refer to the specific self-stim behavior information sheet to identify ways to define each behavior. Specifically defining the self-stim behavior will lead to the curriculum component that will best teach the child a replacement behavior or new skill.

### When Talking with Parents

Help parents understand their child may be engaging in self-stim behavior for a variety of reasons, but most of all the self-stim behavior is probably comforting to their child and makes them feel better. It is important for parents to understand that changing self-stim behavior will be challenging, but that it is important we work on decreasing these behaviors because they can interfere with learning at school as well as many home and community activities. Be positive with parents about how Links EC focuses on decreasing self-stim behaviors through teaching children replacement behaviors and self-regulation skills. Although it will take time for their child to learn alternate, competing behaviors to the self-stim behaviors, it is a more lasting solution. Their child will need to work through the curriculum and learn many new skills. Once children have the communication, cognitive, and social skills they can then learn important self-regulation and self-management to ensure a long-term solution to reduce self-stim behaviors. Provide parents with detailed information on how the Links EC curriculum specifically teaches replacement behaviors that will decrease the self-stim over time.

Lessons that teach appropriate use of hands and can decrease self-stim with hands:

- **EC4 Modeling Object Use.** The child models the teacher's action with an object. The child needs to use appropriate hands in order to model the action.
- **EC69 Drawing a Picture.** Child uses a pencil or crayon to draw a picture. The child needs to use appropriate hands in order to draw the picture.
- **EC111 Adding 1 Digit Numbers.** The child adds one-digit numbers and records the answer on paper. The child needs to use appropriate hands in order to write the correct answer to the math problem.
- Using appropriate hands during art, desk work or hand-washing routine.

# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Self-Stimulatory Behavior

Lessons that teach appropriate verbalizations and can decrease self-stimulation that involves vocalizations such as screaming or yelling:

- **EC16 Requesting Using Imitation.** The child imitates a word to gain access to a desired item. The child needs to use an appropriate verbalization to get their desired item.
- **EC37 Responding to Questions (e.g. what, who, how many).** The child answers questions. The child needs to use appropriate verbalizations to continue to have access to desired items and activities.
- **EC104 Describing 4-Part Functional Picture Sequences.** The child describes the actions in a 4-part picture sequence. The child needs to use appropriate verbalizations to continue to have access to desired activities.
- Using appropriate vocalizations during snack or group or social skills routine.

### Proactive Strategies to Address Behavior

First, it is important to understand that punishing a child or telling them “no,” “stop flapping,” or, “don’t rock back and forth,” is not a long-term solution to stop or change self-stim behaviors. Stopping the behavior from occurring will likely mean another form of the behavior will pop up. Refer to the behavior information sheets for ideas on how to decrease specific self-stim behavior such as hand flapping or jumping.

The best way to reduce self-stim behavior is to teach children what to do instead. Teaching replacement behaviors can be accomplished through:

1. Identifying when and where the child engages in the self-stim behavior. This will help identify appropriate replacement behaviors. **Example:** During snack, Yan hits himself in on the forehead repeatedly while waiting for his food. This indicates to his teachers that Yan needs to work on waiting, turn taking, and requesting.
2. Limiting attention for self-stim behavior so the behavior isn’t inadvertently reinforced through attention. **Example:** During the transition routine, Zeng flaps his activity symbol in front of his face while walking to the next activity. Zeng’s teachers avoid telling Zeng “no,” or “stop.” Instead, they prompt Zeng from behind to complete the transition routine without flapping.
3. Gently interrupting the self-stim behavior, if possible, and redirecting to a replacement behavior. Remember to limit verbal and facial expressions in order to not give too much attention. **Example:** During small group, Ying makes loud vocalizations, including screaming or laughing, while waiting for the group to start. When Ying begins to have inappropriate vocalizations, her teachers briefly establish eye contact and prompts Ying to greet her peers. Her teachers redirect her to use an alternate and more appropriate vocalization.
4. Providing prompting to encourage the use of the replacement behavior. **Example:** During DT, Pan moves his fingers quickly in front of his face when his teacher provides the lesson cue. When Pan puts his hand toward his face, the teacher gently places her hand on Pan’s hand and says, “Hands down.”
5. Always being on the alert to reinforce the child, including:
  - When the child is not exhibiting the target self-stim behavior. **Example:** Elizabeth usually flaps her hands every time the train starts to arrive at the station. Today, instead of flapping her hands she has them by her side and is fidgeting with her jacket a little bit. She receives a small toy and social praise for having her hands at her side, such as, “I’m proud of you for keeping your hands at your side and fidgeting with your jacket!”
  - When the child is exhibiting a behavior that is incompatible or cannot happen at the same time as the target self-stim behavior. **Example:** Lawrence hits his head with his fist every time he is told to stand in line. He is provided a squishy ball. When he plays with the squishy ball, he is provided a token on his token board paired with social praise, such as, “Great job playing with your squishy ball.”
  - When the child uses an alternative or more prosocial behavior than the target self-stim behavior. **Example:** Mark typically rocks back and forth and hums loudly when the classroom gets very loud. When the classroom starts to get loud, Mark is provided the choice of “break” or headphones to block noise. When Mark makes a choice of one of those prosocial behavior options, he is provided with social praise, such as, “Awesome job asking for headphones,” and is allowed to access the headphones.

# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Attention, Attending, or Eye Contact

### General Information

Challenges with attention or attending are common and their frequency often depends on the age of the child. Younger children have more trouble paying attention to another person or attending to a task presented to them. Also, many children have difficulty paying attention when they have no interest in the activity or item. Attention is a critical foundation skill to learning new and more complex skills and, for some children, it is a skill that also must be taught.

### Defining Attention

Attention, attending, or eye contact can mean many different things in different environments and in different situations, so it is important to define the challenging behavior. Specifically defining the challenging attention behavior will lead to the curriculum component that will best teach the child a replacement behavior or new skill.

When defining attention, use observations like, “During 1:1 DT lessons, Jennifer gazes to other areas in the room or closes her eyes,” instead of, “Jennifer never pays attention to what the teacher is saying because she is lazy.” Or, “During circle time, Paul jumps up and down approximately three times per minute,” instead of, “Paul can’t sit still.”

The several types of attention are:

- **Focused attention:** Looking at and attending to item or activity for a short period of time. For example, saying a child’s name and they turn to look at you.
- **Sustained attention:** Attending to an activity over an extended time period. For example, when a child watches the teacher cue, “Do this,” completes the model, and waits for the reward to be delivered.
- **Selective attention:** Paying attention to one thing while ignoring other distractions. For example, when a child participates in a group game by attending to the board game and engaging in the game activity even though there is an art activity happening simultaneously at the same table.
- **Shifting attention:** Changing focus from one activity to another. For example, when a child is reading a book and an adult says, “It is time to take your temperature.” and the child must shift their focus from the book to the adult with the thermometer.
- **Divided attention:** Focusing on two things at the same time. For example, children listening to music while they are completing a desk work assignment.
- **Joint attention:** Focusing attention on the same thing as someone else and using that as a communication tool. For example, when a child draws a picture and then shows their art to their parent by gazing back and forth between the parent and the picture, communicating with the parent they created the picture.

Teaching attention can be a very complex issue for children who have challenges with focusing or attending. Be prepared to start small, understand the different types of attention, and teach strategies that work.

### When Talking with Parents

Help parents understand the different types of attention and that for some children, attention is very hard. Be positive about helping their child learn attention skills through the lessons in the Links EC Curriculum. Let parents know that every DT lesson in the Links curriculum requires the child to listen to the teacher’s cue and to respond appropriately. The PRT and FR lessons also teach the child to attend to the environment, teacher, peers to determine what they need to do next. The lessons and attending behavior required becomes more complex as the child progresses through the lessons. Provide parents detailed information on how the curriculum specifically builds attention skills step by step. Use examples such as:

- **EC4 Modeling Object Use.** Teacher gives the cue, “Do this,” and models an action with an object. The child needs to attend to the teacher and imitate the action.
- **EC12 Following One Step Directions.** Teacher gives a one-step verbal direction. The child needs to attend to the teacher and follow the direction.

# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Attention, Attending, or Eye Contact

- **EC43 Finding Item When Requested.** Teacher tells the child to go to a location and get an item. The child needs to attend to the teacher and get the item.
- **EC86 Identifying Opposites.** Teacher tells the child to find two picture cards that represent opposite concepts. The child needs to attend to the teacher and find the correct two cards that represent opposite concepts.
- **EC35 Requesting in a Variety of Ways.** The child needs to get the teachers attention and request using words or PECs something they would like to eat or play.
- **R1 Transitioning Within the Classroom.** A schedule with the child’s picture is available in the environment. The child needs to find his/her schedule and attend to the schedule card to determine where to go next moving between many distractions.

Parents should understand that teaching attention takes time but through instruction and development (as children get older) their attention will improve.

### Identifying Skills to Teach

Consider what skill the child needs to perform to demonstrate appropriate attention. This will help to identify the type of attention behavior the child needs to learn.

Example	Type of attention
Ray scans the field of instruction cards in front of him and completes the task.	Sustained attention
Ray looks at the teacher for at least five seconds when his name is called.	Focused attention
When playing musical chairs, Ray looks at and finds an empty chair when the music stops.	Shifting attention
During a group board game, Paul watches a peer roll the dice and then says, “Move three spaces.”	Joint attention
Paul sits at circle for 15 minutes engaging in all circle activities.	Sustained attention
Paul sets a timer for 15 minutes and completes all assigned independent work activities within the time frame.	Sustained attention
During the independent work routine, Jennifer completes all assigned tasks while a group activity is happening simultaneously next to her.	Selective attention
The teacher says, “Turn to page 10 and write these words...,” while Paul turns to the page and writes the words.	Divided attention

### Proactive Strategies to Address Behavior

- Teach and reinforce attending to the adult that is presenting information. For example, the child should be reinforced frequently for watching the teacher lead a small group activity rather than the adult that is helping or prompting from behind the child.
  - Reinforcement example: Teacher call child’s name and they look at teacher. Teacher says, “Good looking,” and gives the child a token
  - Reinforcement example: During group time or DT time, the child displays joint attention by looking at the game/ materials. Teacher provides verbal and/or tangible praise.
- When presenting items or pictures on the table in front of the child, use the reinforcer or the target picture to gain the attention of the child to focus on relevant information.
- Get the child’s attention prior to presenting the cue. For example, get eye contact with the child and move the referent item or reinforcer near your eyes so the child is looking at you.
- Use consistent language paired with visuals to help the child attend and reinforce when they follow your command:
  - “Look at me,” or, “look here.”

# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Attention, Attending, or Eye Contact

- Use motivating items and activities during group times to engage children and maintain attention.
- Teach lessons for an appropriate amount of time. If lessons are too long, the children may become bored. Slowly increase lesson time as the child is successful.
  - Consideration: Use bridge lessons if the child continues to struggle with lessons that require scanning. Ensure you have tried error correction and errorless learning with fidelity for a period of two weeks before implementing bridging procedures.
- When to “leave it alone”: It’s okay if children break attention or look away from time to time. This is especially true during small group activities or if something in their area that is new or unusual. If it is brief and infrequent, you can “leave it alone.” Avoid physically turning the child’s head frequently, this does not teach them to attend to the activity.
- Avoid repeating cues or prompts. When giving cues, use the following tips:
  - Get the child’s attention
  - Say it once
  - Help the child understand and comply in other ways (gestures, visual, physical prompts)
  - Repeat the cue without the prompt, if possible
- Use error correction and errorless learning procedures with fidelity. This ensures the child is not inadvertently reinforced for non-attending behaviors.

### EC Links Lessons to Address Behavior

Level One	Level Two	Level Three
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EC2 – Basic Social Skills</li> <li>• EC3 – Basic Behavior Skills</li> <li>• EC12 – One Step Directions</li> <li>• EC14 – Increasing Sounds (if appropriate)</li> <li>• EC26 – Initial Play: Imitation (Phases 1 and 2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EC2 – Basic Social Skills</li> <li>• EC3 – Basic Behavior Skills</li> <li>• EC42 – Two Step Directions</li> <li>• EC43 – Finding Items when Requested</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EC2 – Basic Social Skills</li> <li>• EC3 – Basic Behavior Skills</li> </ul>

\*PRT strategies at all three levels can be used to address attention, especially play-related lessons.

\*All routines can be used to address attention, focus on achieving an independent level on routines.

# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Flapping

### General Information

Hand flapping is a self-stim behavior that sometimes happens when children with developmental delays or autism get upset, overwhelmed, happy, or for other reasons.

### Defining Flapping

Hand flapping can differ in its duration, frequency, and intensity depending on the child and the function of their behavior. Flapping also looks different depending on the child; some children flap their hands by their hips and some flap their hands closer to their ears.

When defining flapping, use observations like, “During periods when Jillian is viewing preferred videos, she puts both hands by her ears and quickly and repetitively moves them side to side,” instead of, “Jillian acts strange with her hands when she’s happy.”

### When Talking with Parents

Use the information provided in the information sheet on self-stimulatory behaviors to help parents understand why children engage in self-stimulatory behaviors such as hand flapping. It is important to help parents understand that the lessons in the Links EC curriculum teach their child many replacement behaviors for hand flapping, such as handwriting, playing with balls and toys, and keeping their hands in lap or pocket. As children progress through the curriculum, they also learn communication, cognitive, and compliance skills that teach self-management and self-regulation. These skills help children monitor and change their own behavior. Change may not happen quickly and there is no easy or one step solution. Through learning replacement behaviors, and with adults reinforcing those replacement behaviors, children can learn to participate in school, home, and community activities and reduce the impact of hand flapping.

### Possible Replacement Behaviors

Replacement behaviors should be chosen based upon the function of the behavior. Examples include:

- Playing with a toy that is incompatible with flapping behavior, such as play dough or a stress ball.
- Engaging in an incompatible behavior, such as clapping or using an instrument.
- Hands down (in lap or on table).
- Hands in pockets.
- Holding a book or pencil.

### Proactive Strategies to Address Behavior

- The most important proactive strategy to implement for challenging behaviors is to reinforce the identified replacement behavior at a high rate. Reinforce with behavior-specific praise like, “Awesome job keeping your hands down,” or the delivery of edible or token upon the child’s demonstration of that replacement behavior.
  - Reinforcement example: During group time or DT, give tangible reinforcement and/or praise for hands down behavior or intersperse practicing, “Hands down,” between trials of other lessons and reinforce.
- Provide access to alternative sensory input items that are incompatible with hand flapping such as sensory balls, squish balls or Play-Doh and then teach the child to request the alternative items during periods when they would ordinarily flap their hands.
- Use Links EC lessons that are designed to teach children skills to keep their hands busy. Keep the child actively engaged with tasks they can do with their hands, thus limiting the time available for hand flapping.
- Use consistent language paired with visuals to help the child attend and reinforce when they follow your command:
  - “Hands down” or, “Hands in lap”
- After the child reaches Level 3 or School Readiness, use the self-management lessons to show the child when it is okay to flap their hands. For example, develop a social story with visuals that support the idea that the expected behavior during lessons is, “hands down,” and it’s okay to flap hands while dancing or during physical activities.

# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Flapping

### Reactive Strategies to Address Behavior

- Limit adult attention to the behavior.
- Provide cues telling the child what you want them to do, including, “hands down,” “use your stress ball,” or “hands in pockets.”
- If appropriate for the child’s level, cue, “Do this,” and model putting your hands down to help show the child what to do.
- Provide the child multiple-step directions or sing a song to engage their hands in more appropriate behaviors. For example, sing, “If you are happy and you know it clap your hands.”
- If necessary, present the cue again with the least-necessary prompt (either physical, gestural or visual) and help the child complete the task. If using physical prompting, you can lightly put your hands on the child’s hands and guide them down immediately followed by praise and reinforcer delivery.
- Know when to “leave it alone”: It is not possible to always reactively address flapping behavior, such as if they are doing it in their bedroom while alone. If the flapping is done with a frequency, intensity, or duration that is not disruptive to a child or others, it may be that you don’t have to address it at all. Or, you might teach them when it is okay to flap and when it is not and then reinforce the behaviors.

### EC Links Lessons to Address Behavior

Level One	Level Two	Level Three
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• EC3 – Basic Behavior Skills</li><li>• EC12 – One Step Directions</li><li>• EC15 – Requesting with Sounds</li><li>• EC16 – Requesting Using Imitation</li><li>• EC17 – Requesting Using Spontaneous Words</li><li>• EC18 – Requesting Using “I Want X”</li><li>• EC16-EC18 – Alternate Lessons</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• EC3 – Basic Behavior Skills</li><li>• EC42 – Two Step Directions</li><li>• EC35 – Requesting in a Variety of Ways</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• EC3 – Basic Behavior Skills</li><li>• EC80 – Requesting in a Variety of Ways (Expanded)</li></ul>

\*Use requesting lessons in PRT to teach children to request for alternative items such as squish ball, sensory ball, or Play-Doh that are incompatible with flapping.

### Considerations

- It is important for teachers to embed target skills from the listed lessons into various routines throughout the school day. This will provide children with many practice opportunities that will help them to generalize these skills.
- For children working on skills at the 3, 3+, or School Readiness level, use the self-monitoring strategies in the School Readiness lessons to reduce hand flapping.
- If this behavior is consistently intense, disruptive, and has not changed after implementing the above strategies, it is important for teachers to take data on the behavior (ABC or frequency) in order to inform decisions about how to develop effective interventions.

# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Jumping

### General Information

Jumping is a normal behavior when it is done at socially accepted times, such as playing games involving jumping, or using a trampoline. Children who jump up and down during times that are unusual or unexpected, such as during circle time or while waiting for a train to arrive, might be doing it for many different reasons. For example, it may be that a child leaves circle time and starts jumping up and down because the work task presented at circle time is too hard or too boring. Maybe, the child jumping up and down during the arrival of a train is exhibiting self-stim behavior.

### Defining Jumping

Since jumping can mean many different things in different environments, it is important to define the challenging behavior objectively.

When defining jumping, use observations like, “When given a difficult work task or command, John jumps up and down repeatedly 5 or more times,” instead of, “When John gets emotional or upset, he hops like a bunny.”

### When Talking with Parents

Use the information provided in the information sheet on self-stimulatory behaviors to help parents understand why children engage in self-stimulatory behaviors such as jumping up and down. It is important to help parents understand that the lessons in the Links EC curriculum teach their child many replacement behaviors for jumping, such as functional routines that focus on completing an activity or task that is incompatible with jumping. As children progress through the curriculum, they also learn communication, cognitive, and compliance skills that teach self-management and self-regulation. These skills help children monitor and change their own behavior. Change may not happen quickly and there is no easy or one-step solution. Through learning replacement behaviors, and with adults reinforcing those replacement behaviors, children can learn to participate in school, home, and community activities and reduce the impact of jumping.

### Possible Replacement Behaviors

Replacement behaviors should be chosen based upon the function of the behavior. Examples include:

- Sitting.
- Standing without jumping.

### Proactive Strategies to Address Behavior

- The most important proactive strategy to implement for challenging behaviors is to reinforce the identified replacement behavior at a high rate. Reinforce with behavior-specific praise like, “Great job sitting” or the delivery of edible or token upon the child’s demonstration of that replacement behavior.
  - Reinforcement example: During circle/group time, say “Good sitting,” and provide tangible reinforcement using a token board.
  - Reinforcement example: If child is walking appropriately during transition, say “Great walking” and provide tangible reinforcement.
- Implement visual timers to help children know when something will be ending or when they will have access to something that they want.
- Use a visual schedule or mini-schedule to show what’s happening during an activity.
- Use consistent language paired with visuals to help the child attend and reinforce when they follow your command:
  - “Sit down” or, “Stand up”



# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Jumping

### Reactive Strategies to Address Behavior

- Limit adult attention to the behavior. It is okay to ignore the behavior, but not the child.
- Provide cues telling the child what you want them to do.
- If necessary, present the cue again with the least-necessary prompt (either physical, gestural or visual) and help the child complete the task.
- Know when to “leave it alone”: If jumping is done during socially acceptable times at a basketball game or if a child is very excited and it is not happening in a way that is unsafe or disruptive of others, you can leave the behavior alone.

### EC Links Lessons to Address Behavior

Level One	Level Two	Level Three
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• EC3 – Basic Behavior Skills</li><li>• EC12 – One Step Directions</li><li>• EC23 – Comes When Called</li><li>• EC24 – Walking</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• EC3 – Basic Behavior Skills</li><li>• EC42 – Two Step Directions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• EC3 – Basic Behavior Skills</li></ul>

### Considerations

- It is important for teachers to embed target skills from the listed lessons into various routines throughout the school day. This will provide children with many practice opportunities that will help them to generalize these skills.
- For children working on skills at the 3, 3+, or School Readiness level, use the self-monitoring strategies in the School Readiness lessons to reduce jumping behavior.
- If the behavior is consistently intense, disruptive, and has not changed after implementing any of the above strategies, it is important for teachers to take data on the behavior (ABC or frequency) in order to inform decisions about how to best address and change the behavior.

# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Out of Seat

### General Information

Most children can have difficulty sitting, especially for long periods of time. This can depend on the developmental level of the child and is often directly related what is motivating a child to sit down. For example, a child may have an easier time sitting for a longer period if they are watching a movie that they like, or if they are eating a meal. They may have more trouble sitting if they are asked to perform a difficult or boring work task, or if they are receiving attention only when they stand up when they should be sitting down. Sitting and standing behaviors can serve all four functions of behavior.

### Defining Out of Seat

Since sitting and standing are both appropriate and expected behaviors at certain times, operationally and objectively defining the behavior in context will help make sure that you are addressing it correctly.

When defining sitting, use observations like, “When given a new work task during teaching sessions, James stands up and walks away from the table,” instead of, “James is always getting up when he is having a bad day and doesn’t want to listen to the teacher.”

### When Talking with Parents

It is important to help parents understand that the lessons in the Links EC curriculum teach their child many replacement behaviors to address getting out of their seat, such as many functional routines that focus on completing an activity or task that requires them to stay in their seat for longer periods of time. As children progress through the curriculum, they also learn communication, cognitive, and compliance skills that teaches self-management and self-regulation. These skills help children monitor and change their own behavior. Change may not happen quickly and there is no easy or one step solution. Through learning new skills, and with adults reinforcing those replacement behaviors, children are able to stay in their seat for longer periods of time as they build more skills and find seat-time academic and social activities more meaningful and fun.

### Possible Replacement Behaviors

Replacement behaviors should be chosen based upon the function of the behavior. Examples include:

- Sitting down.
- Asking for a break.

### Proactive Strategies to Address Behavior

- The most important proactive strategy to implement for challenging behaviors is to reinforce the identified replacement behavior at a high rate. Reinforce with behavior-specific praise like, “Great job sitting,” or the delivery of edible or token upon the child’s demonstration of that replacement behavior.
  - Reinforcement example: During group time or DT, give tangible reinforcement and/or social praise for remaining seating.
  - Reinforcement example: Intersperse practicing “sit down” and “stand up” in between trials of other lessons and reinforce.
- Using a timer (appropriate for the child – either digital or visual) to show the child when the expectation to sit will be ending. For difficult activities, start with expecting the child to sit for a short period of time, such as 1 minute. Gradually increase the amount of time the child is expected to sit throughout the activity as they demonstrate the ability to be successful with the shorter time periods. It is a good idea to start implementing proactive strategies such as using a timer to address challenging self-stim behaviors during times when you feel the child will be most successful and there are many opportunities for reinforcement.

# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Out of Seat

- When appropriate, incorporating gross motor activities into teaching, especially during small group activities, to allow the children to stand up and move as part of a bigger activity.
- Avoid slang language like “sit on your pockets.” Use consistent language paired with visuals to help the child attend and reinforce when they follow your command:
  - “Sit down” or, “Stand up”

### Reactive Strategies to Address Behavior

- Limit adult attention to the behavior. It is okay to ignore the behavior, but not the child. This is especially important if it is determined that the child is standing instead of sitting in order to gain attention.
- Provide cues telling the child what you want them to do. For example, cue, “Sit down,” and pair with a visual for sitting.
- If necessary, present the cue again with the least-necessary prompt (either physical, gestural or visual) and help the child complete the task.
- If a child does stand up and leave the table or assigned area repeatedly and frequently, follow these tips:
  - Limit verbal cues and talking to avoid providing unnecessary attention
  - Remove reinforcers and items that can be thrown
  - Use visuals or gestures to let the child know what you want them to do. Prompt with the lowest amount of prompting, as necessary
  - Reinforce movements back to the desired behavior of sitting in an assigned location
- Know when to “leave it alone”: If standing up is done at socially appropriate times, or if it happens for very brief durations and the child “self-corrects” it is okay not to address the behavior.

### EC Links Lessons to Address Behavior

Level One	Level Two	Level Three
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EC3 – Basic Behavior Skills</li> <li>• EC12 – One Step Directions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EC3 – Basic Behavior Skills</li> <li>• EC42 – Two Step Directions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EC3 – Basic Behavior Skills</li> </ul>

### Considerations

- It is important for teachers to embed target skills from the listed lessons into various routines throughout the school day. This will provide children with many practice opportunities that will help them to generalize these skills.
- For children working on skills at the 3, 3+, or School Readiness level, use the self-monitoring strategies in the School Readiness lessons to reduce getting out of seat behavior.
- If this behavior is consistently intense, disruptive and has not changed after implementing any of the above strategies, it is important for teachers to take data on the behavior (ABC or frequency) in order to inform decisions about how to best address and change the behavior.

# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Self-Talking

### General Information

Self-talking can happen in a lot of different ways and in many different settings. From unintelligible mumbling, scripting specific television shows, humming at inappropriate times, or talking about the current situation in an atypical way, it can serve a different purpose for whomever is exhibiting the behavior. Children can self-talk out of anxiety, stress, excitement, happiness, or to express when they get overwhelmed. Everyone thinks out loud at times, but often children with autism do this at a much higher rate than other children. When vocalizations have no meaning for the child, it is considered self-stim. Types of self-talking include:

- **Scripting:** Reciting lines from movies, books, or TV when there is no contextual reason for repeating the phrases.
- **Echolalia:** Automatically repeating what was just heard. It is important to note that echolalia is a normal part of child development and helps young children develop communication. When echolalia continues as the child becomes 3 years old, or older, and the echolalia has no communicative meaning, it is considered self-stim.
- **Vocal stimming:** Repeating noises, sounds, or phrases over and over that have no meaning.

### Defining Self-Talking

In order to best address self-talking, it is important to define the problematic behavior specifically and objectively.

When defining self-talking, use observations like, “Jane recites the script from multiple Peppa Pig shows when she’s in an environment or during an activity that is loud,” instead of, “When Jane isn’t happy she says weird things.”

### When Talking with Parents

Use the information provided in the information sheet on self-stimulatory behaviors to help parents understand why children engage in self-stimulatory behaviors such as self-talking. It is important to help parents understand that the lessons in the Links EC curriculum teach their child many replacement behaviors for self-talking, including lessons in receptive language, expressive language, and spontaneous communication. As children progress through the curriculum, they also learn cognitive and compliance skills that teach self-management and self-regulation. These skills help children monitor and change their own behavior. Change may not happen quickly and there is no easy or one step solution. Through learning replacement behaviors, and adults reinforcing those replacement behaviors, children can learn to participate in school, home, and community activities and reduce the impact of self-talking.

### Possible Replacement Behaviors

Replacement behaviors should be chosen based upon the function of the behavior. Examples include:

- Being quiet.
- Self-talking in a quiet voice or whisper so it does not bother others.
- Teaching children to think inside their head versus thinking out loud.
- Self-talking when it is allowed or appropriate.
- Using effective and adaptive communication or language to gain access to what a child wants.
- Asking for noise-cancelling headphones.
- Responding appropriately to proactive rules about voice tone or visual supports denoting appropriate voice tone during a specific activity.

# Guides for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

## Self-Talking

### Proactive Strategies to Address Behavior

- The most important proactive strategy to implement for challenging behaviors is to reinforce the identified replacement behavior at a high rate. Reinforce with behavior-specific praise like, “Way to go being quiet,” or, “Good job asking for X,” or delivery of edible or token upon the child’s demonstration of that replacement behavior.
  - Reinforcement example: When the child is at DT or small group, give tangible and/or verbal praise when the child is being quiet.
  - Reinforcement example: When child is in the sensory area and they describe what’s happening in the sensory area, or making appropriate request, honor that language and verbally praise the on-topic conversation or communication.
- Use visual supports to help the child’s understand that different voice tones and volumes are appropriate at different times. Visuals of quiet and voice volume can be found in Routine Essential Behavior Supports. Visuals of appropriate voice tone include:
  - Quiet during teacher’s instruction.
  - Normal during snack time.
  - Loud during outdoor activities.
- Use visual or proactive rules to show the child when it is appropriate to self-talk and when it is not.
- Use consistent language paired with visuals to help the child attend and reinforce when they follow your command:
  - “Be quiet,” “Quiet mouth,” or, “Let’s talk about something different”

### Reactive Strategies to Address Behavior

- Provide cues telling the child what you want them to do and show a visual. For example, cue, “Quiet voice,” while showing quiet visual.
- If appropriate for the child’s level, cue, “Do this,” and model closing your mouth to help show the child what to do.
- During snack, cue them to request an item, which will interfere with the self-talking.
- If the child is humming during arrival, cue to have a more appropriate vocalization such as greeting teachers/peers.
- Know when to “leave it alone”: It is not always possible to always react or be present when a child is self-talking, especially when they are playing alone outside of the earshot of a parent. It is also not possible to physically prompt the child to stop, thus the self-talking is automatically reinforcing. It is okay to “leave it alone” when it is not interfering with the child’s learning, or the learning of others.

### EC Links Lessons to Address Behavior

Level One	Level Two	Level Three
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EC3 – Basic Behavior Skills</li> <li>• EC12 – One Step Directions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EC3 – Basic Behavior Skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EC3 – Basic Behavior Skills</li> </ul>

\*PRT strategies at all three levels can be used to address this behavior.

### Considerations

- It is important for teachers to embed target skills from the listed lessons into various routines throughout the school day. This will provide children with many practice opportunities that will help them to generalize these skills.
- For children working on skills at the 3, 3+, or School Readiness level, use the self-monitoring strategies in the School Readiness lessons to reduce self-talking behavior.
- If this behavior is consistently intense, disruptive and has not changed after implementing any of the above strategies, it is important for teachers to take data on the behavior (ABC or frequency) in order to inform decisions about how to best address and change the behavior.