

# Teaching Object/Picture Exchange to Request (Mand)

by  
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If it has been determined that an exchange system is the best response form to use at this time, it must be determined whether to use objects or pictures (or both). Again this decision should be based on the current skills of the child as well as the constraints of the environments the child is typically in. Once this is determined, the team must decide on the most appropriate stimuli to use to teach the exchange. If object exchange is to be used, collect the items the child will use as the representative sample. The following suggestions may assist in gathering these items:

- A plastic cup to request a drink.
- A few pieces of the child's favorite snack taped to a piece of cardboard.
- A few pieces of the favorite food inside a clear cassette case taped shut.
- A sample of the favorite item inside a clear video case box.

If pictures are to be used, determine which types of pictures will be best for the child. Remember that it is not always necessary that the child be able to match the picture to the object before teaching can begin. When we reinforce the child for exchanging the picture by giving the desired object, we are associating the two. However, if a child has particular difficulty discriminating between pictures, re-evaluate the stimuli to determine what changes can be made to help the child discriminate or if a different type of stimuli should be used. Options may include:

- Photographs
- Pieces of the wrapper of favorite items
- Parts of the boxes from favorite toys
- Icons or line drawings

Next, determine which items or activities to use to begin teaching the child the exchange system chosen. Start with the child's favorite items or activities. It must be determined that the child actually wants the item or activity at the beginning of the teaching time. Give the child a bit of the item and see if they indicate they want more or observe the child reach for or stare at the item. Remember you can't teach a child to request something they don't want at the moment!

The beginning steps in teaching the exchange require two people. Place the item you have established the child wants in front of him but not within reaching distance. For initial training, it is helpful to use items that come in small pieces or can be broken into small pieces to allow plenty of practice. The object or picture to be exchanged is placed between the child and the desired item. The first instructor sits opposite the child, close to the desired item. The second instructor sits behind the child to prompt. It is important that neither instructor say anything before the item is delivered at the beginning of teaching because we want the response to be based on the child's desire for the item rather than on anything the instructors have said or done.

1. As the child reaches for the item, the second instructor physically prompts the child to pick up and give the picture or object to the first instructor whose hand is out-stretched. As soon as the object or card is in the instructor's hand, the first instructor says the name of the item and gives the child the item. This should happen very quickly. Continue full prompting until the child is picking up and delivering the object or picture to the first instructor's hand with no prompting. Do not give the child verbal directions during this process.



2. Add a picture or object of something that you know the child will not want as a distracter. Mix the items up on the table so the child must look at the pictures or objects in order to choose the correct one.
3. Fade the prompt of the out-stretched hand of the first instructor.
4. Fade the presence of the first instructor. Gradually move away from the child so the child has to come to you to get the desired item.
5. Gradually teach the child to request other desired items or activities.
6. Gradually increase the size of the field the child must request from.
7. Keep the pictures or objects in a place where the child always has access to them. If this is not possible, teach the child to request a notebook or box where the pictures or objects can be stored.
8. Be sure to teach the child to exchange with a wide variety of people so he doesn't learn to associate one person with this activity.

