

Teaching Procedures- Vocal Mands

by
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Always keep in mind:

- Find a condition under which the child can produce the same or similar response that you want to get then transfer it to the new condition.
- A child is more likely to repeat a word he has just said under a new condition.
- Prompt the child within 2-3 seconds: Keep the child successful.

What if the child has vocals but very little can be understood? Continue to reinforce these vocalizations in the natural environment. If a word even remotely sounds like something the child might be requesting, give him the item and follow with the correct articulation of the word. The specific sounds can be shaped to gradually sound more like the name of the desired item. Hopefully, this child would also be using an augmentative system of some form to request such as signs or an exchange system so that unfamiliar people can understand their requests. If the child is using an augmentative system, the following procedure can be used for strong mands. This includes requests the child consistently makes that require no prompting. It's important to be sure to immediately reinforce any new requests the child is just learning. Always honor whatever system the child used to request. For example, if a child brings you a card to request some cereal, don't say, "Say cereal". (He already did!) **Using this procedure too soon could result in the child stopping his attempts to request things with his augmentative system.**

1. When the child signs/exchanges to request something, give him a little bit of what he has requested.
2. When he finishes that small amount, say the name of the item the child is requesting. Give more of the item immediately if the child tries to imitate you. This can be done up to 3 times for most children, however, if the child has a history of tantrums or crying quite quickly, do it only once, then give the child the item even if he doesn't respond. We want to keep learning fun and the child successful! If the child is asking for a item that is difficult to say, you can try just saying the beginning sound or syllable to see if he will attempt it. If this is done you may want to prompt the child to request again using their augmentative system.
3. Clearly say the name of the item when you give it to the child.

What if the child says many clear words as he spontaneously imitates (echoes) but won't imitate me when I ask him to?

1. Fill-in to mand transfer: If the child responds to fill-ins, perhaps this is a condition under which you could get the desired response. For example, if you say "blow bubbles" repeatedly while blowing bubbles, try saying "blow.... " and pause to see if the child will fill-in "bubbles". Since the child just said the word "bubbles" he will be more likely to say it again, so, say, "What do you want?" The child should say "bubbles" again. If not, answer the question yourself and continue. It's important to avoid giving the instruction to, "Say ____ " until the child's imitation (echoic) skills are under instructional control because we can't physically prompt the child to speak. This, in essence, teaches the child to not follow this instruction.

Instructor: "Blow bubbles", "blow _____"
 STUDENT: "bubbles"
 Instructor: "What do you want?"
 STUDENT: "bubbles"



2. Increase the likelihood of the echo: "Play Dumb"- As the child is reaching toward an item, say the name of the item in a "questioning" tone. For example, if the child is reaching for a ball on a shelf, say "ball?". If the child doesn't respond, put it back on the shelf. If the child again reaches, repeat "ball?". Do this no more than 3 times before giving the child the ball. If the child has a history of tantrumming under such conditions, do it just once. You could also try offering two choices to the child. Be sure to only say the name of the item to avoid having the child echo "Do you want...?"

3. Get the echoic under instructional control. Teach the child to imitate other things that you can prompt such as motor movements. This can be done while singing songs or playing with toys. The goal is to get motor imitation under the control of the Sd "Do this". For example, you might be pouring rice into a bowl with a child. Once the child starts pouring, say, "Do this" right before you pour your rice. Then, when the child pours his rice, reinforce heavily. This must be done with a variety of different actions so that we don't inadvertently teach, "Do this," means "pour rice"! Clapping hands, stomping feet, tapping the table are all easy things to teach a child to imitate because you can easily prompt them by moving their body parts for them. Once the child can imitate quite a few movements, you can transfer the motor imitation to a vocal imitation.

Instructor: "Do this" (*claps hands*)
 STUDENT: <Response = claps hands>
 Instructor: "Do this" (*taps table*)
 STUDENT: <Response = taps table>
 Instructor: "Do this – ball"
 STUDENT: "ball"
 Instructor: "Say ball"
 STUDENT: "ball"

What if the child will imitate me consistently to request a desired item but will not respond when I ask, "What do you want?"

1. Echo to mand transfer-

Instructor: "What do you want? Ball"
 STUDENT: "ball"
 Instructor: "What do you want?"
 STUDENT: "ball"

If the student echo's "What do you want?", try one of the following suggestions:

- Say the question more quietly than the item.
- Pause slightly between the question and answer.
- Say the beginning sound of the item he wants.

Instructor: "What do you want? B"
 STUDENT: "Ball"

What if the child responds when I ask, "What do you want?" but won't respond if I give him two choices? We want the child to be able to tell people what he wants under a variety of different conditions. If the child will be offered choices by people in his environment (i.e. day care, school etc.) it is important to teach him to respond to the different ways people might give him choices.



1. Transfer to new question (Sd):

Instructor: (*Holding a ball and a cookie*) What do you want?
 STUDENT: "ball"
 Instructor: "Do you want a ball or a cookie?"
 STUDENT: "ball"

Some children may consistently respond with the last item in this situation. If so, it may be helpful to "practice" with some highly preferred and non- preferred items saying the preferred item first and increasing your loudness when saying the preferred item. You can also try prompting the child by saying the first sound of the desired item after asking the question.

2. Start with single words:

Instructor: (*holding a ball and a cookie*) "Ball? Cookie?"
 STUDENT: "Ball"
 Instructor: "Do you want the ball or the cookie?"
 STUDENT: "Ball"

3. Provide an echoic prompt:

Instructor: (*Holding a ball and a cookie and observing the child reach for the cookie*)
 "Do you want the ball or the cookie? Cookie."
 STUDENT: "Cookie"
 Instructor: "Do you want the ball or the cookie?"
 STUDENT: "Cookie"

What if the child only requests after I ask, "What do you want?" Some children may have been inadvertently taught that they can only request things when someone talks to them first. As stated earlier, a "pure mand" is based totally on the child's desire for the item so we want him to also be able to ask for things when no one has asked, "What do you want?"

Instructor: "What do you want?" (or choice)
 STUDENT: "Cookie"
 Instructor: <gives student a small piece of the cookie then just looks at him expectantly>
 STUDENT: "Cookie"
 Instructor: <gives the student a bigger piece of the cookie>

Or, if the child says nothing, try prompting him with the beginning sound (phonemic prompt).

What if the child hands me his PECS card as he tells me what he wants and I want to teach him to tell me when he doesn't have the card? Once the child is vocal, we want to teach him to ask for things without the pictures so he can still request if the picture is not available.

STUDENT: (*as he hands a picture of a cookie to the instructor*) "Cookie"
 Instructor: <gives a small piece of cookie>
 Instructor: (*hiding the picture behind her back*) "What do you want?"
 STUDENT: "cookie"



If the child does not respond, the instructor can prompt with the initial sound, whole word, or briefly flash the PECS card so the child can see it.

What if the child is only able to ask for things he sees?

Instructor: (*cookie is visible*) "What do you want?"
 STUDENT: "cookie" (child gets small piece of cookie)
 Instructor: (*hiding the cookie under the table*) "What do you want?"
 STUDENT: "cookie" (child gets bigger piece of cookie)

Let the child watch you as you gradually move the item to the location it is usually kept in, out of sight, while continuing more trials.

What if I want the child to learn to say "I want" before telling me what he wants? Some people teach the child to do this very early in the training program. It's important to consider how much added "value" this phrase gives the child compared to how much more difficult it makes the task of requesting. If talking is already quite difficult, it might cause a great deal of frustration for the child. Another problem often seen when carrier phrases are taught too early is that the child uses them inappropriately for all requests. For example, the child might start requesting, "I want walking", or "I want sleeping".

For most children, it's best to teach beginning requests with one word. This teaches the child which specific word will get him what he wants and also makes it easier to transfer the request to other language functions. For example, if a child is taught to request "shoe on", when we try to teach the child to label (tact) the shoe, they may call it a "shoe on". It's usually best to wait until the child is requesting many objects and actions before adding carrier phrases. When carrier phrases are added, it's important to teach a wide variety instead of just one. Some phrases which might be taught include, "get the", "give me", "let's play" among others. These can easily be taught using an echoic prompt once the child has many requests, but should initially be trained with only the strongest mands (i.e. those the child requests frequently, needing no prompts).

STUDENT: "cookie"
 Instructor: "Say, Give me a cookie."
 STUDENT: "Give me a cookie."
 Instructor: "What can I give you?"
 STUDENT: "Give me a cookie." (*child gets a piece of the cookie*)
 Instructor: "Say, I want a cookie."
 STUDENT: "I want a cookie." (*child gets a piece of the cookie*)
 Instructor: "What do you want?"
 STUDENT: "I want a cookie." (*child gets a piece of the cookie*)

OR

STUDENT: "Ball"
 Instructor: "Say, "Let's play ball."
 STUDENT: "Let's play ball"
 Instructor: "What do you want to play?"
 STUDENT: "Let's play ball"

What if the child is able to request objects but not actions? Actions can be taught in the context of reinforcing activities. For example, if the child requests "swing", you might use fill-ins or echoic prompts to teach him to request "push".



STUDENT: "Swing"

Instructor: (*puts child in swing and begins pushing saying*) "Gonna push, Gonna push,
Gonna _____"

STUDENT: "push"

Instructor: "What should I do?"

STUDENT: "push"

OR

STUDENT: "Swing"

Instructor: (*puts child in swing and begins pushing saying*) "Say push"

STUDENT: "push"

Instructor: "What should I do?"

STUDENT: "push"

Be sure to teach the child the correct grammatical form of the word to use to request actions. Some children can label (tact) actions before they are able to request them but they tact them in the "present progressive" tense. So, they may use "pushing" to tact but we want to teach them to use "push" for the mand.

What if the child has limited things he wants so he is not requesting very often? Continually explore new items or activities the child may be interested in based on the way he responds to different sounds, sights, touches smells and tastes (stimuli). You can also increase the number of things the child requests by gradually adding in new requests that must be made to get the desired item. For example, if the child wants to take a bath, the value of having his clothes off may be pretty strong at the moment. Be sure you don't add in new requests too quickly or add too many at one time or the child may no longer want the item or activity. (Lose your EO) Or, if the child really enjoys bubbles, the value of opening the container, taking out the wand, and blowing becomes quite strong!

