

PECS Training

Phase I

By the end we want them to think “these pictures are good and get me what I want”

Goal: Initiate communication and how to communicate

Key: The student must ‘go first’

What we need before we start:

Identify Reinforcers – student exerts effort to get them, resists having them taken away, and spends a lot of time with them

Prepare materials – collect/make pictures (have several on hand) or have a blank that you can quickly draw on

Two helpers - the physical prompter and the communication partner

The job of the **Communication Partner** is:

- Reinforce the picture exchange
- Begin a new trial by retrieving the reinforcer
- Keep hand closed until you see the reach or initiation

The job of the **Physical Prompter** is:

- To wait for initiation (reaching towards the preferred item)
- Physically prompts the picture pick up, reach, and release
- Collect data

The PP needs to eliminate prompt using backward chaining and be silent

Reinforcers

- Need to be powerful, or something the student will work for
- Need at least 3 reinforcers before starting PECS
- Need to be given within ½ of a second of getting the picture
- Tangible vs Social rewards – which one is more motivating for your student?
- Better than before? – Give ‘em more!

Physical Prompter:

Prompting is the help we provide, where as cues are the natural signal in the environment that the student responds to

Only use one prompt at a time and work on eliminating it as soon as possible

Backwards chaining is when last step of a sequence is mastered first

Setting the Stage: Enticing your student to communicate

Think: Why should your student care? Why should they bother to communicate? Imbed the exchanges into the natural environment, rather than taking him out of it to 'teach', create opportunities all day and expect communication all day

We can teach spontaneity and generalization from the beginning by varying the people he communicates with, the activities and items he requests, where he communicates, and when in the day

Create and Wait

- pause during a favourite routine
- items in sight but out of reach
- offer part of a multi-component toy
- offer an associated item

We can move onto Phase II – Distance and Persistence when:

Move on when the child can independently ask for 3 to 5 different reinforcers, with 2 different communication partners in at least 2 different environments

Phase II Distance and Persistence

Goal – We want our student to persist across obstacles

No discrimination yet

Now we need a book!

Key- Make the change big enough that we can notice it, but small enough so that the child does not notice it

Distance

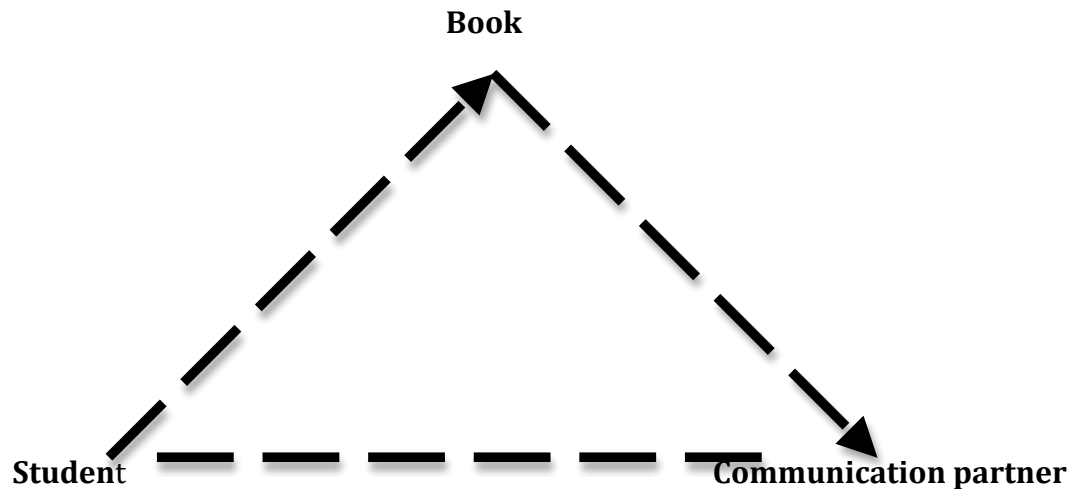
Step 1.

Our student needs to travel to a communicative partner with the picture. The book is near him, but the communication partner is not. Once the student is moving 5-8 feet toward their communication partner move to step 2.

Step 2.

Begin moving the book further and further away from the student. Then move it to the side so it is no longer directly in the line of sight of the child. Begin storing their book in a specific spot

Eventually the child will be able to move in a triangle:



Assess and Eliminate Prompts

- a. The Expectant Look – We need to get rid of our body language that is saying ‘What do you want?’
- b. High drama – No more enticing the student with the item, or else the student won’t ask for items that are out of sight
- c. Body Orientation – Gradually turn away from the child as you move further and further away from them
- d. Eye contact – Want them to look at you, not wait for you to look at them before they will initiate the exchange

Eventually, our student also needs to be able to travel from room to room with a book

Persistence

- Get communication partner’s attention when back is turned
- A communication partner we need to get rid of those subtle prompts (body orientation, eye contact, drama)
- Build the ability to request items out of sight
- Start working beginning to expect Eye contact

Never say, “Get your book”

Need to conduct reinforcer assessment frequently – be sure that we have motivating items for our student

Phase III: Discrimination Part A

Goal: To choose from among all pictures on or in the book

Set up: The motivation to use the correct pictures to get the desired item and avoid the undesired or neutral item

Find out:

- What is not motivating for the child you are working with, what is a non-preferred item?
- What is a highly motivating item?
- Make sure you have pictures for the items you wish to use
- Have a book or spot you are going to keep the growing vocabulary of words

Process:

Step	Teacher	Student
	entice with both items	
		gives incorrect picture
	give corresponding item	
		reacts negatively
1. MODEL/SHOW	Tap correct picture	
2. PRACTICE	Hold hand open near picture to prompt exchange	
	Praise – NO ITEM	gives target picture
3. SWITCH	change focus of attention	
		performs action
4. REPEAT	Entice with both items	
	use ½ second rule for selection	gives correct picture
	allow access/praise	

We can reinforce the moment of correct choice with verbal praise, even if it is only a touch of the correct picture! Then we give the preferred item when the picture is given to the communication partner

A switch can involve:

- Having follow a simple direction – “clap your hands”
- Turn the PECS book over
- Model a motor action for them to imitate
- A time delay

It is important to “switch our switches” so the child doesn’t being to think that the motor action is a part of the communication exchange.

Always end the session successfully. If they are not 'getting it' go back to the level of mastery, for example, one picture to exchange so they are able to do this and end on a success.

NOTE: Vary the distracter picture so that the child learns not just to avoid the one picture, but to actively look at their options!

Keep the communication book at level of mastery when not teaching Discrimination Part A

Move onto the next step when the child can independently and accurately select pictures to complete the request sequence:

- 9 out of 10 opportunities
- from many pairings of preferred and non preferred pictures
- multiple communication partners
- Gets book and travels to communication partner

Next step is Discrimination Part B: multiple preferred items

Phase III: Discrimination Part B

Goal: To choose from among all pictures on or in the book

Now the child can have access to two preferred items. We can check to see if the child has chosen the 'correct' item (or the item for which they gave you the picture)

By now we should have a good idea of what is motivating for the child and at the very beginning, they will choose between only **two** preferred items on the cover of their book

Set up: The communication partner has the two preferred items and their corresponding pictures are on the front cover of the PECS book

- The child chooses a picture and gives it to the communication partner
- The communication partner, instead of saying the name of the item that was requested, says 'Take it' (this is a Correspondence Check)
- **IF** the child reaches for the item that is the same as the picture that was exchanged, we praise them, label the item, and let them have it
- **IF** the child reaches for the item that is **NOT** the same as the picture that was exchanged, the communication partner blocks them from taking the item and then 'teaches to the reach' by doing the 4 Step Error Correction

For example:

Sarah gives the fairy picture to her mom, but then, when her mom says 'Take it'; she reaches for the teddy bear. Her mom stops Sarah from picking up the teddy bear and then does the 4 Step Error Correction to prompt Sarah to pick up and exchange the teddy bear picture (as she reached towards the item that was the most motivating, the teddy bear)

Process: 4 Step Error Correction

Step	Teacher	Student
	entice with both items	
		gives incorrect picture
	give corresponding item	
		reacts negatively
1. MODEL/SHOW	Tap correct picture	
2. PRACTICE	Hold hand open near picture to prompt exchange	
	Praise – NO ITEM	gives target picture
3. SWITCH	change focus of attention	
		performs action
4. REPEAT	Entice with both items	
	use ½ second rule for selection	gives correct picture
	allow access/praise	

Once the child is able to discriminate between two pictures, move to:

- Choosing between 3, 4, 5 pictures
- Looking within the book
- Reintroduce phase II elements!

Keep the communication book at level of mastery when not teaching Discrimination Part B

Move onto the next step when the child can independently and accurately select pictures to complete the request sequence:

- 9 out of 10 opportunities
- 90 % accurate on correspondence checks
- Looks in book
- Gets book and travels to communication partner

Next step is Phase IV Sentence Creation

Phase IV: Sentence Creation

Goal: Create, exchange, and 'read' Sentence Strip for requesting

The tasks of the learner or child:

- Remove 'I want' icon from the book
- Place it on the sentence strip
- Remove reinforce picture from the book
- Place it on the sentence strip
- Remove and give sentence strip to communication partner
- Tap or 'read' the symbols

This is a new behavior because the child is used to giving one picture to the communication partner and that will probably be what they try to do first off.

Step One

Set up: The 'I want' picture is already on the sentence strip and the reinforcer picture is on the cover of the book

The child will pick up the reinforcer picture and try to give it to you. Instead:

- Physically prompt them to place the reinforcer picture on the sentence strip
 - Give social reinforcement after this step! For example 'yes!' or 'mhhh!'
- Physically prompt them to pick up the sentence strip and give it to you

We can use only one person, because the child is still initiating, (picking up the card first). It is important that the child is still motivated and still initiates the exchange!

Once they can pick up the picture, put it on the sentence strip, get the sentence strip and give it to you, we can move onto the next step!

Step Two:

The 'I want' picture is on the left side of the book, the reinforcer picture is on the right side of the book. The child will probably try to pick up the reinforce picture:

- Child tries to pick up reinforce picture
- Block them from picking it up, then physically prompt them to pick up the 'I want' picture
- Physically prompt them to put the 'I want' picture on the left side of the sentence strip
- They may need a physical prompt to help them put the reinforce picture on the strip
- Prompt child to tap the pictures, as though they are reading the words

The Child can move onto Phase V when they independently construct and exchange the sentence strip:

- 9 out of 10 opportunities
- tap the pictures while the communication partner reads the strip
- get the book and travel to the communication partner

Phase IV: Sentence Structure

Goal: Add two pictures to a sentence strip and exchange the sentence strip

Teach student to exchange a sentence strip while maintaining a requesting function

The end process will look like this, the student will:

1. Remove 'I want' picture from the book
2. Place it on sentence strip
3. Remove reinforcer picture
4. Put it sentence strip
5. Remove and give the sentence strip to their communication partner
6. Finally, they will tap the symbols

Step 1.

Add reinforcer picture to sentence strip

*** The 'I want' picture is already on the sentence strip

- Wait for initiation
- Physically prompt to add reinforcer to the sentence strip and exchange strip – eliminate prompt as soon as possible
- Quickly read the strip to student and give the student the reinforcer
- Reinforce behaviour as quickly as possible (within ½ second)

Step 2.

Add both pictures to the sentence strip

- Wait for initiation
- Prompt adding 'I want' to sentence strip – eliminate prompt as soon as possible
- Student will independently add reinforcer picture and exchange sentence strip
- Quickly read sentence strip to student and give reinforcer
- Reinforce targeted behaviour within ½ second

Step 3.

Read Sentence strip

- Teach student to point to pictures as you read strip
- Use backward chaining to eliminate prompt
- Differentially reinforce when independent

Step 4.

Encourage Speech

- Add a constant time delay (3-5 Seconds) to encourage or leave room for speech
- Differentially reinforce talking – if they talk, throw a party! They get a huge reward, if they don't talk, they still get the reward, but maybe just the normal amount

!!!NOTE!!!

- We don't INSIST on speech
- We don't withhold the reinforcement if they don't speak,
- We still honour the exchange!