



Autism in Action™

A better tomorrow starts today.

Oak Series “How-To” Teaching Program C-003

Making Choices By Pointing Or Touching

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Making Choices By Pointing Or Touching

WHO THIS IS FOR

This “How-To” teaching program is for the child who does not have a clear way to express what they want. Instead, the child may pull adults to desired items; or, may grunt, grab, yell, or cry to gain what they want.

ASSUMPTIONS

-  The child has at least one favorite food, liquid, item, or activity that can be used as a reinforcer.
-  The child has the motor ability to point a finger or touch an object with their hand.

RELATED “HOW-TO” PROGRAMS

A-001	Identifying Common Objects
B-005	Sitting In A Chair
C-001	Requesting Desired Items And Activities Using Pictures
C-002	Naming Objects With Words
C-004	Answering “Yes” To Questions
C-005	Requesting “Help”
C-006	Requesting A Break
I-001	Identifying Positive Reinforcers
SCT-004	Initiating A Request To Use The Bathroom With An Object Or Picture

Teaching Steps

Making Choices By Pointing Or Touching

Step 1

Begin teaching by choosing one item that the adult knows the child wants (e.g., favorite drink), and one that the child feels neutral about (e.g., a sock).

Step 2

Guide the child to the teaching location at a table or on the floor. Provide physical guidance if necessary (i.e., gently guide the child by the wrist to the teaching location) and use a tangible reinforcer (i.e., favorite food, liquid, item or activity) to encourage the child to sit.

Step 3

While showing the child their favorite item or activity (e.g., favorite drink) and an item that they don't like or feel neutral about (e.g., a sock), ask the child, "What do you want?"

Step 4

Honor whatever choice the child makes. If the child touches or points to the preferred item (e.g., the drink), honor that request, saying, "You want _____!" and give them the preferred item (e.g., the drink).

Step 5

If the child chooses the neutral item (e.g., the sock), honor that choice by saying to the child, "You want the _____", while giving them the neutral item. For example, if the child chooses the picture of a sock instead of the item that the adult knows that they want (e.g., drink or food item), give them the sock for three to five seconds. Next, offer only the preferred item and repeat, "What do you want?" while guiding their hand to the correct response (i.e., the preferred item). Reinforce the corrected response while giving the child praise and the preferred item (e.g., a sip of the drink). Use this correction procedure following any error.

Step 6

If the child does not make a choice, selecting no item, say, "You want _____" (or "Touch _____"), while physically guiding their hand to point to or touch the preferred item (e.g., the drink). Reinforce the child by giving them the preferred item (e.g., a small sip of the drink).

Step 7

Always require a correct response (e.g., child makes choice by pointing or touching) before rewarding the child with the desired item or activity, even when physical assistance is necessary (e.g., hand over hand or touch prompts).

Step 8









Repeat at least five quick trials during each teaching session. Try to conduct at least three teaching sessions per day.


Step 9

Always look for opportunities to fade the amount of assistance the adult provides until the child is able to independently point to or touch the desired item or activity. That is, if using full physical guidance (e.g., hand over hand), try fading to touch prompts (e.g., touch at the wrist, forearm, or elbow). Once using touch prompts, try fading to a gestural prompt (e.g., adult points to or reaches toward the preferred item). Finally, try fading the gestural prompt so that the child gives the correct response simply to the verbal prompt, “What do you want?” Should any error occur during this fading process, implement the error correction procedures described in Steps 5 and 6.

Helpful Hints

Making Choices By Pointing Or Touching

-  Be sure that the child cannot access the items you are using to teach making choices at other times. Remember, the child will most likely want the desired item if they have not been able to have it “freely”. For example, if the child can pour their own drink whenever they want, they are not likely to request a drink through pointing or touching.
-  If using a toy as the favorite item, allow a brief time with it (e.g., ten seconds) before repeating the next teaching trial.
-  If you are using food or drink items to teach how to make choices, make sure that the child only receives a little bit of the food or drink. For example, if using chips, use a small piece of one chip. If using drink, use a small sip of the drink poured into a cup.
-  It is probably not a good idea to use items that are difficult to take back from the child once they have chosen it. For example, it might not be a good idea to begin teaching this skill with preferred items such as videotapes. Once the child has pointed to the preferred videotape, it will probably be difficult to play a small part of the videotape, and take it back from the child, without them becoming upset.
-  If the child likes music or certain songs, it might be a good idea to use a tape recorder with a favorite taped song. The adult can control the buttons on the recorder, so that the child can point to the recorder, and be rewarded for a brief time with the music. When the adult stops the music, the child can be taught to choose it again by pointing or touching.
-  Remember to immediately reward the child for pointing to or touching the desired item. For example, as soon as the child points to or touches the drink, reward them by giving a small sip.
-  Model pointing or touching with other adults and/or children who have already learned how to point to or touch to get desired items.
-  Discover favorite items by observing the child’s natural interests and through people who know the child well.

-  If the child continues to select the neutral item, reconsider the items you are using as “preferred” and “neutral”. It may be that the child is actually choosing the neutral item as their choice and the preferred item is really not as rewarding as presumed by the adult.

Data Form

Making Choices By Pointing Or Touching

DATE	TIME	POINTED/TOUCHED WITHOUT PROMPTS					FAVORITE ITEM	NEUTRAL ITEM
		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
		N	N	N	N	N		
		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
		N	N	N	N	N		
		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
		N	N	N	N	N		
		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
		N	N	N	N	N		
		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
		N	N	N	N	N		
		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
		N	N	N	N	N		
		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
		N	N	N	N	N		
		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
		N	N	N	N	N		
		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
		N	N	N	N	N		
		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
		N	N	N	N	N		
		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
		N	N	N	N	N		
		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
		N	N	N	N	N		
		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
		N	N	N	N	N		

DIRECTIONS:



Note whether the child pointed to or touched the favorite item with no physical or gestural prompts.



Note the items that were used in the teaching trials.