

# TEACHING REQUESTING

## GOAL

Teach your child to use communication to ask for what he wants.

## BACKGROUND

The first step in teaching requesting is to identify what form of communication will work best for your child. Even though you want your child to speak, vocal language may not be his best option right now.

Consider the following questions:

- How does he communicate now?
- Does he say words or word approximations that can easily be understood?
- Does he say the word for each of his favorite objects, foods, and activities?

If he doesn't, consider introducing an alternative method of communication.

## DOES MY CHILD NEED AN ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM?

According to the AAP Council on Children with Disabilities, approximately 30% of children with autism have a limited ability to communicate vocally.

Although you will continue to learn strategies to help your child communicate vocally, you must give him a way to communicate now. Doing so builds independence and reduces challenging behavior. If he can't ask for the things he wants, introduce AAC.

Choose from 3 common AAC options:

1. Sign language
2. Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)
3. Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

# CHOOSING AN ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM THAT'S RIGHT FOR YOUR CHILD

	Advantages	Disadvantages
<b>Sign Language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Hands are always available</li><li>-Allows for teaching self-talk</li><li>-Provides a means for true labeling rather than simply matching</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Not understood by the general public</li><li>-Not suitable for children with motor challenges</li><li>-Requires strong motor imitation skills</li></ul>
<b>PECS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Structured method of teaching communication as an interaction</li><li>-Easily understood by the general public</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Time and labor intensive to make the pictures needed</li><li>-Often missing or losing pictures needed</li><li>-Need to carry the book around, may be stigmatizing</li></ul>
<b>Communication Apps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Easily understood by the general public</li><li>-Peers may see the app as “cool”</li><li>-Can create an unlimited vocabulary</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Can be expensive, \$1000+</li><li>-Requires some technical skills to teach</li><li>-Need to carry the device around</li></ul>

## AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION (AAC)

### **The right communication system for your child is the one that helps him communicate his needs.**

There is no one right communication system for all children. Some children benefit from a combination of speech and AAC. Other children might be able to use sign language as a backup to a communication app in case they can't use their communication device because it needs to be charged or is damaged.

Choose one form of communication to teach at first. Once he's proficient with that system, consider teaching alternatives, if appropriate for your child.

### **What if my child speaks sometimes?**

Some children with autism who do speak find it difficult to speak in specific situations such as when under pressure or during social interactions. By being aware of alternative methods available, you are prepared to help your child should he need it.

All of the strategies we will cover work regardless of the type of communication your child uses. Your teaching methods might look slightly different when your child uses alternative communication, but the basics remain the same.

# FIGURE OUT WHAT YOUR CHILD WANTS OR WANTS TO AVOID

## WHAT HE WANTS

### Tangible

A tangible is something your child can see and touch. What toys, foods or objects does your child like best?

### Activities

Activities generally involve some sort of object but require an action to make it work. These could be bubbles, balloons or the swing.

### Interactions

Interactions with you will be motivating for some children. Consider how your child responds to tickles, light touches, or being swung in the air.

## WHAT HE WANTS TO AVOID

### Tasks

Many children want to avoid unpleasant tasks such as cleaning up or sitting at a table.

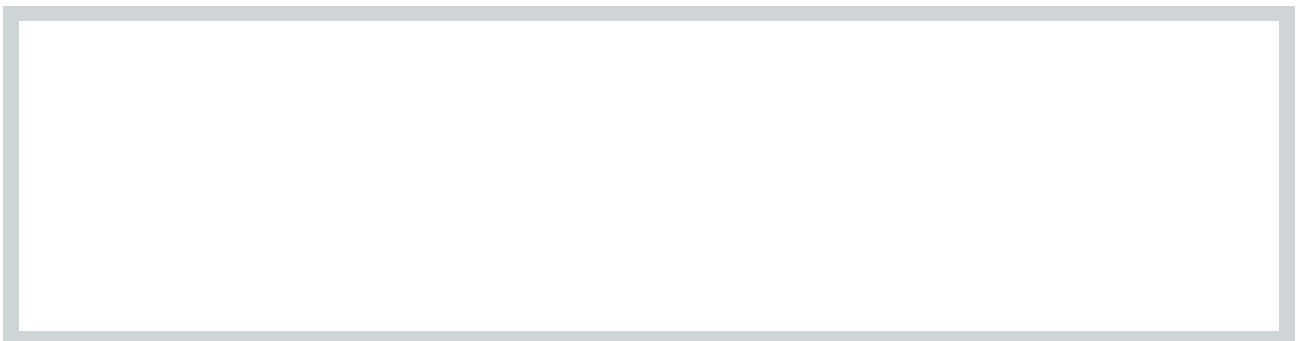
### Sensory Stimulation

Bright lights, loud noises, textures or touches can be uncomfortable or painful. Does your child try to avoid any sensory stimulation?

### Attention

Are there times when your child prefers to be alone or otherwise avoid your attention? Not all children want attention all the time.

## WHAT MIGHT YOUR CHILD WANT OR WANT TO AVOID?



# CHOOSE TARGETS AND START TEACHING

Now that you have a list of your child's favorite items, activities and interactions, you need to choose targets that you can restrict access to. If he has free access to something, he has no reason to ask you for it so don't try to teach him to.

## 4 STEPS TO TEACHING REQUESTING

### 1. Choose your target

Choose items or activities that make sense for your child in a given moment. If he's hungry, teach him to ask for his favorite food. If he has a lot of energy, teach him to ask for jumping. Motivation is fluid and what he wants changes over time.

### 2. Put items out of reach

Remember that whatever you want to teach him to ask for must be visible but where he can't access it on his own. Put food in clear containers he can't open, put toys up on a shelf or a table he can't reach.

### 3. Prompt the request

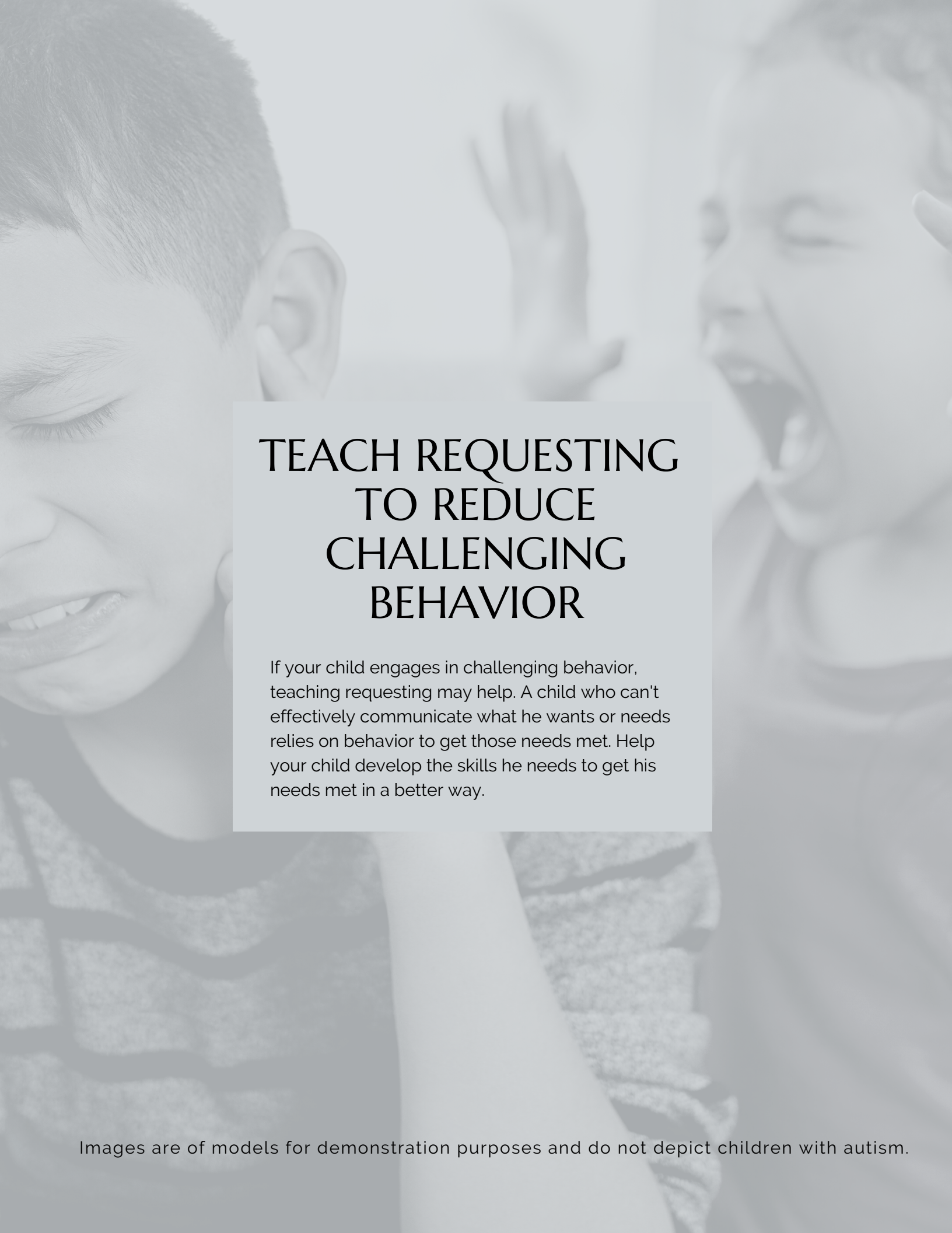
When your child shows he's motivated for one of the items, prompt him to say the word or use the alternative communication system

### 4. Give access to the item

As quickly as possible after he asks for the item, give him the item. Try to get it to him within 3 seconds if possible. The faster you are, the stronger the connection between the request and getting what he wants.

# TIPS

- ✓ Choose 1-2 items per category (food, toys, etc.)
- ✓ Start with 4-6 targets
- ✓ Make sure targets are available in AAC
- ✓ Teach the request in the space where he uses the item
- ✓ Place items out of reach but where he can see them
- ✓ Break food items into small pieces to increase opportunities
- ✓ Limit time with toys or activities he requests-1-2 min
- ✓ Wait until he shows he's interested (points or reaches for item)
- ✓ If teaching spoken language, accept word approximations
- ✓ Practice throughout your child's day during different routines
- ✓ Reinforce gradual progress your child makes
- ✓ Keep it fun and rewarding

The background of the entire page is a grayscale photograph of two children. On the left, a child is shown in profile, crying with their eyes closed and mouth open. On the right, another child is shown from the chest up, shouting or screaming with their mouth wide open and both hands raised in the air. The image is faded to serve as a background for the text.

# TEACH REQUESTING TO REDUCE CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

If your child engages in challenging behavior, teaching requesting may help. A child who can't effectively communicate what he wants or needs relies on behavior to get those needs met. Help your child develop the skills he needs to get his needs met in a better way.

Images are of models for demonstration purposes and do not depict children with autism.