

**A Program to Teach
Language and Communication**



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ASD Unlocking Language: A program to teach language and communication

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OVERVIEW

Introduction

Life with limited language is difficult to imagine and even more difficult to live. Though in the past this has been the case for many children on the autism spectrum, careful instruction can enable the majority to attain a high level of skill in this vital area.

What is ASD Unlocking Language and what can it accomplish?

ASD Unlocking Language is a program designed to teach effective language and communication to children with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental conditions that affect language. Upon successful completion of the program, children are able to understand and talk about

- ▣ past, present, and future events in their home life, such as eating, playing, bathing, and dressing
- ▣ past, present, and future events in the outside world, such as visits to the supermarket, a trip to the zoo, and activities at school
- ▣ simple stories and other early literacy skills

Mastery of these skills enables children to become more **active** participants in the world around them. As many parents and professionals have told us, the level of language achieved through this program is beyond what most have thought to be possible.

The program may be implemented by a parent, teacher, therapist, or other dedicated adult.

Who is the program for?

The program is for children who meet the following criteria:

- ▣ In language – the ability to say at least two words in sequence, either spontaneously or through imitation, such as “go home,” “bye bye,” “want cookie.” While behaviors like these are fragmentary, they are significant indicators that the child has the perceptual and motor base required for spoken language.
- ▣ In behavior – the willingness to respond effectively to adult guidance. To benefit from language instruction, a child must be able to cooperate in the teaching process.



If a foundation of cooperation is not yet present, it can be established through the behavioral program outlined in *Spectacular Bond: Reaching the Child with Autism* by Dr. Marion Blank, Dr. Suzanne Goh, and Susan Deland. It is advisable to postpone ASD Unlocking Language until the Spectacular Bond program has been completed.

For children who do not meet the language criteria described above, a different program—ASD Reading—may be more appropriate (see www.ASDreading.com). Although most children learn to speak before they learn to read, this is not a fixed sequence. Children on the autism spectrum have strengths in visual processing that enable many to read before they learn to speak.

How is the program organized?

ASD Unlocking Language is organized into short daily sessions lasting about 20 to 30 minutes each. Sessions take place once per day, four or five days per week. Skills taught in the lessons are also practiced outside the session in real-world settings. Depending on the child's skill and rate of progress, the full program takes from 6 to 18 months to complete. There are two components to the program: Pre-Language Skills and Language Skills.



Components of the program

The two components of the program are outlined below.

PART 1: Pre-Language Skills

Key Pre-Language Skills

- **Attention** – maintaining selective and sustained focus
- **Sequencing** – processing and retaining information that comes in over the course of time
- **Memory** – holding in mind a set of information, such as pictures, words, or sentences

Certain cognitive skills are needed before children can begin to understand and produce spoken language. While these “cognitive precursors” have received little attention, their role in development is critical. The Pre-Language section is designed to teach these skills.

Four activities are used in this section, with each aimed at fostering attention, sequencing, and memory:

- **Activity A: Matching Pictures** – The child sees one or more pictures and selects – either through direct matching or by memory – identical picture(s) from a set of choices.
- **Activity B: Sequencing Body Movements** – The child sees the adult perform a sequence of movements, such as tapping the head and then the knee. The child then imitates the same movements.
- **Activity C: Sequencing Visual Patterns** – The child sees a card with one or more colored squares in a row. Then, either via direct matching or memory, the child reproduces the pattern by tapping in sequence the appropriate colored squares on a separate board.
- **Activity D: Building Receptive Language** – The child carries out requests made by the adult to perform certain actions using a set of small objects (e.g., dolls, animals, etc.). The objects for this activity may be purchased online or in stores (a “shopping list” is provided in this workbook).

Copies of the materials in this workbook may be photocopied for your own personal use to ensure that you have a back up in the event that any part is lost or damaged.



PART 2: Language Skills

With the Pre-Language skills in place, the child moves on to the Language Skills. They are organized into 24 levels. As the program progresses, the child is taught to understand and use language of increasing length and complexity.

<i>Elementary Sentence Structure</i>	<i>Level 1</i>	Two-Word Phrases
	<i>Level 2</i>	Simple Noun-Verb Sentences
	<i>Level 3</i>	Expanding Sentence Structure
<i>Advanced Sentence Structure</i>	<i>Level 4</i>	Sentences Introducing a Subject
	<i>Level 5</i>	Sentences Describing Actions
	<i>Level 6</i>	Sentences Describing Potential Actions
	<i>Level 7</i>	Sentences Discussing the Non-present
	<i>Level 8</i>	Sentences in the Past Tense
	<i>Level 9</i>	Sentences in the Future Tense
	<i>Level 10</i>	Sentence Combinations 6 to 8 Words in Length
	<i>Level 11</i>	Sentence Combinations up to 10 Words in Length
	<i>Level 12</i>	Compound Sentences up to 12 Words in Length
<i>Questions</i>	<i>Level 13</i>	Starting Questions
	<i>Level 14</i>	Questions about Action
	<i>Level 15</i>	Questions about Location
	<i>Level 16</i>	Questions that use “Which one” for Identification
	<i>Level 17</i>	Questions about Desire and Ability
	<i>Level 18</i>	Questions using “Not”
	<i>Level 19</i>	Questions that refer to Past Actions
	<i>Level 20</i>	Questions that refer to Future Actions
<i>Expanding the Language Forms</i>	<i>Level 21</i>	Yes/No Questions
	<i>Level 22</i>	Introducing “You” and “I”
	<i>Level 23</i>	Questions About “What Has Been Said”
	<i>Level 24</i>	Summarizing Events



The workbooks have been designed to include four types of language activities:

- **Following Commands** – The child carries out a request that the adult has made.
- **Verbal Imitation** – The child repeats a phrase or sentence that the adult has said.
- **Answering Questions** – The child answers a question that the adult has asked.
- **Sentence Completion** – The child completes a sentence that the adult has started.

These forms appear simple, but they have enormous power. When combined and centered on a specific topic, they begin to approximate the flow of natural conversation. The introduction of new material is done in a slow, carefully paced manner that gives children the sense that verbal communication is within their power.

How do I get started?

This workbook provides all the information you need to carry out the program effectively, including

- the materials to be used,
- the language and actions required of the adult and the child, and
- ways to handle difficulties that may arise.

In preparing for the program, it is helpful to practice with someone other than the child. This allows you to become familiar with the materials and the format of the workbooks, thereby helping the sessions run smoothly when you start working with the child. Remember, there is no need to rush. Spend time reviewing the materials and practicing with them. You may also find it helpful to refer to the resources available online at www.ASDLanguage.com. The website includes images and videos that demonstrate the techniques used in the program. You may also submit questions through our website.



General Guidelines

Sessions

You should aim to complete one teaching session per day, four or five days per week.

In Part 1 of the program (Pre-Language Skills), a teaching session includes four lessons – one from each activity (A, B, C, & D). From one day to the next, vary the order in which the different activities are presented. For example, on one day you might begin with Activity A, then go to Activity C, then D, then B. On another day, you might begin with Activity B, then go to D, then C, then A. The workbooks can be presented in any order. This variation helps the child develop flexibility.

In Part 2 of the program (Language Skills), a teaching session includes one lesson composed of 25 items.

Set-up

Workspace: The sessions should be carried out in a quiet room with no TV, computer, or other distractions. The work area, if possible, should not be in the child's room. The workspace should be free of clutter with no food, drink, or other items on or near the table. It is preferable to carry out the full session without a break. If necessary, particularly at the outset, you can provide one break during a session. However, do not let the child leave the work area. Just permit him or her to sit quietly and "take a rest."

Position: The adult should sit next to or across from the child at a small table or desk. The child should sit in a firm chair with his or her feet touching the floor. (If necessary, place a stool under the child's feet). Position the material so that the child sees it clearly. Position yourself so that you can see what the child is doing and are close enough to support the child's hand when needed (hand support is explained in more detail below).

Adult's Manner: Your goal is to convey a sense of calm control. Throughout the session, be "business-like." Limit your language to only what is specified in the workbooks. By keeping your language simple, you are helping the child to focus more effectively on the tasks at hand.

The activities are structured so that there are no rewards such as food, toys, or "high-fives." Correct responses are acknowledged solely with comments such as "good" or "very nice" and these are not offered for every correct response. Though often not given the attention it merits, the mastery of skills is empowering and, on its own, serves as the most effective reward a child can receive. As the children learn to recognize the power they have to deal with the world, their



confidence soars and they become far more involved in teaching activities – without the need for external rewards.

Child's Behavior: The goal is to have the child sit quietly and attend to the adult throughout the session. If a child is not yet able to do this, the program should be delayed and then restarted in one to two months. In the intervening time, it is recommended that you implement the behavioral program outlined in *Spectacular Bond: Reaching the Child with Autism* (available on Amazon.com). This offers a complete step-by-step guide that enables a child to achieve the behavioral foundation needed for learning.

Hand Support

Many of the activities require some level of fine motor skill and this can be challenging for children on the autism spectrum. To handle these difficulties, particularly early in the program, it is extremely valuable to support or stabilize the child's hand. This technique is referred to as "hand support." This type of support is significantly different from the commonly used "hand-over-hand" assistance.

"Hand Support" vs. "Hand-over-hand" assistance	
Hand Support	To support or stabilize the child's hand, hold it at the wrist or palm but do not move it . The support reduces the motor demands of the task so that the child can concentrate on the cognitive demands. It also allows you to prevent the child from making incorrect responses or other inappropriate movements. Many children benefit greatly from hand stabilization, but they often are not given this help. Unfortunately, hand support is mistakenly viewed as the adult leading the child to a correct response. This is not the case. Hand support is best viewed as providing the child with "training wheels" that will be removed once the child gains greater motor proficiency. As Ido Kedar, a young man with autism writes, <i>"It helps many autistic people to have someone touch or even support their arm....This is due to our trouble initiating [movements] and getting our bodies to obey our minds. This slight touch seems to help unlock the sort of paralysis I have described."</i> (Ido in <i>Autismland</i>)
"Hand-over-Hand" Assistance	"Hand-over-hand" is a commonly used technique where the adult actively moves the child's hand. In this program we use hand-over-hand assistance on occasion to model a response for the child if such modeling is needed. After the response has been modeled, however, the child then has to perform the action independently. Independent action means that the child is completing the action on his or her own. An action that is completed with the use of hand support (as described above) is considered independent because the adult has not moved the child's hand. However, an action completed with hand-over-hand assistance – in which the adult has actively moved the child's hand – is not considered independent.



Handling Incorrect Responses

In any learning situation, children will for a variety of reasons produce incorrect responses at times. Regardless of the cause, it is important to prevent incorrect responses from occurring too frequently.

Many activities in this program require the child to use a range of hand movements. If the child begins an incorrect movement or goes to an incorrect choice, hold the hand firmly so that the error cannot be made. With the action prevented, the child has the opportunity to consider alternative answers. In other words, hand stabilization allows you to prevent errors and to provide the child with the opportunity to “think before acting.”

If the child does produce an incorrect response, *immediately* stop him or her by firmly holding the child’s hands in yours and shaking your head “No.” In doing so, you prevent the child from continuing on. **In other words, the child should not be allowed to complete an incorrect trial if you can prevent it from happening.**

Once you’ve taken hold of the child’s hands, continue to hold them for one to two minutes while you maintain a calm expression. This may seem like a long period of time to wait, but this distinct pause in activity sends an important message. It tells the child that a particular range of actions is not acceptable. It also leads the child to acknowledge your presence and realize the importance of attending more carefully to what you are requesting. After the delay, say, “Let’s do it again.” Then start the item again from the beginning using hand support to prevent an incorrect response.

If the child still does not provide a correct response when the trial is repeated, model the correct response. In the case of an action, **use the traditional hand-over-hand movement in which you actively move the child’s hand.** Once the correct response has been modeled, start the item again from the beginning so the child can execute (with hand support) the correct response. Later on, in Part 2, some activities require a spoken response. If the child does not offer it, you model it by saying the expected response. Then start the trial again from the beginning.

Many activities in the program require memory. If the child gives an incorrect response for one of these items, repeat the item without requiring memory (that is, allow the child to see the model card while he or she carries out the task). Once the child does this correctly, repeat the item again, but turn the model card over so that the child carries out the task from memory.

These techniques for handling incorrect responses are critical to the success of the program. It may be helpful for you to practice these techniques with a spouse, friend, or older child.



You may also find it helpful to review these instructions during the course of the program. Additional support materials and sample videos can be found at www.ASDLanguage.com.

ASD Unlocking Language and “Real Life”

The ultimate goal of any language program is to improve the child’s understanding and use of language in real life, not just in teaching sessions. This is more likely to happen if parents follow the guidelines below in the language that is used with the child throughout the day:

- **Using commands and questions:** Two of the most common forms of language are
 - *Commands* – where a child is expected to do something (such as “Go get the cup”) and
 - *Questions* – where a child is expected to say something in response (such as “What is that boy doing?” “The boy is playing.”)

Each requires a response which a child may or may not get right. The chances of getting them right (and avoiding failure) increase enormously if they are phrased to be similar to the kinds of commands and questions that the child is encountering in the program. Accordingly if a child has not yet reached the point in the program where questions are posed, parents should not be asking the child questions in the exchange of daily life. Then when the child does reach the question answering part of the program, parents should keep note of the forms being learned and then be vigilant so that the questions used in daily exchange are restricted to those forms. Doing this creates a consistent language world for the child that greatly eases his or her mastery of this vital realm.

- **Using comments:** Comments are the other common language form. In commenting, a person simply makes a statement, such as “It is raining.” If a listener chooses to respond to a comment, that’s perfectly fine. But responses are not required. This makes it an ideal form to use with the children. Even when they have very limited language expression, comments expose them to relatively rich language forms. For example, if the child and adult are outside and cars are going by, the adult might say, “There are so many cars here, and they are going fast. But they have to stop at that light. They have to wait there.” Note that the comments are in the form of statements and not questions. Basically, as long as the child is calm and at ease, an adult can comment about anything that is happening and can do so at any level felt to be appropriate. Since they impose no demand for a response, comments leave the child to decide whether or not to attend. With the pressure removed, the children increasingly begin to listen. The end result is an expanded language base that occurs smoothly and easily.



PART
1

PRE-LANGUAGE
SKILLS



What are “Pre-Language” Skills?

Language instruction for children on the spectrum is vital. Equally important, though less well recognized, is the need to teach a range of pre-language skills prior to teaching language itself. The skills we are referring to are ones that serve as the cognitive foundation on which language rests.

For instance, in typical development, children move from single words to two- and three-word phrases within a relatively short period of time. Soon after that, full sentences emerge, so that by two to three years of age amazingly intricate conversations are taking place. These transitions take place so smoothly it can be easy to overlook a simple fact: **the changes are possible because a broad range of underlying pre-language skills are already in place.**

One such skill, for example, is sequencing. Without this skill, production of connected sets of words is not possible. Failure to recognize and teach pre-language skills is largely responsible for the fact that, despite years of instruction, a high percentage of children with ASD speak almost exclusively in single words or two-word phrases.

The Pre-Language activities are designed to overcome this problem. They are organized into four activities. Each begins at the simplest level possible (attending to a single unit) and proceeds to more advanced levels (attending to and holding in mind sequences up to four units).

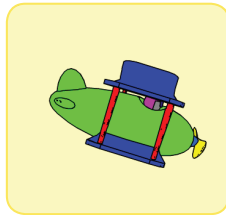
As you will see, most of the Pre-Language activities rely on visual processing rather than auditory processing. This may seem unusual since the sequences of spoken language rest primarily in the auditory realm. However, this approach allows the children to draw on their relative strength in visual processing. In this way, the child’s inherent abilities are being utilized to help foster the development of new skills – namely, those skills that are needed for language. From the perspective of the child on the spectrum, the world of language becomes far less daunting.

ACTIVITY A

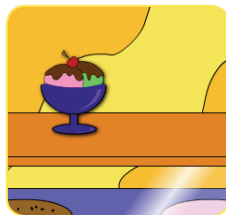
MATCHING PICTURES

Overview

These activities are designed to build the child's skill in visual scanning and visual memory. In each item you show the child a set of 3 to 6 pictures like the ones below.



You then show the child a picture that matches one of the choices above.



You set down the picture; the child then selects the matching picture from the set of choices and places it on top of your picture.

Materials

1. *Pictures:* Two sets of thirty pictures (provided in Appendix A). The pictures represent objects from five different categories: people, animals, toys, food, and clothing. Many parents find it helpful to make a color copy of these images as a back-up in case the original is damaged or lost.
 - Cut out each picture.
 - To ensure that the pictures remain durable, either (a) laminate them or (b) mount each on a small piece of cardboard approximately 2 inches by 2 inches in size.



different categories and must always include the picture that matches the Model. (For example, if the Model is a picture of an apple, then the choices should include an apple and pictures from two other categories, such as clothes, toys, people, or animals.)

Procedure

1. Prior to the session, it is helpful to organize the cards so that administration of the lesson proceeds more smoothly. This means selecting all the cards that you will need for item 1 and placing them in a pile. Do the same for item 2, item 3, and so on. If you use this technique of administration, it may be helpful to create an additional set of picture cards so that when you reach higher levels (where more cards are needed in each item) you will have enough.
2. Sit at a table either next to, around the corner, or across from the child. The position should allow you both to view the pictures clearly.
3. Place the **Choices** on the top half of the mat.
4. Then place the **Model** on the bottom half of the mat.
5. Point to the Model and say, "Put the same one here." The child should pick up the matching card from the Choices and place it on the Model. (Place your finger directly on top of the Model so the child understands to place the matching card directly on top). Do not accept any other action (e.g., the child cannot hand you the matching picture). If needed, hold the child's hands to help him or her carry out the desired action. Once the child understands how to complete the activities (usually within a few items), you no longer need to say, "Put the same one here." Simply show the Model and wait silently for the child to select the correct picture from the Choices.

DO NOT NAME THE PICTURES. IF THE CHILD NAMES THEM, DO NOT COMMENT AND DO NOT REPEAT WHAT THE CHILD HAS SAID.

6. Follow the procedures outlined in the General Guidelines for handling incorrect responses and providing hand support.
7. If the child gives a correct response on the 1st try, place a ✓ in the corresponding box. If the child gives an incorrect response, place an X in the box and then repeat the item until the child gives a correct response. (You only score the 1st response, but the item is repeated until it is done correctly.)
8. Only items with a ✓ are considered a correct response. Record the total number of correct responses at the bottom of the lesson chart. Also record the total in the Summary Table provided at the start of each level.
9. When the child has a score of 9 or higher on 3 out of 4 successive lessons in a level, move on to the next level. If you reach Lesson 12, and this has not yet happened, repeat the



material (starting with Lesson 1) and continue until the child has achieved criterion to move on. If this does not happen within 24 lessons, stop the program for a month and then start again.

LEVEL 1

Matching One Picture (with Picture in View)

In Level 1, the model is a single picture, and the set of choices varies in number from two to five. The choices should be arranged in varied positions from one trial to the next (e.g., side by side next to each other, one above the other vertically, diagonally, or laid out in no particular pattern).

Level 1 Summary Table

(to be filled in at the completion of each lesson)

Lesson	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Date												
Total # Correct Responses												

ACTIVITY B

SEQUENCING BODY MOVEMENTS

Overview

Motor movements, by their very nature, are carried out over time. As such, they represent one of the best domains for developing sequencing skills.

In this activity, you and the child sit facing each other. You perform an action or series of actions on your body, and then the child reproduces, on his or her body, the same action or set of actions.

In executing the activity, the child “mirrors” what you do and uses his or her preferred hand (right hand for a right-hander or left hand for a left-hander). As a result, you will use the opposite side. For example, if the child is to tap his or her right shoulder with the right hand, you use your left hand to tap your left shoulder. That way, from the child’s perspective, he or she is tapping the same side as you.

Materials

- Two firm chairs

Levels

There are four levels in this activity. They start with tapping one body part and progress to tapping four body parts in sequence.



The Lesson Chart

Each Level has 12 lessons and each lesson has 12 items, shown in a chart like the one below.

Sample Chart for Level 1 Lesson 1						
<i>Model</i>	Head	Nose	Chest	Shoulder	Belly	Knee
✓ or ✗						
<i>Model</i>	Off Body	Chest	Nose	Shoulder	Belly	Knee
✓ or ✗						
Total ✓: _____ (Enter Total in Summary Table)				Date: _____		

The row marked **Model** indicates where you should tap. “*Off Body*” means that you can tap the table, the floor, or any nearby surface. Items 1 to 6 are in the top row and items 7 to 12 are in the bottom row.

Procedure

- Both you and the child sit in firm chairs with your feet on the ground or on a stool. Sit near a table or chair that can be used as a surface for tapping *Off Body*. If you prefer, you and the child can be seated on the floor rather than in chairs. If seated on the floor, use the floor for tapping *Off Body*. Face each other directly with about 6 inches separating your knees from the child’s.
- Tap the body part or surface indicated in the chart and say, “Do this.” Once the child understands how to complete the activities (usually within a few items), you no longer need to say, “Do this.” Simply show the action and then wait silently for the child to imitate it.
- If the child is right handed, you should tap your left shoulder and left knee, so that the child mirrors you by tapping his or her right shoulder and right knee. If the child is left handed, you should tap your right shoulder and right knee.
- It is important that the child see the complete sequence before executing any movements. To prevent the child from making incorrect movements or from starting the movements before you have completed the full sequence, use one of your hands to hold both of the child’s hands while you demonstrate the movements with your other (free) hand. Once you have demonstrated the movement(s), change your hold so that instead of holding both of the child’s hands in one hand, you are holding one of the child’s hands in each



of your hands. Hold both hands and wait for the child to move the correct hand in the correct sequence. (See www.ASDLanguage.com for sample videos).

5. Follow the procedures outlined in the Pre-Language Guidelines for handling incorrect responses. Once the child has learned what is expected and is cooperating easily, you can eliminate the hand support.

DO NOT NAME THE BODY PARTS. IF THE CHILD NAMES THEM, DO NOT COMMENT AND DO NOT REPEAT WHAT THE CHILD HAS SAID.

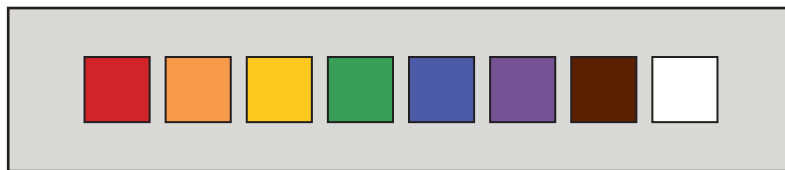
6. If the child gives a correct response on the 1st try, place a ✓ in the corresponding box. If the child gives an incorrect response, place an ✗ in the box and then repeat the item until the child gives a correct response.
7. When scoring the lesson, only items with a ✓ are considered to be a correct response. Record the total number of correct responses at the bottom of the lesson chart. Also record the total in the Summary Table provided at the start of each level.
8. When the child has a score of 9 or higher on 3 out of 4 successive lessons in a level, move on to next level. If you reach Lesson 12, and this has not yet happened, repeat the material (starting with Lesson 1) and continue until the child has achieved criterion to move on. If this does not happen within 24 lessons, stop the program for a month and then start again.

ACTIVITY C

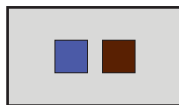
SEQUENCING VISUAL PATTERNS

Overview

In these activities the child learns to reproduce visual sequences using colored squares. A large piece of cardboard with eight colored squares extending from left to right is placed in front of the child.



For each item, you then show the child a small card with one or more squares, such as the following.



The child has to tap, on the large cardboard, the colored squares that appear on the small card – tapping them in left to right sequence as shown on the card. (In the example above, the child would tap on the board the blue and then the brown square.)

For all the trials, the tapping sequence goes from left to right (so “yellow blue” is a possible sequence whereas “blue yellow” is not). This procedure has been adopted because it has payoff when the child moves on to the language of reading (i.e., literacy), where left to right sequencing is essential.

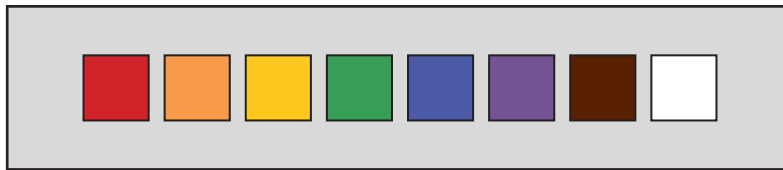
Initially the activity involves direct matching where the child sees both the card and the board. But at the higher levels, the small card is shown to the child and then covered so that the child taps the sequence from memory.



(Note: Although the squares are colored, the colors themselves are not the focus of the activity. They serve only as a means to create the sequence. Other materials, such as shapes or shadings would serve as well. The aim of this activity is not to teach colors, but rather to teach the skill of sequencing.)

Materials

1. *Color Board:* Create the color board by laminating and then taping together the two pages provided in Appendix A at the end of this workbook. Alternatively, these can be mounted on a large piece of cardboard, resulting in a board approximately 8 ½ inches wide by 22 inches long.



2. *32 Small Cards:* These are also provided in Appendix A. Each card has one or more colored squares. Either laminate the cards or mount each on a small piece of cardboard. Many parents find it helpful to make a color copy as a back up in case the original is damaged or lost.
3. *Work Surface:* In order to create a well-defined workspace, you may find it useful to use the same black foam desk pad or piece of black cardboard that you used for the Picture Matching activities.
4. *OPTIONAL:* A small drinking straw cut to about six inches in length or an unsharpened pencil. Either can be used by the child to tap the squares. (Another option is for the child to use his or her index finger to tap the squares. However, because of difficulties with fine motor coordination, some children find pointing to be difficult. For those children the straw or pencil may be easier).

Levels

There are six levels in this activity. They start with tapping one square with the small card in view and progress to tapping a sequence of four squares without the card in view (so that the child is working from memory). As the levels progress, more difficult items are introduced while the simpler items from earlier levels are maintained.

The Lesson Chart



Each level has 12 lessons and each lesson has 12 items, shown in a chart like the one below.

Sample Chart for Level 1 Lesson 1												
<i>Card #</i>	1-1	1-3	1-6	1-8	1-2	1-4	1-7	1-5	1-2	1-6	1-5	1-4
✓ or ✗												
Total ✓: _____ (Enter Total in Summary Table)									Date: _____			

In the lesson chart see the row marked **Card #**. The two-digit number (e.g., 1-1) identifies the small card to be used. (On each small card, the two digits are located in the upper left corner.)

The first digit represents the number of squares on the card:

- Cards that begin with the number 1 have one square.
- Cards that begin with the number 2 have two squares.
- Cards that begin with the number 3 have three squares.
- Cards that begin with the number 4 have four squares.

The second digit identifies the exact card to use. For example, card 1-1 has a single red square; card 1-2 has a single orange square; etc.

Procedure

1. Place the large color board on the table in front of the child (with the red square to the child's left).
2. Show the child the small card. Be sure to hold the card upright, with the card number in the upper left corner. Then point to the large board in front of the child and say, "Tap the same one here." Once the child understands how to complete the activities, usually within a few items, you no longer need to say, "Tap the same one here." Simply show the Model and wait silently for the child to tap the correct color.

DO NOT NAME THE COLORS. IF THE CHILD NAMES THEM, DO NOT COMMENT AND DO NOT REPEAT WHAT THE CHILD HAS SAID.

3. Follow the procedures outlined in the General Guidelines for handling incorrect responses and providing hand support.



4. If the child gives a correct response on the first try, place a ✓ in the corresponding box. If the child gives an incorrect response, place an X in the box and then repeat the item until the child gives a correct response.
5. When scoring the lesson, only items with a ✓ are considered a correct response. Record the total number of correct responses at the bottom of the lesson chart. Also record the total in the Summary Table provided at the start of each level.
6. When the child has a score of 9 or higher on 3 out of 4 successive lessons in a level, move on to next level. If you reach Lesson 12, and this has not yet happened, repeat the material (starting with Lesson 1) and continue until the child has a score of 9 or higher on 3 out of 4 successive Lessons.

ACTIVITY D

BUILDING RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE

Overview

This activity is the only one of the Pre-Language activities that concentrates on language. Aimed at developing receptive language, it enables the child to understand and respond to increasingly complex requests (commands) with no requirement for speaking.

Receptive language activities are common in many intervention programs. However, the focus has typically been on nouns (e.g., *car, house, cup*) and features of those nouns (e.g., *yellow car, big cup*, etc.). By contrast, the activities in this program concentrate on integrating two major language categories—nouns and verbs. Those categories are essential to the development of language. When these categories are initially established via receptive language, the child's mastery of expressive language is eased significantly.

Materials

1. *Small toys (objects)*: Small toys representing people, animals, and vehicles, approximately 3 to 5 inches in size.

Objects	Number needed	Recommended toy brands (available at www.amazon.com)
kids (some boys & some girls)	6	<i>Plan Toy Doll Family</i> (http://amzn.to/19a4YRo) <i>KidKraft Doll Family</i> (http://amzn.to/18D1C7m) <i>Hape Doll Family</i> (http://amzn.to/1aD48Kl)
ladies	6	
men	2	
dogs	6	<i>Toob (Safari LTD)</i> (http://amzn.to/19P3GGC) (http://amzn.to/14W0HO6) (http://amzn.to/18D2b19) (http://amzn.to/17gJV2)
frogs	6	
cats	6	
birds	6	
cars	6	<i>Hot Wheels</i> (http://amzn.to/19a5WgB) <i>MatchBox</i> (http://amzn.to/19hJUmg)
buses	6	<i>DieCast Bus</i> (http://amzn.to/19P4dIs)
trucks	6	<i>MatchBox</i> (http://amzn.to/19hJUmg)
planes	6	<i>InAir Planes (WWII 6 piece set)</i> (http://amzn.to/1bUq3QR)



It's best if the set of objects within a category are not identical. For example, the cars should be different in color and style, the dogs should differ in size and appearance, and so on. The variation encourages flexibility and generalization.

2. *Storage*: One or two utility trays to organize the objects. The trays should have several deep compartments that can store the objects. This will make it easier for you to locate the correct objects during the sessions. We suggest the Stanley Professional Deep Organizer with 10 removable compartments (available on Amazon.com at <http://amzn.to/15EliDT>).
3. *Work Surface*: In order to create a well-defined work space, you may find it useful to use the same black foam pad or black cardboard that you used for the Picture Matching activities.

Levels

The activity has four levels. Level 1 is aimed at teaching a set of 12 nouns via the use of the single action "give me." The child will be responding to requests such as "give me the car," "give me the frog," etc. By Level 4, the requests become longer and more complex. This is achieved by including requests involving two objects and two actions (e.g., "shake the plane and then hug the lady"). Levels 1 and 2 have twelve lessons each, and Levels 3 and 4 have six lessons each. The child will complete all lessons in a level before advancing to the next level.

The Lesson Chart

Each lesson has 12 items. Some sample items from an early lesson aimed at teaching the word "car" appear below.

	Objects		Adult's Actions & Words	✓ if correct		
	Model	Choices		1 st	2 nd	3 rd
1	CAR	car frog dog	holding model "This is a car. Give me another car."			
2	CAR	lady car bird	holding model "This is a car. Give me another car."			
3		frog car kid dog	"Give me a car."			

In the lesson chart, the column labeled **Objects** indicates the objects needed for the lesson. The **Choices** are placed on the table in front of the child. When a new word is first introduced, a **Model** is needed in order to ensure that the child understands the meaning of the word. The



model is typically held in the adult's hand, whereas the choices are placed on the table in front of the child.

The column labeled **Adult's Actions & Words** indicates what the adult should do (shown in gray) and say (shown in black). For all items, the child has to use the correct object(s) to perform the correct action(s).

The lessons here are evaluated differently from those in the other Pre-Language activities. In the other activities, a lesson was offered only once. Here, because the language may be new to the child and more challenging, he or she is given up to three opportunities to succeed in any lesson. This is reflected in the lesson chart by the columns labeled **1st**, **2nd**, and **3rd**. These columns are for keeping track of correct and incorrect responses. The first column is used when the lesson is carried out for the first time. If the child's performance meets the criteria to move on, the lesson is considered complete and is not repeated. The next day the child moves on to the next lesson. However, if the child does not meet criteria to move on, the lesson is repeated the next day and the scores are recorded in the 2nd column. The same thing can occur a third time, and this is recorded in the 3rd column.

A lesson is not administered more than three times. After the third time, the child proceeds to the next lesson. There are several reasons for allowing the child to move on in this way. First, experience has shown us that children generally have learned the new material after three trials even if their performance does not meet strict criteria for moving on. Second, children may show difficulty early on, but it is important to allow them to move ahead to new material. Most children adapt over time and begin to show success as the program progresses. (Further detail is provided in the following section *Procedures*.)

Procedure

1. Place all objects that are needed for the lesson off to the side of the table so they are accessible to you but out of the child's reach. (NOTE: Do not allow the child to play with these objects either during our outside of the teaching sessions. This rule applies to all materials used in the program.)
2. For each item, set out the **Choices** in front of the child. From one item to the next, vary the arrangement of the **Choices** (e.g., sometimes line the objects in a row, sometimes in a 2x2 arrangement, etc.). The variability encourages flexibility.
3. If the item has a **Model**, hold the model in your hand.



4. Do and say what is shown in the column labeled **Adult's Actions & Words**. For example, in item 1 above, the adult will hold the **Model** and say, "This is a car. Give me another car." By contrast, in item 3 above, the adult offers no model and simply says, "Give me a car."
5. If the child gives a correct response on the first try, place a ✓ in the corresponding box in the 1st column. Only items with a ✓ are considered a correct response. If the child gives an incorrect response, place an ✗ in the box and then repeat the item until the child gives a correct response.
6. Unlike the other Pre-Language activities, this one requires that the child complete every lesson at a level before moving on to the next level. Levels 1 and 2 have 12 lessons. Levels 3 and 4 have 6 lessons.
7. A lesson may occur one, two, or three times, depending on the child's performance. If the child has fewer than 9 correct responses on the first trial, repeat the same lesson the following day and record the child's responses in the 2nd column. If the child again has fewer than 9 correct responses, repeat the same lesson a third time on the following day and record the responses in the 3rd column. The maximum number of times a child does the same lesson is three times. After the 3rd time, you move on to the next lesson regardless of how many correct responses were given. (If a child is having a great deal of difficulty, it may be useful to postpone the program for 6 to 8 weeks.)
8. Follow the procedures outlined in the General Guidelines for handling incorrect responses and providing hand support.
9. Record the total number of correct responses at the bottom of the lesson chart. Also record the total in the Summary Table provided at the start of each level.

NOTE: If the child has motor difficulties or is making frequent errors, support the child's hand so that he or she can execute the movement more effectively. In providing hand support, hold the child's hand in a way that prevents him or her from reaching for the incorrect object or carrying out incorrect movements. (In other words, do not move the child's hand to the correct object, but do prevent the child from moving to an incorrect object or from performing an incorrect action.)



As described in the General Guidelines, if the child is having clear difficulty in knowing what to do, you can model a correct response by using hand-over-hand movement (in which you actively move the child's hand in order to show the correct response). Following this, you repeat the item until the child can complete the action without prompting or modeling (though you still may be providing hand support – see the General Guidelines for further details).

Outside the Session

As the child learns the language, it is important to begin using the new linguistic forms in real-life settings. For example, once the child has learned to respond to requests that involve handing over objects (e.g., “give me the car”), similar requests should be made during everyday life (e.g., at the dinner table say, “give me the spoon”).

At the end of Lesson 1 in each Level, sample items are offered to illustrate the kinds of requests that should be made over the course of the day. These are just examples. Parents should also create their own. **Bringing language from the lesson into real-life settings is an essential part of the program and will become even more important as the child progresses to more complex language.**



MATERIALS FOR
PRE-LANGUAGE
ACTIVITIES

PART
2

LANGUAGE
SKILLS



<i>Elementary Sentence Structure</i>	<i>Level 1</i>	Two-Word Phrases
	<i>Level 2</i>	Simple Noun-Verb Sentences
	<i>Level 3</i>	Expanding Sentence Structure
<i>Advanced Sentence Structure</i>	<i>Level 4</i>	Sentences Introducing a Subject
	<i>Level 5</i>	Sentences Describing Actions
	<i>Level 6</i>	Sentences Describing Potential Actions
	<i>Level 7</i>	Sentences Discussing the Non-present
	<i>Level 8</i>	Sentences in the Past Tense
	<i>Level 9</i>	Sentences in the Future Tense
	<i>Level 10</i>	Sentence Combinations 6 to 8 Words in Length
	<i>Level 11</i>	Sentence Combinations up to 10 Words in Length
	<i>Level 12</i>	Compound Sentences up to 12 Words in Length
<i>Questions</i>	<i>Level 13</i>	Starting Questions
	<i>Level 14</i>	Questions about Action
	<i>Level 15</i>	Questions about Location
	<i>Level 16</i>	Questions that use “Which one” for Identification
	<i>Level 17</i>	Questions about Desire and Ability
	<i>Level 18</i>	Questions using “Not”
	<i>Level 19</i>	Questions that refer to Past Actions
<i>Level 20</i>	Questions that refer to Future Actions	
<i>Expanding the Language Forms</i>	<i>Level 21</i>	Yes/No Questions
	<i>Level 22</i>	Introducing “You” and “I”
	<i>Level 23</i>	Questions About “What Has Been Said”
	<i>Level 24</i>	Summarizing Events

LEVEL 1

TWO-WORD PHRASES

Overview

Many children find it relatively easy to say single words. For language to progress, however, it is critical that they learn to combine words. Only with this skill, is it possible to express clear, complete thoughts.

The move from single words to combinations of words must be made carefully. The sequenced production of words is taxing for children with language problems, and it is vital to move slowly and systematically to avoid excessive pressure. The new skills must be built gradually in small increments.

In Level 1 the child masters the important skill of moving from single words to two-word combinations. For children who can already produce some two-word phrases, these exercises will reinforce their basic skills.

In contrast to many programs, the content at this point does not include questions. In getting the child to speak, we do not ask, “What is this?” or “What color is the car?” Questions of this sort tend to elicit, and strengthen, single word responses, rather than advancing the child’s production of multi-word sequences. In addition, answering questions can be difficult, leading the children to feel confused and to experience language as something to be avoided.

Imitation, by contrast, is a more effective technique when first teaching a child to speak. It allows the adult to offer a clear model – thereby removing any pressure on the children at this very early stage to formulate the ideas they are going to say. Verbal imitation is the technique used for the activities in Level 1.



Content

The two-word phrases in this level have been carefully selected to be the key building blocks in actual sentences. The phrases contain

- a noun (generally a figure that can perform an action such as *kid, frog, lady*) and
- a “helping word” (or “non-content word”) that commonly precedes nouns, such as *the, that, some, etc.*

The nouns taught in this level are

- *boy, girl, kid, lady, man, dog, cat, bird, frog, horse, car, plane, truck, bus*

The non-content words taught in this level are

- *a, the, some, more, this, that, these, those*

In addition to verbal imitation of two-word phrases, the child will also continue to practice following the commands introduced in the Receptive Language activity of the Pre-Language section. Therefore, the child will be using language in two ways:

- producing longer utterances
- following verbal commands.

Materials

The activities require a set of small objects that are used to help link the language to real world experience. (Many of the objects are the same as those used in *Pre-Language Activity D: Building Receptive Language.*)

The objects should be

- approximately 3 to 5 inches in size,
- realistic in appearance (they should not be cartoon characters nor have unrealistic features, such as toy cars with eyes painted on them)

All animals need to be in the standing position. All people should be manipulable so that they can stand or sit. Unless a specific position is indicated (e.g., sitting), any figure of a person should be in standing position.



Objects	Number needed	Recommended toy brands (available at www.amazon.com)
boys	3	<i>Plan Toy Doll Family</i> (http://amzn.to/19a4YRo) <i>KidKraft Doll Family</i> (http://amzn.to/18D1C7m) <i>Hape Doll Family</i> (http://amzn.to/1aD48Kl)
girls	3	
ladies	3	
men	3	
dogs	3	<i>Toob (Safari LTD)</i> (http://amzn.to/19P3GGC) (http://amzn.to/14W0HO6) (http://amzn.to/18D2b19) (http://amzn.to/17gJyV2) (http://amzn.to/15PKJ5A)
frogs	3	
cats	3	
birds	3	
horses	3	
cars	3	<i>Hot Wheels</i> (http://amzn.to/19a5WgB) <i>MatchBox</i> (http://amzn.to/19hJUmg)
buses	3	<i>DieCast Bus</i> (http://amzn.to/19P4dIs)
trucks	3	<i>MatchBox</i> (http://amzn.to/19hJUmg)
planes	3	<i>InAir Planes (WWII 6 piece set)</i> (http://amzn.to/1bUq3QR)
beds	2	<i>Plan Toys Dollhouse furniture</i> (http://amzn.to/16JGT3S) (http://amzn.to/1g9XbEA)
chairs	2	

It's best if the objects within a single category are not exactly identical. For example, the 3 cars can differ in color and style; the dogs can differ in size and appearance, etc. This variation fosters flexibility and generalization of the concepts.

Beginning in Level 11, some activities require pictures. The pictures are provided in Appendix B. Cut them out and either laminate them or mount them on pieces of cardboard. You may find it useful to make a back up copy in case the original is damaged or lost.



Procedures

The items in a lesson appear as follows:

	Objects		Adult's Actions & Words	Expected Response*	✓ if correct
	Near Child	Far from Child			
1	girl		<i>"Say – a girl!"</i>	I-Say	
2		dog	<i>"the dog"</i>	I	
3		cat	pointing to cat <i>"A cat is there."</i>	I/P	
4		frog	<i>"Give me the frog."</i>	O/A	

- At the start of a session, have all objects accessible to you but out of the child's reach. (Do not allow the child to play with these objects either during or outside of the teaching sessions.)
- As indicated in the column labeled **Objects**, set out the relevant objects. The objects labeled "Near Child" should be placed close to the child on the table. Objects labeled "Far from child" should be placed farther from the child on the table. Figures should be placed in the standing position unless other directions are given in the column labeled **Adult's Actions & Words**.
- Follow the actions described in the column labeled **Adult's Actions and Words**. The action is shown in gray. (In Level 1, the adult does not need to carry out any actions, but in Level 2 and above, the adult uses a range of different actions).
- Then, from the same column, say the relevant words that appear in quotation marks.
- The response expected from the child is shown in the column labeled **Expected Response**. The abbreviations used are
 - I-Say (which means that the child must imitate what the adult has said without repeating the word "say")
 - I (which means that the child must imitate what the adult has said)
 - P (which means that the child must point to the object that is being referred to)
 - O/A (which means that the child must perform the correct action on the correct object).



6. If the child gives the correct response on the 1st try, mark the item correct by placing a ✓ in the right-hand column.
7. If the child provides an incorrect response or no response to an item, repeat the item until a correct response is given, but leave the right hand column blank. In other words, a ✓ is given only for a response that is correct on the 1st try.
8. Once the child gives the correct response, move on to the next item.
9. After the session is completed, add up the number of ✓s and write down the total.
10. Record the total in the Summary Table located at the beginning of each level.

Ensuring An Effective Response

Obtaining Correct Imitations

In the first several levels, the early items include the instruction *“Say.”* This helps the child understand what you are asking him or her to do. Sometimes a child will mistakenly echo the word *“say”* in his or her response. It is critical not to allow this pattern to take hold. If it does, it tends to reappear throughout the program, interfering with the child’s progress. For example, when you reach Level 13 and start asking the child questions, he or she is likely to echo the questions rather than answer them.

To overcome the pattern, the following techniques are helpful.

- Say the directive word (in this case, *“Say”*) in a low voice and the actual words to be imitated in a louder and more animated voice.
- If the child starts to say the directive word, immediately shake your head and say *“No”* with a firm voice.
- It can be helpful to put your finger over the child’s mouth as a cue to not say the word.

Once the feedback has been given, immediately repeat the item, starting from the beginning. After the first few items, once the child is accustomed to the task, the word *“say”* is no longer needed as part of the instruction.



Providing Hand Support

Hand support, which was introduced in the Pre-Language activities, plays a role in the Language activities as well. Even though many of the Language activities do not require actions, holding the child's hands can serve to increase the child's focus. If the child seems distracted or "tuned out," it is useful to take his or her hands into your hands, and then simply wait. Usually, within a minute, the child will offer an appropriate response. If the child makes an error or displays difficulty, take the child's hands into your own, and then repeat the item as many times as needed for a correct response.

Additional Techniques to Foster Success

Commands – If the child offers an incorrect response or no response, model the correct response by using hand-over-hand assistance. Then have the child complete the action without hand-over-hand assistance (but you may need to still provide hand support). If the command has multiple steps, model each step separately using hand-over-hand assistance. Then have the child complete both parts in sequence without hand-over-hand assistance (but still providing hand support if needed).

Sentence imitation – If the child has difficulty repeating the full sentence, break the sentence into smaller, more manageable, segments. Have the child imitate each segment, and then gradually combine them until the full sentence is repeated.

An important aim of the language program is for the children to distinguish **questions**, **statements**, and **commands**. Each operates differently in conversation and effective mastery of all of them is vital to progress. Therefore, do not allow the child to echo a command or question. The appropriate response to a command is to carry it out. The appropriate response to a question is to answer it.

One final comment before beginning the sessions. As you will see, the language gradually becomes more complex and steadily approaches the natural language of everyday life. At no point, however, are the rules or procedures underlying the language explicitly discussed with the child. For example, we do not say things like, "When I say 'You', you have to answer with 'I.'" or "If something is gone, we use words like 'was' or 'did'." There is a strong tendency for skilled language users to resort to this type of explanation when they see someone having difficulty with language. However, it invariably complicates matters and makes the language experience even more complex for someone who is already confused. Instead, our approach is to dissect the underlying skills into the smallest units possible and then systematically provide the many encounters that the child needs until he or she masters each of those units.



Generalizing the Content: A key goal of the program is to have the children use their skills in the real world (outside the sessions). To aid this process, each level includes a set of sample items that you can use in daily life—both inside and outside the home. These are included after Lesson 1 of each level. There is no need to be limited to the examples offered. They are simply illustrations of how the content can be used in a variety of settings. These “real-world” activities are equally as important as the sessions themselves since they show the children how to generalize their newly acquired language.

It may be helpful to review the section in the General Guidelines at the beginning of the workbook (called ASD Unlocking Language and “Real Life”). It is important to follow these guidelines for using commands, questions, and statements in everyday life.

LEVEL 2

SIMPLE NOUN-VERB SENTENCES

Overview

At each level, the introduction of new information needs to be carefully controlled. In Level 1, the length was limited to two words and the structures were limited to noun phrases (resulting in combinations such as “*those kids*” and “*that truck*”). In Level 2, the language remains at the two-word level, but the structures expand to include noun-verb combinations such as “*boy sits*,” “*cats run*,” and “*cars go*.” Rather than simply identifying figures, the child is now describing the actions that the figures are performing.

The actions introduced in this level are ones that can easily be demonstrated, such as *sit*, *walk*, *run*, and *jump*. (Actions that cannot easily be demonstrated, such as *see* and *feel*, are not taught at this time.) While the verbs are simple, they can still foster important language advances. For example, a single figure may be performing an action (e.g., a dog sitting), while the sentence is in the plural form making a general statement about the capacities of figures like these (e.g., “*Dogs sit*”). Items like these lead the child to the realization that language can and regularly does go beyond what is immediately in view.

These new combinations also lend themselves to the use of pronouns. For example, a figure referred to initially as “*the boy*” can now be referred to as “*he*.” The children may or may not understand the meaning of the pronouns at this stage; the goal is to practice hearing and saying them.

Meaningful language in everyday life rarely consists of single sentences. Instead, sentences link together to create a coherent message. So even at this early stage, consecutive items are linked to maintain focus on a “topic.” For example, the child sees several cats and says, “*some cats*.” In the next item, the child says, “*They sit*.”

In summary, this level has several goals:

- to introduce children to more varied language structures
- to expose them to connected language
- to familiarize them with hearing and saying pronouns
- to show them that figures do not always have to be named (but can be referred to by using pronouns)

LEVEL 3

EXPANDING SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Overview

Having become familiar with two-word noun phrases (e.g., *these cars*) and noun-verb combinations (e.g., *cars go*), the next step for the child is to expand the length of sentences to three words and to integrate the structures, so that noun-phrases and noun-verb combinations appear in a single sentence such as “*The boy sits.*” and “*These birds fly.*”

The new forms maintain a focus on “actors” and their actions. “Actor-action” concepts are critical to understanding the world in which we live. Often, these ideas are not emphasized in language programs for ASD, where the focus is on inanimate nouns or features of nouns, such as size, shape and color. So it may take a bit of time for a child to become comfortable with this aspect of language.

The children often have a preference for nouns, but nouns alone are inadequate for meaningful communication. Even a large vocabulary of single word nouns (e.g., *car, boy, house, spoon, cup*, etc.), does not enable a child to formulate and communicate ideas. Only when children become skilled in linking nouns with verbs can they

- begin to understand the complex language that they hear around them and
- produce the more complex language that others need to understand what the children are thinking.

To skilled language users, the advances from Level 2 to Level 3 are barely noticeable. However, children on the spectrum are far more sensitive to change. This is one reason why they often have difficulty with transitions. By making the transitions tiny, they are able to steadily advance.

LEVEL 4

SENTENCES INTRODUCING A SUBJECT

Overview

To keep things simple, the language forms taught in Levels 1 and 2 were limited to two-word phrases and sentences. Now that the children are building up their sentence length, we are going to revisit those forms and present them in the fuller versions in which they typically appear (e.g., “*this kid*” will be replaced with “*This is a kid,*” etc.) The following sentence forms are taught in Level 4:

This is a ____. (e.g., *This is a frog.*)

These are ____. (e.g., *These are birds.*)

That is a ____. (e.g., *That is a horse.*)

Those are ____. (e.g., *Those are planes.*)

A ____ is here. (e.g., *A boy is here.*)

Some ____ are here. (e.g., *Some kids are here.*)

A ____ is there. (e.g., *A boy is there.*)

Some ____ are there. (e.g., *Some boys are there.*)

When using these forms, you will often be pointing as you say the words, and you will also be requiring the child to point as he or she says the words. This action is important to clarify the language. For example, three figures may be in view, such as a dog, a bird and a girl. If you say, “This is a girl,” the comment is relevant only if you point to the appropriate figure.

You will see the items that require the child to point by the letters “I/P” in the Expected Response column. The “I” represents the fact the imitation is required and the “P” represents the fact that pointing is also required for that particular item. To facilitate the pointing response, it is best to avoid verbal instructions (e.g., do not say, “You have to point.”) Instead, just take the child’s hand and model the pointing. Repeat the item until the child points independently. You should continue to provide hand support as needed, but be sure that the child is clearly moving his or her arm and that you are not guiding it in any way.

LEVEL 5

SENTENCES DESCRIBING ACTIONS

Overview

The real world is filled with both animate figures such as *kids*, *dogs*, and *ladies*, and inanimate objects such as *chairs*, *beds*, and *plates*. For effective social development, the children need to become aware of the abilities and behaviors of animate figures. A key feature distinguishing the two is that animate figures perform actions, whereas inanimate objects generally do not. To assist children in gaining this awareness, at this level, the children are taught to say complete sentences describing actions that various animate figures are performing. (In addition, some inanimate figures are associated with movement such as *planes flying*. These are also discussed at this level.) The following sentence forms are taught:

The ___ is ___ing. (e.g., The lady is sitting.)

The ___s are ___ing. (e.g., The dogs are walking.)

As always, the language forms taught up to this point are also maintained.

LEVEL 6

SENTENCES DESCRIBING POTENTIAL ACTIONS

Overview

In language programs, there is a tendency to focus on labeling what is in view (e.g., “a big dog,” “a red car,” etc.) However, effective language does far more than label what one is seeing. We use language to talk about the past, the future, and what is possible. This aspect of language begins very early in typical development. For example, the speech of toddlers regularly extends beyond what is immediately in view (e.g., “all gone” “where Daddy?”)

This aspect of language is often assumed to be beyond the capabilities of children with ASD. Fortunately, this is not the case. Through carefully structured language, they can achieve significant progress. *From this point on, our goal is to teach children to hear and produce language that refers not only to the immediate present but to figures, objects, actions, and ideas that are not immediately within view.*

As a starting point, the children are taught to use words that focus on the ability or desire to perform particular actions (e.g., *can*, *likes to*, and *wants to*). In other words, what is being described are not particular actions, but rather the potential for those actions.

The following sentence forms are taught in this level:

- ___ *can* ___. (e.g., “The dog can walk.”)
- ___ *want(s) to* ___. (e.g., “The kid wants to sit.”)
- ___ *like(s) to* ___. (e.g., “The lady likes to rest.”)

One final comment before beginning the sessions: As we pointed out earlier, at no point, are the rules or procedures underlying the language explicitly discussed with the child. For example, we do not say things like “If something is gone, we use words like ‘was’ or ‘did’.” There is a strong tendency for skilled language users to resort to this type of explanation when they see someone having difficulty with language. However, it invariably complicates matters and makes the language experience even more complex for the children. Instead, our approach is to

LEVEL 7

SENTENCES DISCUSSING THE NON-PRESENT

Overview

As noted earlier, a chief goal of the program is to enable children to understand the power of language to communicate about objects, events and ideas that go beyond what is immediately in view. The word “not” serves as an excellent tool to achieve this objective and so this level introduces children to the idea of events that are *not* occurring.

Examples:

(Boy standing) *“This boy is not sitting.”*

(Boy is moved to a seated position) *“Now he is sitting.”*

(Cat standing) *“The cat is not walking.”*

(Cat walking) *“Now the cat is walking.”*

LEVEL 8

SENTENCES IN THE PAST TENSE

Overview

Many aspects of language go beyond what is immediately in view. One key set involves references to the past. References to the past are abundant in the language that children hear others use (e.g., “We went to the park yesterday.” “Remember when we saw the little kitten?” etc.) Once children gain an understanding of the past tense, their understanding of the language that they hear from others increases dramatically. In this level, the language introduces children to describing actions in the past tense (that is, actions that did occur but are no longer occurring).

Examples:

The man was walking.

Those frogs were jumping.

LEVEL 9

SENTENCES IN THE FUTURE TENSE

Overview

In this level, “language beyond the present” continues to expand by introducing forms that describe future events. In daily life we refer to the future using two major forms – “going to” (as in “*We are going to the park*”) and “will” (as in “*He will be here soon*”). “Going to” tends to be used more commonly. Therefore, it is the form that is used in the exercises that follow.

Examples:

The dog is going to run.

These kids are going to rest.

This level introduces another dimension to the children’s language. To increase the child’s flexibility in dealing with language, the response to statements will be varied. Until now, the child has had to imitate each statement. Now, on some items the statement is paired with a command. For these items, the child will **NOT** imitate the statement. Instead, he or she will simply carry out the command. This is introduced for the first time in Level 9 Lesson 2 Item 10, where the item is as follows

Adult: “A boy is there. Point to the boy.”

Child: (points to the boy without saying anything)

If the child tries to imitate the statement, stop speaking, shake your head and if it is helpful, put your finger over his or her mouth. Keep repeating this until the item is done correctly. If it takes several minutes to achieve success, stop the session for that day and then in the next session, resume where you left off.

LEVEL 10

SENTENCE COMBINATIONS 6 TO 8 WORDS IN LENGTH

Overview

At this level, the child learns to combine sentences that he or she has already mastered to create combinations of six to eight words in length. The combinations contain two sentences that differ by only one word.

Example: "Here is a girl. Here is a boy."

Several new verbs are introduced in this level and subsequent levels, including *has, have, do, does, & did.*

LEVEL 11

SENTENCE COMBINATIONS UP TO 10 WORDS IN LENGTH

Overview

The sentences in this level increase in both length and complexity, with combinations up to ten words in length and sentence pairs that differ by more than one word.

Examples:

"Here is a girl. There is a boy."

"The man is standing. The kid is sitting."

"These frogs can jump. These birds can fly."

This level also expands language by introducing *categories*, such as animals, furniture, food, fruits, clothes, and toys. This teaches the child that different objects can be categorized under a single word.

In order to expand the range of material, some items in each lesson use pictures rather than figures. The pictures are in Appendix B. Make photocopies of the pictures and keep the original as a back-up. Cut out the pictures and paste them onto cardboard to make them more durable, or you may choose to laminate them. (For an affordable, portable laminator see Purple Cows Hot and Cold Laminator available on Amazon.com (<http://amzn.to/19SLqxs>)). Write the picture number on the back of the picture.

LEVEL 1 2

COMPOUND SENTENCES UP TO 12 WORDS IN LENGTH

Overview

In this level, the child learns longer sentences that have greater variation. In addition, key words are introduced, such as “and” and “but,” which play a major role in connecting ideas.

Examples:

“The girls likes to swim, and she also likes to jump.”

“That boy likes to walk, but he does not like to sit.”

“Cats can jump, but that cat does not want to jump.”

LEVEL 13

STARTING QUESTIONS

Overview

At this point, we move on to the vital skill of learning how to answer questions. Even when the children can speak extensively (as they can now do at this level of the program), questions can still be extremely challenging. Often the children do not understand what the question is asking, leading them to resort to a range of ineffective strategies. One such strategy is to answer all questions with a label – that is, a word that names a person or an object. For example, when asked, “What is the boy doing?” a child may answer, “boy.” Other patterns also exist. All reflect the confusion that the children experience in this domain.

A useful strategy for getting past these difficulties is to show the children in an explicit manner how questions and answers link together. This is done by having key words in the question “brought down” and incorporated in the answer. In the examples below, those carry-down words appear in bold.

Examples:

(Show the child a car)

*Adult’s question: “What **is this?**”*

*Child’s answer: “**This is** a car.”*

*Adult’s question: “What **is that kid** doing?”*

*Child’s answer: “**That kid is** running.”*

In the first example above, the typical answer would be “a car” – with the words *This is* being understood implicitly. Similarly, for the second question, the words *That kid is* would generally be left out of the answer and only the single word “running” would be offered.

Many questions, such as those just cited, can be answered by one or two word responses. This similarity in form (one or two word responses regardless of the question form) is one source of the children’s confusion. It leads them to think that all questions are alike. By making the hidden words explicit, the children are provided with clear cues that enable them to distinguish among different types of questions. They then realize that they have the ability to deal effectively with a range of questions – a realization that greatly increases their comfort with language.



Carrying down key words means that questions will always be answered with full sentences. While this is somewhat unusual, it has many benefits, including helping children improve their production of smooth and fluent language.

The questions taught at this level all involve the identification of people, animals, or objects.

Who is this/that?

Who are they?

What is this/that?

What are these/those?

“Who” is the question word used for people and domestic animals, such as pets. “What” is used for inanimate objects and most other animals. Simultaneous introduction of these related forms (those that involve singular, plural, animate, inanimate, etc.), helps the children see the commonality underlying them. Subsequent levels continue this pattern (i.e., clustering varying but related forms) since it facilitates the children’s recognition of key patterns that underlie language.

Supporting the Transition: Key Techniques

Up until now, when the child has had to speak in a session, the language has mirrored what the adult has said. Questions represent a major change. Now the child is not going to mirror what the adult has said. Instead, the child changes the words to create a meaningful response.

To help the child master this major and complex transition, it is helpful to start by saying the question in a somewhat soft voice. Then in a louder voice, immediately provide the answer.

Example

Adult: (in a soft voice) “What is this?”

Adult: (in a louder voice) “This is a plane.”

Then the adult once again gives the question but this time waits for the child to offer the answer. If, after five attempts, a child still does not offer the correct response, provide the answer again and then have the child repeat your model. In the initial sessions, this sequence may need to be repeated a number of times before the child recognizes what is needed. If that keeps happening (i.e., a considerable amount of time is needed to get a correct response), the session should stop once the correct response is achieved. Then in the next session, go back to where you left off and resume at that point.



A common pattern is for children to echo the question rather than provide an answer. If the child imitates part or all of the question (i.e., including saying the question and then the answer), say, “No,” shake your head, and repeat the question. If the child offers anything but the answer, interrupt him or her right away by saying “no” and holding up your hand. Then repeat the above sequence.

The successful transition to questions represents a major change and its mastery may take some time. Do not be concerned if the child continues to show difficulty over the first several sessions. By the 3rd or 4th session, the difficulties generally recede, and the children begin to show clear progress. If that keeps happening (i.e., a considerable amount of time is needed to get a correct response), the session should stop once the correct response is achieved. Then in the next session, go back to where you left off and resume at that point.

Level 13 Summary Table

(to be filled in at the completion of each lesson)

Lesson	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Date												
Total # Correct Responses												

***Criterion for Moving On:** Each lesson contains 25 items. Once a child achieves 20 or more items correct on 3 out of 4 consecutive sessions, move on to the next level. (The child does not need to complete all 12 sessions in order to move on). If the child does not achieve criterion within the 12 sessions, take a break for 3-4 weeks, and then restart this level from Lesson 1.

NOTE: Continue to carry out the Real-World activities on a daily basis. Incorporate as much language as you can from the lessons into the outside world. The language should include material taught in previous levels as well as the new material taught in this level. Remember to use the samples provided as a guide to creating your own.

LEVEL 14

QUESTIONS ABOUT ACTION

Overview

At this level, the lessons expand to include questions about actions (e.g., “What is the boy doing?”). The answers to these sorts of questions require the use of verbs (e.g., “The boy is walking.”).

The question forms taught here are

What is (this/that) ____ doing?

What are (these/those) ____ doing?

Examples:

Adult: (dog walking) “What is the dog doing?”

Child: “The dog is walking.”

Adult: (kids running) “What are they doing?”

Child: “They are running.”

The “actors” may be named directly, as in, “*the kid,*” “*the frog,*” *etc.*, or they may be referred to by pronouns (*he, she, it, and they*).

As in the previous level, the first several times that the new question form is introduced, you will model the correct answer for the child. These items are shaded in gray.

This level also introduces the child to a new format, where a statement is immediately followed by a question. As you may recall, in earlier lessons, some items involved a statement followed by a command. In those items the child did not imitate the statement. He or she simply followed the command. Analogously, at this level for items where a statement is immediately followed by a question, the child should not imitate the statement but only answer the question. (For an example, see Lesson 1 Item 10).

It may take some time for the child to make the adjustment. To help in the transition, you can modify the timing and tone of voice in which the material is presented. For example, for items



where the child should not repeat the statement, do not pause after the statement. Instead, immediately proceed with the question. It may also help to say the statement in a softer voice, and then say the question in a louder voice.

Level 14 Summary Table

(to be filled in at the completion of each lesson)

Lesson	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Date												
Total # Correct Responses												

***Criterion for Moving On:** Each lesson contains 25 items. Once a child achieves 20 or more items correct on 3 out of 4 consecutive sessions, move on to the next level. (The child does not need to complete all 12 sessions in order to move on). If the child does not achieve criterion within the 12 sessions, take a break for 3-4 weeks, and then restart this level from Lesson 1.

NOTE: Continue to carry out the Real-World activities on a daily basis. Incorporate as much language as you can from the lessons into the outside world. The language should include material taught in previous levels as well as the new material taught in this level. Remember to use the samples provided as a guide to creating your own.

LEVEL 15

QUESTIONS ABOUT LOCATION

Overview

In this level the language expands to include questions about location.

Where is ____? Where are ____?

Questions about location can often be answered with prepositional phrases (e.g., “Where is the box?” “On the floor.”) Responses like these involve spatial relations that can be difficult for children on the spectrum (e.g., *in, on, under, etc.*) At this stage, these difficulties are avoided by structuring the situation so that the questions can be answered with the words “here” and “there.”

Examples:

Adult: (places bird on table close to the child) “Where is the bird?”

Child: (points to the bird) “The bird is here.”

Adult: (places some kids on the table far from the child) “Where are the kids?”

Child: (points to the kids) “The kids are there.”

As you will see, when a question asks the child about the location of a particular figure, other figures are also present since this makes the question more meaningful (e.g., if the question is “where is the car?” the car will be shown with other objects. If the car was by itself, there would be little need for the question). In addition, in answering the question, the child points to the figure at the same time that he or she gives the correct verbal response.

Terms like “here” and “there” in everyday language reflect distance from the observer. If a glass is near you, you would say, “A glass is here.” If a glass is far from you, you would say, “A glass is there.” We try to teach this by using “here” for figures that are close to the child, and “there” for figures far from the child. Despite this aid, the distinction may prove elusive for some children. **If after Lesson 6 in this level, the child continues to show difficulty differentiating “here” from “there,” allow the child to use the forms interchangeably for all questions about location.**

LEVEL 16

QUESTIONS THAT USE “WHICH ONE” FOR IDENTIFICATION

Overview

The question word “*which*” is added at this level and it is used to ask the child to identify people, animals, and objects based on name, properties, or actions. The following question forms are taught:

Which one is a ____? Which ones are ____?

Which one is ____ing? Which ones are ____ing?

Which one has ____? Which ones have ____?

Examples:

(On the table are a bird, car, a lady sitting, and a lady standing)

Adult: “Which one is a bird?”

Child: (points to the bird) “This one is a bird.”

Adult: “Which lady is sitting?”

Child: (points to lady sitting) “This lady is sitting.”

Adult: “Which one is standing?”

Child: (points to lady standing) “This one is standing.”

Adult: “Which one has wheels?”

Child: (points to car) “This one has wheels.”

Some of the responses are slightly unusual. For example, for the question “*Which ones are frogs?*” the response is, “*These ones are frogs.*” This is necessary to maintain the pattern of carrying down all possible key words from the question to the answer; thereby showing the child how the same strategy applies to a range of questions.

Understandably, the child may try to offer other types of answers. For example, when looking at two figures (a lady standing and a kid sitting) and asked, “*Which one is sitting?*” the child might answer, “*the kid*” or “*The kid is sitting.*” Technically, these answers are correct. However, they do not fit the pattern of carrying down all possible key words from the question to the answer. Therefore, allowing such answers takes away from the child a key tool for understanding the



range of questions that he or she may encounter. This ultimately interferes with their progress. Hence, to the question “Which one is sitting?” the correct answer would be, “This one is sitting,” along with the child pointing to the correct object.

As in previous levels, when the new question form is introduced, be prepared to offer a number of trials of repetition until the child answers the question correctly.

Level 16 Summary Table

(to be filled in at the completion of each lesson)

Lesson	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Date												
Total # Correct Responses												

***Criterion for Moving On:** Once a child achieves 20 or more items correct on 3 out of 4 consecutive sessions, move on to the next level. If the child does not achieve criterion within the 12 sessions, take a break for 3-4 weeks, and then restart this level from Lesson 1.

NOTE: Continue to carry out the Real-World activities on a daily basis. Incorporate as much language as you can from the lessons into the outside world. The language should include material taught in previous levels as well as the new material taught in this level. Remember to use the samples provided as a guide to creating your own.

LEVEL 17

QUESTIONS ABOUT DESIRE AND ABILITY

Overview

Until now, although the child has been imitating sentences involving items not in view, no questions of that sort have appeared. All questions have been limited to information that is in view. This holds for the questions about identity (*what are these?*), location (*where is that?*), action (*what are they doing?*), and possession (*which one has arms?*). Now we make the important move of raising questions about what is not in view. This is an early step in enabling the child to access the phenomenal potential of language to discuss anything and everything—without the need for there to be any material in view. Examples include discussions about a family trip, a planned birthday party, events that took place in school, and so on.

As always, we start at a simple level with questions about abilities (as reflected in words such as *can*) and desires (as reflected in words such as *likes*). The following question forms are introduced:

Which one can ____? Which ones can ____?
Which one likes to ____? Which ones like to ____?

Examples:

“Which one can fly?”
“Which ones can talk?”
“Which one likes to jump?”
“Which ones like to run?”

In the child’s response to each question, he or she must point at the correct object.

LEVEL 18

QUESTIONS USING “NOT”

Overview

The activities in this level continue to expand the child’s mastery of language by raising questions that involve the word “not.” The question forms are the ones that the child has already learned in previous levels, but they are now modified to include “not.”

Which one is not a ____? Which ones are not ____?
Which one is not ____ing? Which ones are not ____ing?
Which one cannot ____? Which ones cannot ____?
Which one does not ____? Which ones do not ____?
Which one does not have ____? Which ones do not have ____?

Examples:

Adult: (places bird, plane, and 3 dogs near child) “Which one is not a dog?”
Child: (points to bird) “This one is not a dog.”
Adult: “Which ones cannot fly?”
Child: (points to dogs) “These ones cannot fly.”
Adult: “Which one does not have legs?”
Child: (points to plane) “This one does not have legs.”

Techniques for handling errors

Because many children have had extensive experience labeling objects that they see, they may initially have difficulty adjusting to questions of this type. For example, when shown three cars and a dog and asked the question, “Which one is not a car,” a common initial response is to use what they have learned to date, so they pick up a car and say, “This one is not a car.”

If this happens, pick up the correct object (in this case, the dog), model the correct response, and then repeat the item from the beginning. Rather than moving on to the next exercise in Lesson 1, go to the table at the end of Lesson 1 which provides several trials of this sort, each time with a new set of objects. These should be repeated until the child learns the concept of “not.” In each trial, the objects include three or four items that are the same and one that is different (e.g., 3 girls and a cat; 3 dogs and a bird; 4 kids and a plane; etc.)



After a few trials, the children realize that selecting the object that was named in the question is not the way to go. They are then left with only one alternative: to choose the object that is NOT named in the question. By carefully controlling the materials and presenting a clear two-choice situation, (i.e., selecting the object named versus selecting the object not named), the child is given the tools to master questions that deal with a complex, abstract concept such as “not.” Once the concept of “not” is mastered, the child can proceed with the remainder of Lesson 1.

Level 18 Summary Table

(to be filled in at the completion of each lesson)

Lesson	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Date												
Total # Correct Responses												

***Criterion for Moving On:** Once a child achieves 20 or more items correct on 3 out of 4 consecutive sessions, move on to the next level. If the child does not achieve criterion within the 12 sessions, take a break for 3-4 weeks, and then restart this level from Lesson 1.

NOTE: Continue to carry out the Real-World activities on a daily basis. Incorporate as much language as you can from the lessons into the outside world. The language should include material taught in previous levels as well as the new material taught in this level. Remember to use the samples provided as a guide to creating your own.

NOTE: If the child has difficulty with items 1 and 3 in Lesson 1, go to the table that follows Lesson 1 called “Trials to teach the concept of not.” Repeat these trials until the child has learned the concept. Then return to Lesson 1.

LEVEL 19

QUESTIONS THAT REFER TO PAST ACTIONS

Overview

This level continues the development of higher level communication by teaching the child to handle questions about past actions.

What was ____ doing? What were ____ doing?

The items are presented in two different formats described below.

Format #1

The figure performs an action and the child is asked to name the action. The action then stops, and the child is asked to name the past action.

Examples:

Adult: (bird flying) "What is the bird doing?"

Child: "The bird is flying."

Adult: (flying stops and bird is removed from view) "What was the bird doing?"

Child: "The bird was flying."

Adult: (2 dogs running) "What are the dogs doing?"

Child: "The dogs are running."

Adult: (running stops and dogs are removed from view) "What were the dogs doing?"

Child: "The dogs were running."

Format #2

Once the child has mastered the format above, he or she moves on to a more difficult format. The figure once again performs an action and the child identifies it, but then the figure moves on to a different action and the child has to name the previous action. The child is, therefore, describing the past action while viewing a new action taking place. This demand is more difficult and its mastery represents a critical achievement. The child is now able to recognize that, despite what is going on, he or she can use memory to recall the action that was performed.



Examples:

Adult: (kid walking) "What is the kid doing?"

Child: "The kid is walking."

Adult: (kid jumping) "What was the kid doing?"

Child: "The kid was walking."

Adult: (2 ladies sitting) "What are the ladies doing?"

Child: "The ladies are sitting."

Adult: (ladies walking) "What were the ladies doing?"

Child: "The ladies were sitting."

Level 19 Summary Table

(to be filled in at the completion of each lesson)

Lesson	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Date												
Total # Correct Responses												

***Criterion for Moving On:** Once a child achieves 20 or more items correct on 3 out of 4 consecutive sessions, move on to the next level. If the child does not achieve criterion within the 12 sessions, take a break for 3-4 weeks, and then restart this level from Lesson 1.

NOTE: Continue to carry out the Real-World activities on a daily basis. Incorporate as much language as you can from the lessons into the outside world. The language should include material taught in previous levels as well as the new material taught in this level. Remember to use the samples provided as a guide to creating your own.

LEVEL 20

QUESTIONS THAT REFER TO FUTURE ACTIONS

Overview

Continuing the expansion of language, the activities in this level enable the child to understand and respond to questions about future actions:

What is ____ going to do?

What are ____ going to do?

In contrast to the past, questions about the future are open-ended. Many actions could reasonably occur in the future. To help the child make the transition to this new form, the first few trials are set up so that you tell the child what future action will occur. This provides the child with a model for how to answer this question form

Example from the first few trials:

(Place a bird on the table in front of the child)

Adult (in soft tone of voice): "What is the bird going to do?"

Adult (in louder tone of voice): "The bird is going to fly."

Adult (in soft tone of voice): "What is the bird going to do?"

(Waits for the child to respond)

Child: "The bird is going to fly."

(This is always followed by the action taking place, either by having the adult or the child carry out the action).

Adult: "Make the bird fly."

(Child makes bird fly)

The first few items may need to be repeated several times until the child learns this new form. You can help with the transition by using the techniques described above. (See Level 13 "Techniques to support the child's transition to questions" for more detail). In brief, this involves saying the question in a soft tone of voice, then immediately providing the answer in a louder voice. Then once again ask the question, but this time wait for the child to offer the answer.



Once the child has learned the new form, you no longer provide the correct answer. Instead, the child should come up with an appropriate answer. For example, if asked, “*What is the girl going to do?*” the child may say, “*The girl is going to run*” or “*The girl is going to jump*” or “*The girl is going to walk,*” etc. Any reasonable response is fine. However, a response such as, “*The girl is going to fly*” would not be acceptable.

Example from later trial:

(Place a horse on the table in front of the child)

Adult: “What is the horse going to do?”

Child: “The horse is going to run.”

Adult: “Make the horse run.”

(Child makes horse run)

Level 20 Summary Table

(to be filled in at the completion of each lesson)

Lesson	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Date												
Total # Correct Responses												

***Criterion for Moving On:** Once a child achieves 20 or more items correct on 3 out of 4 consecutive sessions, move on to the next level. If the child does not achieve criterion within the 12 sessions, take a break for 3-4 weeks, and then restart this level from Lesson 1.

NOTE: Continue to carry out the Real-World activities on a daily basis. Incorporate as much language as you can from the lessons into the outside world. The language should include material taught in previous levels as well as the new material taught in this level. Remember to use the samples provided as a guide to creating your own.

LEVEL 2 I

YES/NO QUESTIONS

Overview

In this level the child learns to respond to Yes/No questions. These questions cover a wide range of language groupings including the following:

- ▣ Objects or Persons: “Is this a cat?” “Are these kids?”
- ▣ Actions: “Is the boy running?” “Were the ladies sitting?”
- ▣ Abilities: “Can birds fly?” “Do frogs jump?”
- ▣ Possession: “Does the man have a dog?” “Do cars have wheels?”

Though *yes/no* questions appear simple, they are, in fact, more complex than the questions taught up to this point. With all previous questions, the answer was a single form that mirrored the question. *Yes/no* is the first form where this is not the case. The answer to the question is open to two possibilities:

- ▣ *Yes* – where the answer does mirror the question (e.g., pointing to a cat and asking, “Is this a cat?” The appropriate answer is, “Yes, this is a cat.”)
- ▣ *No* – where the answer does not simply mirror the question but rather contains the word “not” (e.g., pointing to a cat and asking, “Is this a dog?” The appropriate answer is, “No, this is not a dog.”)

This step up in complexity may lead to some difficulty for the child. For any difficulties that arise, say the question in a soft voice; then immediately provide the answer in a louder voice (so that you are modeling the full sequence). Then ask the question, but this time wait for the child to answer. Refer back to the techniques described in Level 13 for additional guidance.

If the child says “*yes*” and does not complete the sentence, then model the full response for the child (emphasizing the words that the child did not say) and then repeat the item from the beginning.

Example:

Adult: (pointing to a plane) “Is this a plane?”

Child: “Yes.”



Adult: (pointing to a plane) "Is this a plane? Yes, **this is a plane.**"

Adult: Is this a plane?

Child: "Yes, this is a plane."

Some of the responses may seem unusual since they differ from typical conversation. For example, in everyday talk, a question like "Do kids eat?" can be answered in a variety of ways (e.g., "Yes," or "Yes, they do" or "Yes, kids eat.") In this program, there is a single response. It is "Yes, kids do eat."

The variability of natural language can be overwhelming for the children. By keeping the pattern consistent, the child has a clear, reliable tool that empowers them. It sends the message that they can crack the code of language.

Level 21 Summary Table

(to be filled in at the completion of each lesson)

Lesson	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Date												
Total # Correct Responses												

***Criterion for Moving On:** Once a child achieves 20 or more items correct on 3 out of 4 consecutive sessions, move on to the next level. If the child does not achieve criterion within the 12 sessions, take a break for 3-4 weeks, and then restart this level from Lesson 1.

NOTE: Continue to carry out the Real-World activities on a daily basis. Incorporate as much language as you can from the lessons into the outside world. The language should include material taught in previous levels as well as the new material taught in this level. Remember to use the samples provided as a guide to creating your own.

LEVEL 22

INTRODUCING “YOU” AND “I”

Overview

It is well known that the pronouns “I” (first person) and “you” (second person) pose particular difficulties for children on the spectrum. These seemingly simple words are far from simple. In contrast to names such as “mommy” and “daddy” that stay consistent, “you” and “I” steadily change. When you are speaking to someone, you call that someone “you,” but then when that person responds, he (she) refers to himself (herself) as “I.”

Discussions involving third person pronouns (*he, she, it, they*) do not present these difficulties. If you pose a question about a third person (e.g., “What is he doing?”) the person you are speaking to can use that same pronoun in offering a response (e.g., “He is sitting”). The greater simplicity of third person pronouns is a major factor in our having used them as the basis for the tasks in all the levels until now.

The ability to use first and second person pronouns effectively rests with an understanding of what is called “role relationships” – that is, understanding the role you have relative to another person. For example, even though you refer to yourself as “I,” you know that you are the same person that others refer to as “you.” This is an area of subtle social understanding, and problems in this realm are central to ASD. That is why it poses such difficulty for the children.

In this level, the teaching will convey some selected aspects of using first and second person pronouns. The most common demands that children face with these forms involve “you” questions that require “I” responses (e.g., “What are you going to do?” “I am going to play.”). It is less common and also less important for them to face “I” questions that demand “you” responses (e.g., “What am I doing?” “You are eating.”) Accordingly, this level will focus on teaching the child to use “I” in response to questions containing “you.” This eases the complexity that the children confront and thereby gives them a smoother entry into this important realm of exchange.

The following question forms are taught in this level:

- **Identifying an Action:** *What are you doing? Are you ____ing? What were you doing? Were you ____ing? What did you do? Did you ____?*



- ▣ **Identifying Possession:** *What do you have? Do you have ____? What did you have? Did you have ____? What are you holding? Are you holding ____?*
- ▣ **Identifying Ability:** *Can you ____?*

As with the Yes/No question that imposed greater variability than the other question forms, the child may show some difficulty at first with the “you–I” questions. If this happens, say the question in a soft voice; then immediately provide the answer in a louder voice (so that you are modeling the full sequence). Then ask the question, but this time wait for the child to answer. Refer back to the techniques described in Level 13 for additional guidance.

Level 22 Summary Table

(to be filled in at the completion of each lesson)

Lesson	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Date												
Total # Correct Responses												

***Criterion for Moving On:** Once a child achieves 20 or more items correct on 3 out of 4 consecutive sessions, move on to the next level. If the child does not achieve criterion within the 12 sessions, take a break for 3-4 weeks, and then restart this level from Lesson 1.

NOTE: Continue to carry out the Real-World activities on a daily basis. Incorporate as much language as you can from the lessons into the outside world. The language should include material taught in previous levels as well as the new material taught in this level. Remember to use the samples provided as a guide to creating your own.

LEVEL 23

QUESTIONS ABOUT “WHAT HAS BEEN SAID”

Overview

At this point, the program makes another important advance. So far, all of the comments and questions have dealt with objects and experiences in the world that the child observed. This is reflected in exchanges where the child sees a car moving and is asked, “*What is the car doing?*” We refer to this type of language as *Language About Perception* (LAP).

Many comments and questions in everyday life fall into a different category. They concern information that has been put forth in language alone, such as saying to a child “*We are going to the store,*” and then asking, “*Where are we going?*” We refer to this type of language as *Language about Language* (LAL).

LAL is vital to effective language use. For example, it is the foundation of stories—where the information comes via sentences steadily building one upon the other. It is also essential to understanding conversations where, as with stories, information is provided verbally and not through direct experience. The ability to understand stories and conversations is vital for expanding a child’s communication skills, but these are only accessible to the child who has a foundation in LAL.

This level introduces questions involving LAL. Objects and pictures are still used, but they do not represent the full set of information that a child needs for a correct response. Instead, some of the information is provided through language that the child must then use to formulate an effective response.

Examples:

(Two frogs are in view)

Adult: (pointing) “This frog can jump, but that one cannot jump. Which one can jump?”

Child: (pointing) “This one can jump.”



(Two ladies and two kids are in view)

Adult: "These ladies like sitting, but these kids do not like sitting. Do these kids like sitting?"

Child: "No, these kids do not like sitting."

Level 23 Summary Table

(to be filled in at the completion of each lesson)

Lesson	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Date												
Total # Correct Responses												

***Criterion for Moving On:** Once a child achieves 20 or more items correct on 3 out of 4 consecutive sessions, move on to the next level. If the child does not achieve criterion within the 12 sessions, take a break for 3-4 weeks, and then restart this level from Lesson 1.

NOTE: Continue to carry out the Real-World activities on a daily basis. Incorporate as much language as you can from the lessons into the outside world. The language should include material taught in previous levels as well as the new material taught in this level. Remember to use the samples provided as a guide to creating your own.

LEVEL 24

SUMMARIZING EVENTS

Overview

By this point, the child has mastered a wide range of questions. This has been achieved by teaching each question form separately and intensively. As you have seen, in any session, the new form appears repeatedly – with slight variations from item to item (e.g., in teaching the past tense, one item may be “What was the girl doing?” while the next item might be “What were the dogs doing?”) While this eases the learning for the child, it does not lend itself to showing how a “topic” or “theme” (e.g., a discussion about a trip to the zoo) is maintained over a set of exchanges which can vary greatly from one sentence to the next.

If a child is to become adept at verbal communication, topic maintenance is a key skill. It is also central to reading comprehension since books maintain an idea over sets of pages.

This current level begins to address this aspect of language. It is aimed at introducing the child to topic maintenance. Each session uses the language forms that the child has already mastered to craft a sustained exchange on a particular topic. The exchange then ends with the child producing a short summary of the key points.

A key support offered to the child in this work is sentence completion. In this technique, you provide a near-complete sentence that the child has to complete. He or she then has to produce the complete sentence independently.

Example of a Guided Summary (following a discussion about an animal who was hungry):

Adult: This animal (pointing to a picture) wanted some _____.

Child: food

Adult: Good, now say that again.

Child: This animal wanted some food.

Adult: He found some _____.

Child: food

Adult: Good, now say that again.

Child: He found some food.



Adult: Now tell me the whole thing

Child: The animal wanted food. He found some food.

In these activities, the techniques from earlier levels still apply. For example, If the child provides an incorrect response or no response, give the child the answer, and then repeat the item from the beginning.

Level 24 Summary Table

(to be filled in at the completion of each lesson)

Lesson	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Date												
Total # Correct Responses												

***Criterion for Moving On:** Once a child achieves 20 or more items correct on 3 out of 4 consecutive sessions, move on to the next level. If the child does not achieve criterion within the 12 sessions, take a break for 3-4 weeks, and then restart this level from Lesson 1.

NOTE: Continue to carry out the Real-World activities on a daily basis. Incorporate as much language as you can from the lessons into the outside world. The language should include material taught in previous levels as well as the new material taught in this level. Remember to use the samples provided as a guide to creating your own.