



HOME AND CLASSROOM RESOURCES

-RESOURCES TO HELP FOSTER INDEPENDENCE IN ANY CHILD AND DEVELOP COMMUNICATION
IN BOTH FULLY-VERBAL AND LESS-VERBAL CHILDREN-

MY CHOICE BOARD

-INTRODUCTION-

A choice board is useful for all children, but especially provides a way for the young non-verbal child to communicate their wants while they are still developing speech.

Choice boards are also useful for those around them to easily understand immediate needs, especially caregivers not familiar with sign language yet. When used properly under professional supervision,* one form of communication (PECS/AAC) can be used in conjunction with development of the other (speech); they are not mutually exclusive.

Creating a board for common requests in the classroom/home can introduce them to the vocabulary of items they use in daily life, while at the same time allowing them a way to communicate and reduce any frustration they may be feeling when unable to articulate their wants. In this document,* you will find some examples of how to gradually move from simple card use to teaching the sentence request "I want ___."

-PLANNING-

Level: 1+ **Theme:** Home and Classroom Tools **Topic and Filename:** Choice Boards_Visual Schedules_Cards Set
Context: neurotypical toddler, preschooler, or special needs individual who may be pre-K age or may be older
Duration: intermittent throughout sessions/days, will vary; to be used over span of 1+ year

Disclaimer: *This document and its associated graphics file are an educational support tool and not intended as any behavioural therapy tool; if a child is undergoing Applied Behaviour Analysis or any other program, please consult their IEP/Behaviour Protocol and BCBA/SLP/health care professional for usage and application of such resources.



Materials:

- Adhesive Velcro dots/cut up adhesive hook and loop fastener tape
- Laminator, or self-laminating sheets
- **Select “Fit to Page” with landscape mode in print setup:** 1 printout each per child, of the page “My Choice Board,” printed from al-m.ca/SpecEd and laminated, with Velcro dots/hook (rough side) tape applied on labeled spots
- 1 printout per child, of “My Choices” pages from same file at al-m.ca/SpecEd, laminated and cut up into the square cards; Velcro dots/loop (soft side) tape applied to back of each square

Language Skills Addressed: Beginning sounds of choices cards; sentences using “I want”

Skills and Strategy Focus: Association of card image to real object/action and word association

Selected Level 1 Outcomes and Specific Objectives:

Listening: Student will listen for instructions to select card and place on board

Reading: Student may begin to recognize the words on the cards

Speaking/Signing: Student will point at/select card, and may learn to approximate or say the name/sound of the card words depending on ability

Fine Motor/Gross Motor: Student will pick up laminated card and attach and detach velcro, using pincer grip with some force to remove from board; point at desired card

Assessment: Teacher and parent/caregiver will make anecdotal notes on card sounds/words, independence, confidence in requesting, both at home and in class

Follow-up: Parents/caregivers should use the same file’s boards and cards at home; parent and teacher should meet monthly to discuss progress in independence and any speech

Suggested Procedure Outline:

Modify as necessary, e.g. can introduce one card at a time instead of four; Repeat cycle for each new set of four cards.*

1. **Select 4 square choices cards, ones you would eventually offer on board all at once in a single setting**
 - a. Best to start first time with board of motivating items, things child likes to have or prefer to do
 - b. e.g. a board with “What would you like to eat?” options or “What would you like to play?,” “Where would you like to go?” options; additional cards can be created using the custom template page, with pictures of child’s own toys, grandparents’ house, favourite TV show, etc.
 - c. Regardless of different option sets, all of these should be used with the single “My Choices” Board, which has the phrase “I want _____”
2. **Weeks 1-2: Introduce the 4 choices cards, at times they would naturally occur**
 - a. e.g. show “juice” card whenever you serve child juice—adult should point to card, slowly and clearly say its label, and do the activity immediately (hand juice to child), so an association between card and activity and word is created in child’s mind over time, as association may not be obvious for some children.
 - b. Do not pressure child to make sounds or requests, just show them the image.



3. **Weeks 3-4: Continue to do the same as above, in situation where the card item would naturally appear, but now, hand the card to the child, and have them give it back to you, as a silent request for the item**
 - a. e.g. “juice” (which they were going to get anyway at this point)— they must hand you the card to get the item, which should be given immediately upon card being handed over. You may need to model this for them with someone else at first.
 - b. Adult should praise child for handing over card, and incorporate the sentence in their praise, e.g. “You did such a good job of telling me ‘I want juice’; Fantastic!”
4. **Weeks 5-6: From handing the card over to the adult, the child should now progress to sticking the card on the Choice Board, in the blank square after the words “I want.”**
 - a. As above, the item e.g. juice box, should be given *immediately* after card is stuck to board, along with adult saying words of praise as above.
5. **Weeks 7-8: Now when the card item is due to naturally occur, have it seen, with the three other cards, in the choices row at bottom of board**
 - a. Adult should briefly model picking out the specific card e.g. juice, from the row of four cards, and sticking it in the main empty box beside “I want” and say the sentence for the child. This modeling should be a brief process as child is waiting to get the item.
 - b. Now have the child do the same, focusing on choosing and moving up card, not on making sounds. Adult should provide encouragement throughout, and use hand-over-hand with child at first. Repeat this for all four cards over the two weeks in their natural settings.
6. **Weeks 9-10: Stop modeling using the board, and have child pick out card on their own without you demonstrating, so they independently make the request, picking out the card and moving it to complete the “I want” sentence. When they are done, offer them the item immediately, while praising their effort.**
7. **Short term follow-up:** Have board out and set up with four cards at bottom, when it is time for any of the items to naturally be used, but do not initiate anything else; have child initiate request for item e.g. juice/show/book by picking out card and placing on “I want” box fully independently; when the request is made successfully by placing the card, give them the item immediately, adult always making sure to give a lot of praise and saying the phrase “I want ____” while pointing at relevant parts on board.
8. **Long-term follow-up:** If appropriate*, adult can start encouraging child to make initial sounds of the card words, and the phrase “I want _____,” but no negative pressure should be put on the child.
9. **Repeat cycle for each new set of four cards**

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