



# Imitation

Practical kit for teaching  
**VB-MAPP** skills to **autistic**  
**children**

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# Imitation 1M: Initial Gross Motor Movements

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Mastery Criterion</b>            | The learner reproduces at least 3 gross motor movements after the therapist's instruction.   |
| <b>Program Goal</b>                 | To strengthen the learner's initial ability to imitate visible motor actions, enhancing joint attention and preparing for social activities. |
| <b>Discriminative Stimulus (SD)</b> | "Look, do this with me!" followed by a clear demonstration of the movement.  |
| <b>Target Behavior</b>              | The learner copies the demonstrated movement (e.g., leaning the torso side to side, marching in place).                                      |

## Prerequisite Skills

- Brief eye contact.
- Sufficient balance to perform large body movements.

## Teaching Procedure

- Position yourself facing the learner.
- Deliver the SD and perform the movement.
- Immediately reinforce any approximated response.
- If incorrect, provide partial physical guidance (e.g., gently guiding part of the body).
- Gradually fade prompts until independence is achieved.

# Imitation 1M: Teaching Steps and Activities

## Teaching Steps

- Train at least 3 different movements in varied order.
- Change body position (standing, kneeling, sitting in a chair).
- Insert short pauses to avoid automatic repetition.

## Suggested Activities

- Cross arms over chest, then open them.
- Bend the torso forward and return upright.
- March in place while lifting knees alternately.

## Reinforcement Plan

- Immediate social reinforcement (praise, smile, positive attention).
- Additional reinforcers: allow the learner to choose a short song or briefly play with a preferred toy.

 **General Notes:** If signs of disengagement appear, use short breaks or introduce playful variations to maintain motivation.

# Imitation 2M: Expansion of Gross Motor Actions

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Mastery Criterion</b>            | The learner reproduces at least 6 different gross motor movements presented in varied order.                     |
| <b>Program Goal</b>                 | To expand the motor imitation repertoire and promote behavioral flexibility when responding to new instructions. |
| <b>Discriminative Stimulus (SD)</b> | "Now try this with me!" followed by a demonstration.   |
| <b>Target Behavior</b>              | Accurate execution of a variety of gross motor movements.  |

## Train pairs of movements

## Mix all 6 movements in random order

## Combine previously learned pairs

## Increase physical distance (up to ~6 feet)

## Teaching Procedure

- Begin with two mastered movements.
- Gradually add new movements while alternating with the known ones.
- Provide physical or gestural prompts only when necessary.
- Fade prompts quickly to promote independence.

# Imitation 2M: Activities and Reinforcement

## Suggested Activities



### Movement 1

Squat and stand up.



### Movement 2

Extend arms forward.



### Movement 3

Rotate wrists in circles.



### Movement 4

Jump forward.



### Movement 5

Stomp foot on the floor.



### Movement 6

Touch shoulders with hands.

## Reinforcement Plan

Differential reinforcement: enthusiastic praise for more independent responses; tangible reinforcement when needed to sustain motivation.

- General Notes:** Alternating with short songs or quick games may boost engagement and reduce resistance.

# Imitation 3M: Use of Objects in Imitative Acts

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Mastery Criterion</b>            | The learner imitates at least 5 different actions using distinct objects.  |
| <b>Program Goal</b>                 | To promote understanding of object functions through imitation, supporting the development of a functional repertoire. |
| <b>Discriminative Stimulus (SD)</b> | "Now do it like me!" while modeling the action with the object.  |
| <b>Target Behavior</b>              | Selecting the correct object and reproducing the demonstrated action.  |

## Materials Needed

Everyday items: spoon, toy hairbrush, flashlight, ball, toy remote control.

## Teaching Procedure

- Place 2–3 objects within reach.
- Demonstrate a simple action.
- Reinforce correct imitation.
- If incorrect, guide the learner's hand to the object and model the action.
- Introduce variations with the same object to encourage generalization.

# Imitation 3M: Activities and Reinforcement

1

## Brushing hair with a toy brush

Demonstrate proper brushing motion and direction.

2

## Shining a flashlight toward the wall

Show how to press the button and aim the light.

3

## Bouncing a ball up and down

Demonstrate the proper hand position and force.

4

## "Pressing" a button on a toy remote

Show deliberate finger movement to press specific buttons.

5

## Stirring an empty cup with a spoon

Demonstrate circular stirring motion at appropriate speed.

## Reinforcement Plan

- Immediate social reinforcement.
- Activity-based reinforcement: e.g., after imitating stirring, the therapist "plays serving coffee" together.

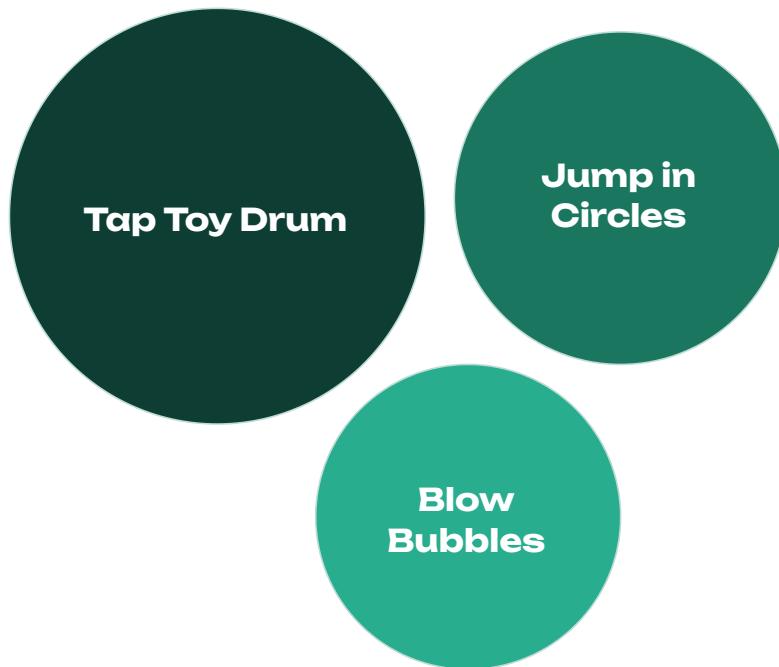
 **General Notes:** Whenever possible, use objects of personal interest to the learner to increase spontaneous engagement.

# Imitation 4M: Emergence of Spontaneous Imitation in Interactions

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>Mastery Criterion</b> | The learner spontaneously imitates at least 5 motor behaviors of others without direct instruction. |
| <b>Program Goal</b>      | To foster natural, spontaneous imitation in social contexts without relying on explicit commands.   |
| <b>Teaching Context</b>  | Play situations or group activities at home, school, or clinic.                                     |

## Teaching Procedure

- Provide shared toys or activities.
- The therapist performs an action in an animated way, without giving a direct command.
- Reinforce any occurrence of spontaneous imitation (praise, continuing play, access to desired item).
- If imitation does not occur, use gradual elicitation strategies (e.g., exaggerating the movement or providing a subtle gestural cue).



# Imitation 4M: Activities and Reinforcement

## Suggested Activities

### Drum Imitation

The therapist taps a toy drum → the child starts drumming too.

### Movement Copying

A peer jumps in circles → the learner attempts to repeat the movement.

### Gesture Mimicking

An adult blows bubbles → the child imitates the blowing gesture.

## Reinforcement Plan

Social reinforcement embedded in the context (applause, continuation of play, group attention).

- General Notes:** Value spontaneous responses even if incomplete, reinforcing the child's initiative before expecting precision.

This module marks an important transition from prompted to natural imitation, laying the groundwork for social learning in everyday environments. By reinforcing spontaneous attempts, we build intrinsic motivation for imitative behavior.

# Imitation 5M: Expansion to Varied and Combined Movements

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Mastery Criterion</b>            | The learner reproduces at least 15 different types of movements (gross, fine, or object-related).              |
| <b>Program Goal</b>                 | To build a varied and flexible imitation repertoire, preparing the learner for more complex skill acquisition. |
| <b>Discriminative Stimulus (SD)</b> | "Let's play copycat!" followed by the modeled movement.  |
| <b>Target Behavior</b>              | Accurate imitation of the modeled motor movement or object action.   |

## Teaching Procedure

- Introduce different categories of movements gradually.
- Mix mastered movements with new ones.
- Use varied contexts: standing, sitting, on the floor, outdoors.
- Incorporate playful elements like "freeze game" or "who copies first."

# Imitation 5M: Activities and Reinforcement

## Suggested Activities

| 1  | 2  | 3   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Gross Motor</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hopping on one foot</li><li>• Spinning arms like helicopter blades</li><li>• Jumping jacks</li><li>• Crawling like different animals</li><li>• Balancing on one leg</li></ul> | <b>Fine Motor</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Snapping fingers</li><li>• Touching nose with finger</li><li>• Making hand signs</li><li>• Wiggling specific fingers</li><li>• Drawing shapes in the air</li></ul> | <b>With Objects</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pushing a toy car</li><li>• Twisting the cap of an empty bottle</li><li>• Tapping a small drum</li><li>• Stacking blocks</li><li>• Rolling a ball</li></ul> |

## Reinforcement Plan

Combined reinforcement: social praise + brief access to preferred activities (e.g., listening to a favorite song after three successful imitations).

 **General Notes:** This is an ideal stage to encourage functional generalization—vary who models the action (parents, peers, different therapists).

# Imitation 6M: Appropriate Selection and Use of Objects in Modeling

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Mastery Criterion</b>            | The learner identifies and correctly uses at least 8 different objects through imitative instructions.          |
| <b>Program Goal</b>                 | To develop discrimination between similar objects and promote functional imitation based on accurate selection. |
| <b>Discriminative Stimulus (SD)</b> | "Watch what I do!" while the therapist models the action with an object.  |
| <b>Target Behavior</b>              | Selecting the appropriate object from available choices and reproducing the demonstrated action.                |

## Materials Needed

3-4 distinct objects (e.g., spoon, toy car, cup, small box).

## Teaching Procedure

- Present the objects on a table.
- Model the action with one of them.
- The learner selects the correct object and imitates the action.
- If incorrect, provide a gestural prompt (pointing to the object) or partial physical prompt.
- Gradually increase the number of available objects to make selection more challenging.

# Imitation 6M: Activities and Reinforcement

## Suggested Activities



**Twisting the cap of a bottle**



**Pushing a toy car forward**



**Placing a lid on a box**



**Shaking a rattle**

## Reinforcement Plan

Immediate praise, quick access to the preferred object, or short enjoyable activities (e.g., rolling the toy car with the therapist).

- ❑ **General Notes:** Whenever possible, vary object placement to ensure true discrimination rather than location-based responding.

This module builds critical discrimination skills that support functional object use. By learning to select the correct object based on observed actions, learners develop the foundation for more complex functional skills and adaptive behavior in daily environments.

# Imitation 7M: Coordination of Fine and Precise Movements

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Mastery Criterion</b>            | The learner imitates at least 12 different fine motor movements when prompted.   |
| <b>Program Goal</b>                 | To strengthen fine motor coordination, essential for writing, manipulating small objects, and performing daily living tasks. |
| <b>Discriminative Stimulus (SD)</b> | "Now copy this one!" while the therapist demonstrates the movement.  |
| <b>Target Behavior</b>              | Accurately reproducing movements involving hand and finger coordination.   |

## Prerequisite Skills

Prior evaluation by an occupational therapist to identify motor restrictions and determine appropriate starting movements.

## Teaching Procedure

- The therapist delivers the instruction while modeling the fine motor movement.
- Immediately reinforce correct responses.
- If incorrect, provide gestural prompting (pointing) or light physical guidance (guiding the hand/finger).
- Gradually fade prompts until independent performance is achieved.

# Imitation 7M: Activities and Reinforcement

## Suggested Activities



### Basic Skills

- Opening and closing a clothespin with fingers
- Picking up a bead and placing it in a small container
- Tapping fingertips on the table in sequence (like typing)
- Slowly rolling a pen between fingers

### Intermediate Skills

- Stacking bottle caps on top of each other
- Crumpling a piece of paper into a ball
- Using toy tweezers to transfer small objects
- Drawing a small circle on paper with chalk or pencil

### Advanced Skills

- Making "waves" by opening and closing fingers in sequence
- Twisting the cap of a small jar until it opens
- Placing toy rings on fingers and then removing them
- Fitting small pieces into a board with holes

## Reinforcement Plan

Immediate social reinforcement (praise, enthusiastic feedback) and tangible reinforcement when necessary.

Example: after several correct responses, brief access to playdough or another preferred activity.

**General Notes:** Partial attempts should be reinforced, as they represent progress in coordination. Successive approximations build motivation and support progression.

# Imitation 8M: Reproduction of Chained Action Sequences

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Mastery Criterion</b>            | The learner correctly imitates at least 6 different sequences, each composed of 3 linked steps. |
| <b>Program Goal</b>                 | To train short-term memory, motor planning, and understanding of multi-step routines.           |
| <b>Discriminative Stimulus (SD)</b> | "Watch closely, now do it like me!" while the therapist performs the sequence.                  |
| <b>Target Behavior</b>              | Reproducing the three demonstrated actions in the same order.                                   |

## Teaching Procedure

### 1 Show the sequence slowly

Emphasize clarity of movements to help the learner observe each distinct step.

### 2 Address errors with support

Provide physical assistance on the first step, then allow independent attempts for the others.

### 3 Reinforce appropriately

Use expressive praise and immediate access to a preferred activity.

# Imitation 8M: Suggested Sequences and Reinforcement

## Suggested Sequences

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>Sequence 1</b> | Close a pencil case, push it to the edge of the table, tap it twice with the hand. |
| <b>Sequence 2</b> | Raise both arms, touch shoulders, squat down.                                      |
| <b>Sequence 3</b> | Push a chair back, sit down, place hands on the table.                             |
| <b>Sequence 4</b> | Put a lid on a box, tap it lightly, slide the box to the side.                     |
| <b>Sequence 5</b> | Point upward, stretch arms sideways, cross arms on chest.                          |
| <b>Sequence 6</b> | Take two stacked cups, separate them, place one inside the other.                  |

## Reinforcement Plan

Apply differential reinforcement: more enthusiastic social praise and higher-value reinforcers for sequences completed without support.

 **General Notes:** Introduce simple sequences first and gradually increase complexity as consistency improves, avoiding memory overload.

This module develops crucial executive functioning skills that support daily living activities. By mastering action sequences, learners build the foundation for more complex routines like brushing teeth, getting dressed, or preparing simple meals.

# Imitation 9M: Natural Imitation of Functional Daily Activities

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Mastery Criterion</b>            | The learner spontaneously imitates at least 6 functional activities in natural situations.    |
| <b>Program Goal</b>                 | To promote independence and engagement in daily tasks, supporting social participation.       |
| <b>Discriminative Stimulus (SD)</b> | Observation of a functional action performed by an adult or peer, without direct instruction. |
| <b>Target Behavior</b>              | Spontaneously performing the same activity after observing the model.                         |

## Suggested Activities



### Bottle Closing

Closing a bottle cap after watching an adult demonstrate.



### Pillow Placement

Placing a pillow on the couch after seeing a peer do the same.



### Table Cleaning

Wiping a table after observing an adult.



### Supply Organization

Putting pencils inside a case after seeing someone model it.

# Imitation 10M: Building a Generalized Imitation Repertoire

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Mastery Criterion</b>            | The learner reproduces novel actions (with or without objects) without prior training.                        |
| <b>Program Goal</b>                 | To consolidate a broad imitation repertoire, preparing the learner for continuous learning in new situations. |
| <b>Discriminative Stimulus (SD)</b> | An adult models a new action, with or without an object.  |
| <b>Target Behavior</b>              | Reproducing the action accurately or at least producing an approximation.                                     |

## Teaching Procedure

- Present a new action and observe the immediate response.
- If no response occurs, provide less intrusive prompts (gestural, exaggerated movements).
- If necessary, offer partial physical assistance.
- Reinforce any approximation of the action.

## Suggested Novel Actions

### Facial Coordination

Placing a finger on the nose while blinking eyes.

### Bilateral Coordination

Rotating two small objects simultaneously, one in each hand.

### Balance Challenge

Balancing a block on the head.

### Pretend Play

Pretending to play guitar with a broom handle.

## Reinforcement Plan

Immediate reinforcement with praise, social celebration, and access to a motivating item.

**General Notes:** This skill is essential: the more varied the training, the greater the learner's ability to independently acquire novel actions without formal teaching.