



Intraverbals

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

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Intraverbal 6M – Completing Songs, Rhymes, and Environmental Sounds

Mastery Criterion	The learner completes different segments of children's songs, nursery rhymes, social phrases, or animal/object sounds across various contexts.
Program Goal	To promote the ability to fill in verbal gaps from partial cues, supporting social engagement, auditory memory, and language flexibility.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	- For songs/rhymes: the therapist sings a line and pauses before the last word. - For sounds: "What sound does a ... make?" or "Which animal goes ...?"
Target Behavior	The learner completes the missing word or imitates the correct sound within 3 seconds.

Teaching Steps

Songs/Rhymes

- Pause at the last word in simple songs
- Remove two or more strategic words
- Introduce rhymes with unexpected substitutions
- Encourage spontaneous responses during play

Sounds

- Start with animal pictures + question
- Then ask without visual support
- Alternate between real recorded sounds and direct questions
- Mix mastered and new stimuli in short, varied sessions

Prompting Strategies

- Full verbal model ("The cow says moo")
- Partial verbal model ("The cow says m...")
- Gestural cue or silent pause
- Independent response

Reinforcement Plan

Provide differential reinforcement for quick, spontaneous responses. Rotate between social praise ("Great memory!"), short playful activities (dance together), or small tangible rewards (stickers, bubbles).

Diverse Examples

- Song: "Twinkle, twinkle, little ..." → star
- Sound: "What sound does a police car make?" → siren
- Rhyme/play: "Eeny, meeny, miny ..." → moe
- Object: "When you knock on the door it goes ..." → knock

General Notes

If the learner shows frustration, alternate with humorous sounds (sneeze, snore, fan noise). Humor reduces stress and keeps motivation high.

Intraverbal 7M – Engaging in Basic Social Exchanges

Mastery Criterion	The learner appropriately answers simple social questions such as stating their name or greeting.
Program Goal	To foster self-recognition and engagement in initial social interactions, which are foundational for functional communication.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	Examples: - "What's your name?" - "How are you?" - "Who are you?"
Target Behavior	The learner responds correctly within 3 seconds.

Teaching Procedure

- Stand in front of the learner and ask the social question
- If the response is correct and immediate → reinforce with smile, eye contact, and specific praise
- If the response is incorrect ("My dog is John"), redirect with a gentle verbal model ("Your name is John. Can you say it with me?")
- Gradually fade prompts until the learner responds independently

Begin with pairs of questions

("What's your name?", "How old are you?")

Introduce variations of the same question

("Who is your teacher?" / "What's your teacher's name?")

Mix familiar and new questions in short sequences

Expand to real-life contexts

(greeting peers, introducing in group)

Prompting Strategies

- Full verbal model ("Say: John")
- Partial verbal model ("My name is J...")
- Situational cue (therapist looks expectantly)
- Independent

Reinforcement Plan

Strong social reinforcement (specific praise, high-five), occasional tangible reinforcement (sticker card, short toy access), affective reinforcement (hug, extended smile).

Diverse Examples

- Question: "Who are you?" → "I am Ana."
- Question: "What's your brother's name?" → "Peter."
- Question: "How are you today?" → "I'm happy."

General Notes

If the child echoes the question instead of answering ("What's your name?" → "What's your name?"), use echoic modeling followed by differential reinforcement.

Intraverbal 8M – Finishing Everyday Sentences

Mastery Criterion	The learner completes a variety of common daily sentences without visual prompts.
Program Goal	To expand functional vocabulary and strengthen the ability to understand incomplete linguistic contexts.
Prerequisite Skills	Basic receptive comprehension (equivalent to LRFFC) to support sentence understanding.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	Examples of incomplete phrases: - "You sleep in a ..." - "The car drives on the ..."
Target Behavior	The learner completes the sentence correctly within 3 seconds.

Teaching Procedure

- Present incomplete oral sentences during different moments
- Reinforce immediate correct responses
- If incorrect ("You eat in the shoe"), provide verbal correction and repeat encouragingly
- Gradually reduce support

Teaching Variation

- Use incidental teaching (during snack, walk)
- Play "interrupted story": therapist narrates and pauses for learner to complete

Diverse Examples

- "You paint with ..." → crayons
- "You keep food in the ..." → refrigerator
- "When it's cold, we wear a ..." → coat
- "You listen to music with ..." → headphones
- "You take a shower in the ..." → bathroom

Simulated Error

Therapist: "You drink ..."

Learner: "Scissors."

Therapist: "Actually, you drink juice. Repeat with me: 'You drink juice.'"

Reinforcement Plan

- Praise ("Great job remembering!")
- Activity-based reinforcement (brief movement break, short music clip)
- Occasional small tangible reinforcement

General Notes

Include sentences linked to the child's familiar environment (names of relatives, home objects). This increases relevance and generalization.

Intraverbal 9M – Answering "What?" Questions

Mastery Criterion	The learner answers a variety of "What...?" questions appropriately.
Program Goal	To expand the learner's functional verbal repertoire by training discrimination of objects, actions, and functions.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	Questions such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- "What do you use to write?"- "What makes noise in the kitchen?"
Target Behavior	Provide an appropriate response within 3 seconds.

Teaching Procedure

- Begin with visual support (pictures, real objects)
- Move to questions without visual aids
- Introduce planned errors to model corrections
- Differentially reinforce more independent responses

Diverse Examples

- "What do you wear on your feet?" → Shoes
- "What do you use to cut paper?" → Scissors
- "What gives light when it's dark?" → Flashlight
- "What do you take to school?" → Backpack
- "What makes noise on the street?" → Truck

Simulated Error

Question: "What do you use to eat soup?"

Learner's answer: "Knife."

Correction: "Almost! We use a spoon for soup. Let's try again."

Teaching Variation

- Use natural contexts ("We are in the kitchen—what do we use to cook rice?")
- Mix easy and more challenging questions

Reinforcement Plan

- Praise + celebratory gesture
- Quick access to a preferred activity
- Affective reinforcement (handshake, hug)

General Notes

Vary themes (playtime, school, family routines) to avoid rote responding and encourage verbal flexibility.

Intraverbal 10M – Answering "Who?" and "Where?" Questions

Mastery Criterion	The learner answers questions about people and places appropriately.
Program Goal	To develop the ability to associate social roles and functional locations with fluent verbal responses.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	Questions such as: - "Who cuts hair?" - "Where do you sleep?"
Target Behavior	Provide a correct response within 3 seconds.

Teaching Procedure

- Work on "Who?" and "Where?" questions in parallel
- Gradually mix both categories
- If the response is incorrect, provide a visual cue or partial model

Diverse Examples – Who?

- Who teaches at school? → Teacher
- Who delivers the mail? → Mail carrier
- Who drives the bus? → Bus driver
- Who prepares medicine? → Pharmacist
- Who sings songs? → Singer

Diverse Examples – Where?

- Where do you buy fruit? → Grocery store
- Where do we sleep at night? → Bedroom
- Where are the books at school? → Library
- Where do we take a shower? → Bathroom
- Where do we play soccer? → Field

Simulated Error

Question: "Who fixes cars?"

Learner's answer: "Teacher."

Correction: "Actually, the person who fixes cars is a mechanic. Repeat with me."

Teaching Variation

- Use short videos to introduce questions ("Where were the firefighters?")
- Create real-life context: bring the learner to a setting (kitchen, bedroom) and ask questions there

Reinforcement Plan

- Enthusiastic praise
- Quick activities (jump 3 times, short group game)
- Occasional tangible reinforcement (sticker, brief toy access)

General Notes

Start with clear, familiar figures and settings, then progress to abstract contexts ("Who helps when you're sad?") to encourage more complex responses.

Intraverbal 11M – Producing Spontaneous Verbal Comments

Mastery Criterion	The learner produces intraverbal comments spontaneously, without direct prompts.
Program Goal	To develop skills for initiating natural verbal exchanges, enhancing social engagement, reciprocity, and communicative initiative.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	A comment or observation made by therapist, family member, or peer (e.g., "It's raining a lot outside," "The room is crowded today").
Target Behavior	Make a related comment within 3 seconds, without being asked.

Teaching Procedure

- Start with comments about images ("Look, the boy fell down!")
- Wait up to 3 seconds for a response
- If no response, provide a model ("You could say: He might be hurt")
- Gradually fade prompts, returning to the initial comment and waiting for independent responses
- Generalize to daily routines (arrival time, snack time, transitions)

	
Therapist Comment "It's really hot today."	Learner Response "I want to go to the pool."
	
Parent Comment "I'm getting the car."	Learner Response "Can I come too?"
	
Peer Comment "I'm eating an apple."	Learner Response "I like bananas better."

Simulated Error

Comment: "It's very windy."

Learner's response: silence.

Correction: "You can say something like 'The wind feels cold.' Try to repeat."

Reinforcement Plan

- Differential reinforcement for quick and creative responses
- Social reinforcement (praise, smile, high-five)
- Short activities as reinforcement (choosing a song to play)

General Notes

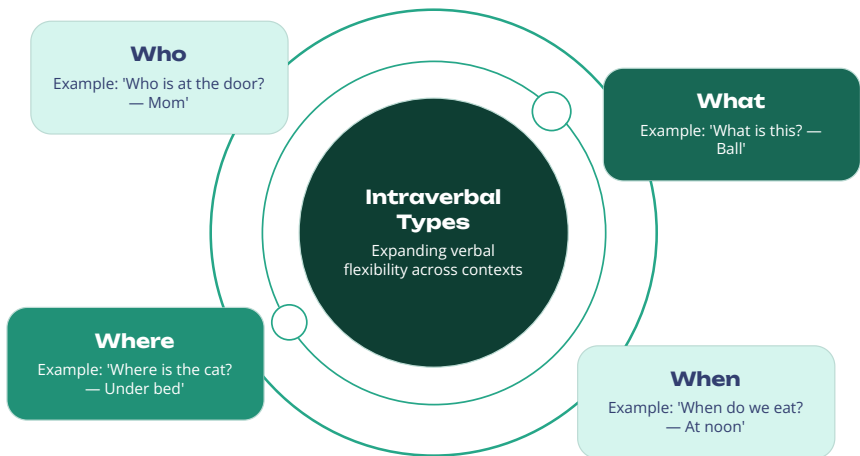
Spontaneous intraverbals may also appear within mands (e.g., "I want to go too"). These should still be reinforced to support initiative and motivation.

Intraverbal 12M – Expanding the Intraverbal Repertoire in Varied Ways

Mastery Criterion	The learner demonstrates a broad variety of intraverbal responses across contexts.
Program Goal	To increase verbal flexibility, promoting adaptation to different types of conversations, questions, and natural comments.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	- Open-ended questions ("What do you like to do?") - Specific questions ("Where do you sleep?") - Spontaneous observations
Target Behavior	Respond correctly and coherently within 3 seconds.

Teaching Procedure

- Create rotating lists of questions from different categories
- Mix easier and more complex questions
- Use topics from the learner's daily life to support generalization
- Turn it into a game challenge: "Answer 5 questions in a row without missing any"



Diverse Examples

- "Who cooks at your house?" → "My mom."
- "What do you find at the beach?" → "Sand and ocean."
- "What sound does an airplane make?" → "Vroooooom."

Simulated Error

Question: "Where are the books kept?"

Answer: "In the car."

Correction: "Almost! Usually, books are kept in the library. Let's repeat together."

Reinforcement Plan

- Immediate social reinforcement
- Occasional tangible reinforcement (small toy, snack)
- Playful reinforcement (dance, blowing bubbles)

General Notes

Avoid restricting the repertoire to fixed questions. Introduce new questions weekly to prevent rote responding and build flexibility.

Intraverbal 13M – Answering Questions after Listening to Short Stories

Mastery Criterion	The learner answers comprehension questions after listening to a short passage or story.
Program Goal	To strengthen auditory comprehension, short-term memory, and narrative skills.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	The therapist reads or tells a short story and then asks a related question.
Target Behavior	Respond correctly within 3 seconds.

Teaching Procedure

- Read a short passage with a picture
- Ask a related question
- If incorrect, reread the sentence highlighting key words
- Progress to longer stories without visual support



Example 1

Story: "John ran to the gate and saw a dog barking."

Question: "What did John see?"

Answer: "A dog."



Example 2

Story: "Mary baked a cake and put it in the oven."

Question: "What did Mary make?"

Answer: "A cake."



Example 3

Story: "The teacher wrote on the board."

Question: "Who wrote on the board?"

Answer: "The teacher."

Simulated Error

Question: "Who baked the cake?"

Learner's answer: "The dog."

Correction: "Not the dog—Mary baked the cake. Repeat with me: Mary baked the cake."

Reinforcement Plan

- Immediate praise and social reinforcement
- Short play breaks between passages

General Notes

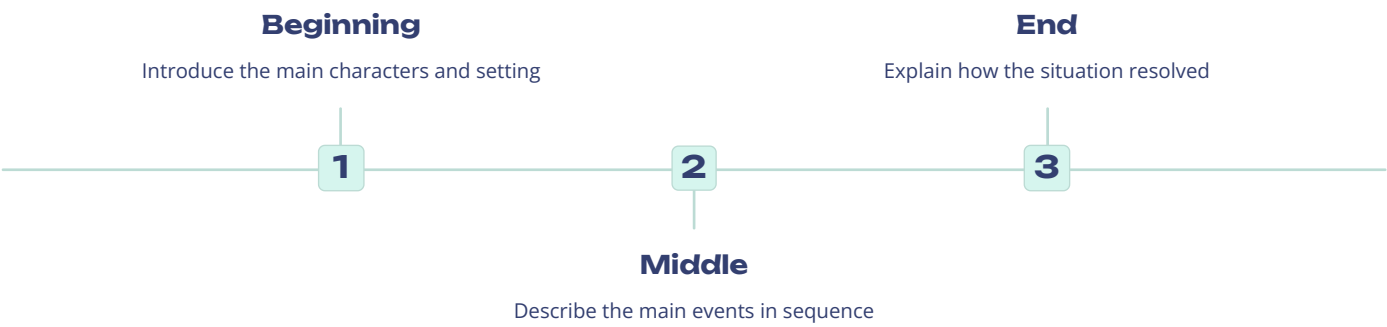
Avoid using familiar stories, as they may trigger memorized responses. Prefer original or therapist-created passages.

Intraverbal 14M – Retelling Events from Narratives and Situations

Mastery Criterion	The learner organizes and describes events, videos, or personal experiences.
Program Goal	To train verbal narration with beginning, middle, and end, increasing coherence of speech.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	Prompts such as: - "Tell me what happened..." - "Tell me about the video..."
Target Behavior	Narrate fluently using complete sentences with at least eight words.

Teaching Procedure

- Present a scene or short video
- Request an oral retelling
- Provide guiding questions if needed ("And then what happened?")
- Gradually fade prompts until spontaneous retelling occurs



Diverse Examples

- After watching a cartoon: "The dog ran, fell down, and started barking."
- After play: "I played soccer with my friend at the school park."
- After a personal event: "Yesterday I went to the store with my mom and we bought fruit."

Simulated Error

Prompt: "Tell me what happened in the video."

Learner's answer: "Car."

Correction: "Let's try again. You can say: The car crashed and then the man ran away."

Reinforcement Plan

- Specific praise ("You gave so many details!")
- Occasional tangible reinforcement (sticker, small toy)

General Notes

Encourage the learner to include feelings ("He was sad," "I was happy") to strengthen socio-emotional skills.

Intraverbal 15M – Answering Multiple Questions about the Same Topic

Mastery Criterion	The learner answers a variety of related questions about a single topic.
Program Goal	To train verbal flexibility and thematic organization, consolidating understanding across diverse topics.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	A series of "Who?", "What?", "Where?", and "Which?" questions about one theme.
Target Behavior	Answer each question correctly within 3 seconds.

Teaching Procedure

- Select a theme (e.g., school, park, snack time)
- Present a set of varied questions on that theme
- Begin with visual support (picture, object) and fade gradually
- Mix questions from different themes in blocks

Theme: School

- Who teaches the students? → Teacher
- What do you carry in your backpack? → Notebook
- Where do you study? → Classroom
- Which subject is your favorite? → Math

Theme: Park

- Who plays with you at the park? → Friend
- What do you hold when you're on the swing? → Ropes
- Where are the slides? → Playground
- Which play equipment do you like most? → Slide

Simulated Error

Question: "Where are the books kept?"

Learner's answer: "On the plate."

Correction: "Not on a plate—that's for food. Books are kept in the library."

Reinforcement Plan

- Social reinforcement (praise, smile)
- Brief choice-based activities (short game, quick song)

General Notes

It is helpful to vary themes, including emotional topics ("Who helps you when you feel sad?"), to promote broader generalization.

Implementing Intraverbal Programs: Key Considerations

1

Assess Current Skills

Before beginning any intraverbal program, conduct a thorough assessment of the learner's current verbal abilities, including receptive language, echoic skills, and existing intraverbal responses.

2

Select Appropriate Starting Point

Choose the intraverbal program that matches the learner's current abilities. Starting too advanced may lead to frustration, while starting too basic may not provide sufficient challenge.

3

Establish Consistent Data Collection

Track progress systematically to determine when mastery is achieved and when to move to more complex skills.

4

Plan for Generalization

Ensure skills transfer across settings, people, and contexts by practicing in varied environments with different communication partners.

Successful implementation requires consistency across all communication partners. Ensure that family members, teachers, and other caregivers understand the goals and procedures of the current intraverbal program.

Prompting Hierarchy for Intraverbal Programs

Prompt Level	Description	Example
Full Verbal Model	Providing the complete answer for the learner to imitate	"Say: The cow says moo"
Partial Verbal Model	Providing part of the answer	"The cow says m..."
Phonemic Cue	Providing just the initial sound	"The cow says /m/"
Visual Prompt	Showing a picture or object	Showing a picture of a cow
Gestural Prompt	Using body language to hint at the answer	Pointing to ears for "listen"
Expectant Waiting	Pausing with an expectant look	Silent pause with raised eyebrows
Independent	No prompts provided	Learner responds without assistance

Prompt Fading Strategies

Most-to-Least Prompting

Begin with the highest level of prompting needed for success, then systematically reduce support as the learner demonstrates progress.

Least-to-Most Prompting

Start with minimal or no prompts, adding support only as needed if the learner is unsuccessful.

Time Delay

Introduce a brief pause (2-5 seconds) before providing prompts to allow opportunity for independent responding.

The goal of all prompting strategies is to fade support systematically until the learner can respond independently across various contexts and with different communication partners.

Reinforcement Strategies for Intraverbal Development



Social Reinforcement

Praise, high-fives, smiles, and other social gestures that communicate approval and encouragement.
Example: "Great job remembering that cows say moo!"



Tangible Reinforcement

Physical items like stickers, small toys, or token systems that can be exchanged for preferred items. Best used intermittently rather than continuously.



Activity Reinforcement

Brief access to preferred activities like jumping, dancing, playing a quick game, or listening to a favorite song after successful responses.

Differential Reinforcement

Providing stronger or more enthusiastic reinforcement for responses that are:

- More independent (requiring fewer prompts)
- Faster (shorter latency between question and answer)
- More elaborate or detailed
- Novel or creative rather than rote

Reinforcement Schedules

As skills develop, gradually shift from continuous reinforcement (reinforcing every correct response) to intermittent reinforcement (reinforcing some but not all correct responses). This helps maintain responding even when reinforcement isn't always available.

Pairing Reinforcers

Combine social reinforcement with other types to strengthen the value of social praise over time. For example, pair enthusiastic praise with a high-five and occasional access to a preferred activity.

Common Challenges in Intraverbal Training

Challenge	Description	Strategies
Echolalia	Learner repeats the question instead of answering it	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Use echoic-to-intraverbal transfer- Provide visual supports initially- Reinforce any approximation of an answer
Rote Responding	Learner gives memorized answers regardless of the question	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Vary question wording- Mix question types- Reinforce novel responses
Prompt Dependency	Learner waits for prompts before responding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Use time delay- Fade prompts systematically- Differentially reinforce independent responses
Limited Generalization	Skills don't transfer to new settings or people	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Practice in multiple environments- Involve various communication partners- Use naturalistic teaching opportunities
Motivation Issues	Learner shows disinterest in verbal interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Incorporate special interests- Use preferred activities as reinforcers- Keep sessions short and engaging

Addressing Frustration

If the learner shows signs of frustration during intraverbal training:

- Return to an easier, mastered skill to rebuild confidence
- Break complex skills into smaller steps
- Increase reinforcement for attempts and approximations
- Incorporate humor and playfulness to reduce pressure
- Take short breaks when needed, then return to the activity

Data Collection for Intraverbal Programs

What to Track

- Percentage of correct independent responses
- Types of prompts required
- Response latency (time between question and answer)
- Novel vs. rote responses
- Generalization across settings and people

Data Collection Methods

- Trial-by-trial data sheets
- Frequency counts
- Duration recording
- ABC (Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence) charts
- Video recording for later analysis

Sample Data Sheet Format

Create a table with columns for:

- Date and time
- Question/SD presented
- Learner's response (verbatim)
- Prompt level required
- Correct/Incorrect
- Notes (motivation, distractions, etc.)

Mastery Criteria

Typical mastery criteria include:

- 80-90% correct independent responses
- Across 2-3 consecutive sessions
- With at least 2 different instructors
- In at least 2 different settings

Using Data for Decision-Making

Regularly review collected data to:

- Determine when to move to the next program level
- Identify patterns of errors that need targeted intervention
- Adjust prompting strategies based on learner response
- Document progress for team meetings and program planning

Prerequisite Skills for Intraverbal Development

Skill Area	Importance for Intraverbals
Receptive Language	The learner must understand the questions being asked before they can respond appropriately.
Echoic Skills	The ability to repeat words and phrases provides a foundation for verbal imitation that can be shaped into intraverbal responses.
Mand (Request) Skills	Experience with verbal requesting builds motivation for communication and vocabulary that can transfer to intraverbal contexts.
Tact (Label) Skills	The ability to name objects and actions provides vocabulary that can be accessed during intraverbal exchanges.
Listener Responding	Following verbal directions demonstrates comprehension that supports intraverbal development.
Joint Attention	The ability to share focus with a communication partner is essential for meaningful verbal exchanges.

Assessment of Prerequisites

Before beginning intraverbal training, assess the learner's skills in these prerequisite areas. If significant deficits are identified, it may be necessary to strengthen these foundation skills first or concurrently with early intraverbal programs.



The development of intraverbal skills builds upon and integrates these prerequisite abilities, creating a comprehensive verbal repertoire that supports functional communication.

Naturalistic Teaching Strategies for Intraverbals



Embed in Routines

Incorporate intraverbal opportunities into daily activities like mealtimes, dressing, and transitions. Example: During breakfast, ask "What do you put in your cereal?" or "What are you drinking?"



Follow the Child's Lead

Use the learner's current focus of attention as an opportunity for intraverbal exchanges. If they're playing with cars, ask questions about colors, sounds, or functions of vehicles.



Create Communication Temptations

Arrange the environment to encourage verbal interaction. Example: Place a favorite toy in sight but out of reach, then make comments that invite verbal responses.

Incidental Teaching Moments

Look for spontaneous opportunities throughout the day to practice intraverbal skills:

- When a song comes on the radio, pause it and wait for the learner to fill in the next line
- During a walk, comment on environmental features and wait for responses
- While looking at family photos, ask questions about people and events
- During play, create "problems" that prompt verbal exchanges about solutions

Environmental Arrangement

Structure the physical environment to promote communication:

- Place preferred items in clear containers that require assistance to open
- Provide incomplete materials for activities (e.g., paper but no crayons)
- Create unexpected changes that prompt comments or questions
- Rotate toys and materials to maintain novelty and interest

Generalization Strategies for Intraverbal Skills

Generalization Type	Description	Implementation Strategies
Across People	The ability to use intraverbal skills with different communication partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Train multiple therapists, family members, and peers- Use video modeling of different people asking questions- Gradually introduce new communication partners
Across Settings	Using intraverbal skills in various locations and contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Practice in different rooms, buildings, and community locations- Vary background noise and distractions- Create opportunities during community outings
Across Materials	Responding to questions about different objects, pictures, or topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Use various visual supports- Rotate topics and themes- Incorporate novel materials regularly
Response Generalization	Providing varied answers to similar questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reinforce novel responses- Model different possible answers- Ask open-ended questions with multiple correct answers

Train Sufficient Exemplars

Teach multiple examples within each intraverbal category rather than just a few. For example, when teaching animal sounds, include at least 10-15 different animals rather than just 3-4.

Program Common Stimuli

Identify elements that will be present in both training and generalization settings, and ensure they're highlighted during instruction. This creates "bridges" between learning contexts.

Teach to Generalize

Explicitly teach the learner that the same question can be asked in different ways and still require the same answer. For example, "What's your name?" and "Who are you?" both ask for the learner's name.

Intraverbal Skills Assessment

Formal Assessment Tools

- Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment and Placement Program (VB-MAPP)
- Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills - Revised (ABLLS-R)
- Early Echoic Skills Assessment (EESA)
- Promoting the Emergence of Advanced Knowledge (PEAK)

Informal Assessment Strategies

- Structured observation during play and daily routines
- Parent/caregiver interviews about verbal abilities
- Language sample analysis
- Probe trials across different intraverbal categories

What to Assess

A comprehensive intraverbal assessment should evaluate:

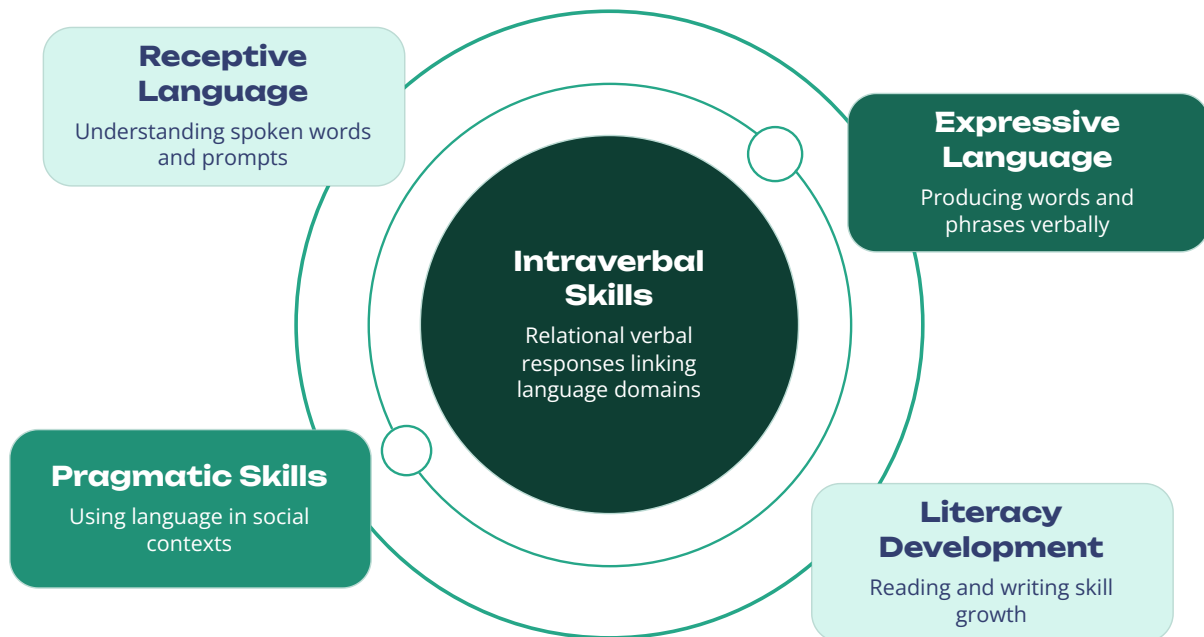
- Ability to complete familiar phrases, songs, and rhymes
- Responses to social questions (name, age, preferences)
- Answers to "what," "who," "where," and "when" questions
- Ability to categorize items verbally
- Responses to questions about past events
- Ability to answer questions about stories or narratives
- Spontaneous commenting and conversation skills

Ongoing Assessment

In addition to initial assessment, conduct regular probes to:

- Monitor progress in current programs
- Identify emerging skills
- Detect areas of regression or plateau
- Evaluate generalization to new contexts

Intraverbal Skills and Language Development



Relationship to Other Language Domains

Intraverbal skills are interconnected with multiple aspects of language development:

Vocabulary Development

Intraverbal training expands both receptive and expressive vocabulary as learners encounter and use new words in meaningful contexts.

Syntax and Grammar

As intraverbal responses become more complex, learners naturally incorporate more sophisticated grammatical structures in their verbal exchanges.

Pragmatic Skills

Intraverbal training teaches the social rules of conversation, including turn-taking, topic maintenance, and appropriate responding.

Literacy Foundation

Strong intraverbal skills support later reading comprehension, as both require the ability to understand and respond to verbal information without visual support.

Developmental Progression

Intraverbal development typically follows a predictable sequence:

1. Completing familiar phrases and songs
2. Answering simple personal questions
3. Responding to questions about the immediate environment
4. Answering questions about past events and absent objects
5. Engaging in conversational exchanges with multiple turns
6. Discussing abstract concepts and hypothetical situations

Understanding this progression helps practitioners target skills at the appropriate developmental level and build a strong foundation for more complex language abilities.

Intraverbal Skills for Learners with Limited Vocal Abilities

Challenge	Adaptation Strategies
Limited or Unclear Speech	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Accept approximations of words- Reinforce any appropriate vocal attempt- Pair vocal attempts with visual supports
Inconsistent Vocalizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Use high-preference topics to increase motivation- Provide additional processing time- Create low-demand, high-success opportunities
Non-vocal Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Incorporate AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication)- Accept pointing to pictures/symbols as intraverbal responses- Use speech-generating devices for responses

AAC-Based Intraverbal Training

For learners using AAC systems, intraverbal training can be adapted by:

- Asking questions that can be answered using available symbols
- Teaching navigation between pages to find appropriate responses
- Gradually increasing the complexity of required responses
- Pairing AAC use with any vocal approximations the learner produces

Multimodal Approach

Combine different communication modalities to support intraverbal development:

- Vocal attempts (even if approximate)
- Sign language or gestures
- Picture exchange systems
- Speech-generating devices
- Written communication for literate learners

Modified Mastery Criteria

For learners with limited vocal abilities, adjust mastery criteria to focus on:

- Consistency of response rather than clarity
- Appropriateness of content rather than form
- Independence of communication rather than specific modality
- Functional effectiveness rather than conventional accuracy

Advanced Intraverbal Skills

Advanced Skill	Description	Teaching Strategies
Categorization	Naming items that belong to specific categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Start with familiar categories (animals, foods)- Gradually introduce more abstract categories- Use sorting activities as visual support
Feature Analysis	Describing attributes of objects or concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Begin with concrete features (color, size)- Progress to function and abstract qualities- Use compare/contrast activities
Multiple Associations	Providing several related responses to a single stimulus	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Model multiple possible answers- Use brainstorming activities- Create semantic webs
Conditional Discrimination	Varying responses based on specific conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Teach "if/then" relationships- Use visual supports initially- Create scenarios requiring different responses

Conversation Skills

As intraverbal skills advance, focus on developing natural conversation abilities:

- Topic maintenance for multiple exchanges
- Appropriate topic shifting
- Asking questions of others
- Providing relevant comments
- Repairing communication breakdowns

Perspective-Taking in Intraverbals

Advanced intraverbal training incorporates theory of mind concepts:

- Answering questions about others' thoughts and feelings
- Predicting how others might respond in situations
- Adjusting communication based on the listener's knowledge
- Understanding figurative language and humor

Intraverbal Skills and Academic Success



Reading Comprehension

Intraverbal skills directly support the ability to answer questions about text, make predictions, and draw inferences—all critical reading comprehension skills.



Mathematics

Verbal problem-solving, explaining mathematical reasoning, and recalling number facts all rely on strong intraverbal abilities.



Science

Describing processes, explaining cause-effect relationships, and discussing hypotheses require sophisticated intraverbal skills.



Social Studies

Recalling historical facts, discussing cultural concepts, and explaining geographical relationships all build on intraverbal foundations.

Classroom Participation

Strong intraverbal skills enable learners to:

- Respond appropriately to teacher questions
- Participate in class discussions
- Follow multi-step verbal directions
- Ask clarifying questions when needed
- Collaborate effectively with peers

Assessment Performance

Many academic assessments rely heavily on intraverbal skills:

- Oral examinations and presentations
- Written responses to comprehension questions
- Explaining problem-solving processes
- Demonstrating conceptual understanding through verbal explanations

By strengthening intraverbal abilities, practitioners help prepare learners for the verbal demands of educational settings and support their long-term academic success.

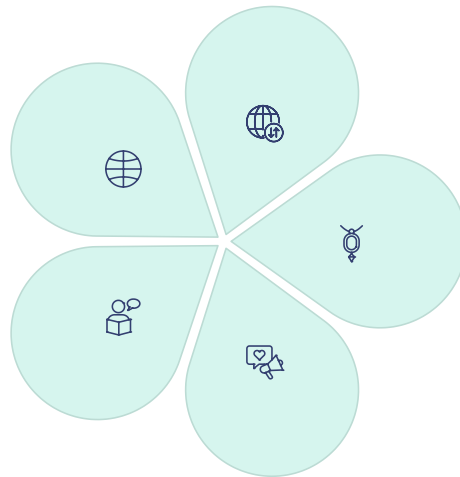
Cultural Considerations in Intraverbal Training

Cultural Context

Consider how cultural background influences communication patterns, including directness of questions, appropriate topics, and expected response styles.

Narrative Traditions

Incorporate culturally relevant stories, songs, and rhymes that reflect the learner's cultural background and family traditions.



Multilingual Learners

Adapt intraverbal programs for learners developing skills in multiple languages, recognizing that skills may develop at different rates across languages.

Family Communication Styles

Respect and incorporate family-specific communication patterns, including cultural variations in turn-taking, question-asking, and conversation topics.

Social Norms

Teach intraverbal responses that align with culturally appropriate social exchanges, recognizing that these may vary across communities.

Culturally Responsive Practice

When implementing intraverbal programs:

- Conduct thorough family interviews to understand communication values and practices
- Include culturally familiar content in teaching examples
- Recognize that some cultures may value listening more than frequent verbal responses
- Adapt reinforcement strategies to align with family preferences
- Consider how eye contact, physical proximity, and other non-verbal aspects of communication vary across cultures

By incorporating cultural considerations into intraverbal training, practitioners create more effective, respectful, and relevant interventions that support learners' development within their cultural context.

Technology Tools for Intraverbal Development



Educational Apps

Interactive applications designed to promote verbal responding through engaging activities, games, and structured question-answer formats.

- Provide immediate feedback
- Offer consistent practice opportunities
- Can be customized to learner's interests



Speech-Generating Devices

Dedicated communication tools that allow non-verbal or minimally verbal learners to produce intraverbal responses through alternative means.

- Range from simple to highly sophisticated
- Can grow with the learner's abilities
- Support multimodal communication



Video Modeling

Recorded demonstrations of appropriate intraverbal exchanges that learners can observe, analyze, and imitate.

- Provides consistent models
- Can be reviewed repeatedly
- Reduces social pressure during learning

Virtual Reality Applications

Emerging technologies that create immersive environments for practicing intraverbal skills in simulated real-world contexts:

- Virtual social scenarios for conversation practice
- Simulated community settings for functional communication
- Adjustable difficulty levels to match learner abilities
- Data collection features to track progress

Technology Implementation Guidelines

- Use technology as a supplement to, not replacement for, human interaction
- Ensure content is developmentally and age-appropriate
- Provide supervision and support during technology use
- Transfer skills practiced with technology to natural environments
- Select tools that align with the learner's specific goals and abilities

Parent Training for Supporting Intraverbal Development

Training Component	Implementation Strategies
Understanding Intraverbals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Explain the concept in accessible language- Provide everyday examples- Demonstrate the difference between intraverbals and other verbal operants
Creating Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Identify natural moments in daily routines- Teach environmental arrangement techniques- Practice pausing expectantly to elicit responses
Effective Prompting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Demonstrate prompt hierarchy- Practice prompt fading- Teach wait time strategies
Reinforcement Techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Identify natural and meaningful reinforcers- Practice enthusiastic social reinforcement- Explain differential reinforcement
Data Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Provide simple tracking methods- Teach observation skills- Create user-friendly recording systems

Parent Coaching Model

Effective parent training for intraverbal development follows a coaching sequence:



Supporting Materials

Provide parents with resources to reinforce training:

- Written handouts with key concepts and examples
- Video examples of techniques for reference
- Lists of question ideas organized by category
- Simple data sheets for home use
- Regular check-in opportunities to address questions

Peer-Mediated Intraverbal Interventions

Benefits of Peer Involvement

- Provides natural social reinforcement
- Creates authentic communication contexts
- Increases opportunities for practice
- Promotes generalization across people
- Develops reciprocal social relationships
- Builds social motivation for communication

Peer Training Components

- Simple explanations of communication differences
- Specific strategies for engaging peers
- Modeling of effective interaction techniques
- Practice with adult feedback
- Recognition and reinforcement for participation
- Regular check-ins to address challenges

Structured Peer Activities

Implement specific activities designed to promote intraverbal exchanges between peers:

Interview Games

Peers take turns asking each other questions from prepared cards, with visual supports as needed.

Cooperative Construction

One peer has instructions while the other builds, requiring verbal exchanges to complete the project.

Guessing Games

One peer describes an object or picture while others ask questions to identify it.

Turn-Taking Activities

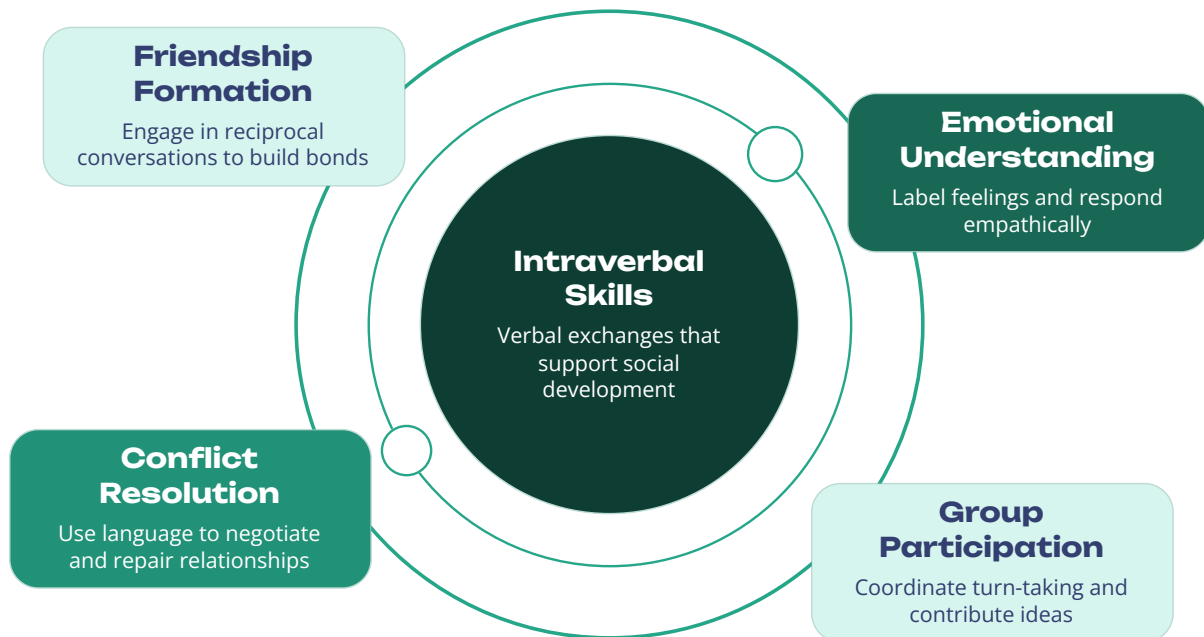
Structured games that require verbal exchanges to progress, with clear visual cues for whose turn it is to speak.

Adult Facilitation

Even in peer-mediated interventions, adults play important roles:

- Setting up the environment for successful interactions
- Providing initial prompts or models as needed
- Reinforcing both peers for effective communication
- Gradually fading support as interactions become more natural
- Monitoring for opportunities to increase complexity

Intraverbal Skills and Social Development



Social Benefits of Strong Intraverbal Skills

Proficient intraverbal responding contributes to social development in multiple ways:

Friendship Formation

The ability to engage in reciprocal verbal exchanges is fundamental to developing and maintaining friendships. Intraverbal skills enable children to share interests, respond to peers' comments, and sustain conversations.

Emotional Understanding

Discussing feelings, responding to questions about emotional states, and verbally processing social situations all build emotional intelligence and self-regulation skills.

Conflict Resolution

Verbal negotiation, explaining perspectives, and discussing solutions all rely on advanced intraverbal abilities that help children navigate social challenges.

Social Intraverbal Programs

Specialized intraverbal training can target social-specific verbal skills:

- Greeting and farewell exchanges
- Asking and responding to personal interest questions
- Commenting appropriately on others' activities
- Giving and receiving compliments
- Expressing empathy through verbal responses
- Using humor appropriately in conversation

By explicitly teaching these social intraverbal skills, practitioners help learners develop the verbal foundations needed for successful social integration and relationship building.

Troubleshooting Common Intraverbal Challenges

Challenge	Possible Causes	Intervention Strategies
Rote Responding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Overreliance on memorized answers- Limited understanding of questions- Insufficient variety in teaching examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Vary question wording- Teach multiple correct answers- Reinforce novel responses- Mix question types within sessions
Overgeneralization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Confusion between similar questions- Insufficient discrimination training- Limited conceptual understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Teach clear discriminative features- Present contrasting questions in sequence- Use visual supports initially- Provide explicit feedback on errors
Response Latency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Processing difficulties- Word retrieval challenges- Uncertainty about correct answer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Allow longer response time- Teach self-prompting strategies- Break complex questions into steps- Gradually shape faster responding
Motivation Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Low interest in topics- History of failure- Insufficient reinforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Incorporate preferred topics- Create high-success opportunities- Use more powerful reinforcers- Make sessions more playful and engaging

When Progress Plateaus

If a learner stops making progress in intraverbal development:

- Review prerequisite skills to identify potential gaps
- Analyze error patterns to pinpoint specific challenges
- Consider adjusting the teaching format or materials
- Consult with other team members for fresh perspectives
- Take a brief break from challenging programs and focus on maintenance

Addressing Frustration

When learners show signs of frustration during intraverbal training:

- Temporarily reduce task difficulty
- Increase reinforcement for attempts
- Alternate difficult items with mastered ones
- Incorporate more play and humor
- Consider whether the skill is developmentally appropriate

Intraverbal Skills in Group Settings



Classroom Applications

Strategies for promoting intraverbal skills in educational settings:

- Structured question routines during circle time
- Peer interview activities with rotating partners
- Group storytelling with verbal contributions from each student
- Think-pair-share activities that require verbal exchanges



Group Therapy Sessions

Techniques for targeting intraverbal skills in therapeutic groups:

- Structured conversation games with visual supports
- Topic-based discussion groups with facilitated turn-taking
- Role-play scenarios requiring specific verbal exchanges
- Group problem-solving activities with verbal reporting

Adapting for Mixed Ability Groups

Strategies for including learners at different intraverbal skill levels:

- Differentiate questions based on individual abilities
- Use a visual queue system to manage participation
- Incorporate peer modeling opportunities
- Provide additional support for struggling learners (visual cues, partial prompts)
- Create roles that leverage each learner's strengths

Group Activity Ideas

Specific activities that promote intraverbal skills in group settings:

- "Hot potato" question game where each person answers before passing
- Group scavenger hunts requiring verbal clues and responses
- Category games where each person adds an item to a list
- "Show and tell" with structured questions from the audience
- Group storytelling where each person adds a sentence

Intraverbal Skills and Executive Functioning

Working Memory

Intraverbal responses require holding the question in mind while formulating an answer. Complex intraverbals develop working memory capacity.

Planning & Organization

Formulating coherent responses, especially in narrative intraverbals, requires organizing thoughts and planning verbal output.



Cognitive Flexibility

Shifting between different types of questions and adapting responses accordingly builds mental flexibility and reduces rigid thinking.

Inhibitory Control

Waiting to respond, staying on topic, and avoiding irrelevant comments all develop inhibitory control during verbal exchanges.

Executive Function-Focused Intraverbal Activities

Specific activities that target both intraverbal skills and executive functions:

Verbal Sorting Tasks

Asking learners to categorize items verbally without visual supports (e.g., "Tell me things that are red" or "Name animals that live in the ocean").

Verbal Sequencing

Having learners describe multi-step processes in order (e.g., "Tell me how to make a sandwich" or "What do you do to get ready for bed?").

Verbal Problem-Solving

Presenting hypothetical situations that require verbal solutions (e.g., "What would you do if you lost your backpack?" or "How could you help someone who is sad?").

Verbal Rule-Following

Games with changing verbal rules that require flexible responding (e.g., "Answer with an opposite" or "Answer with something in the same category").

By targeting intraverbal skills that specifically engage executive functions, practitioners can support the development of both language abilities and cognitive control simultaneously.

Measuring Long-Term Outcomes of Intraverbal Training

Outcome Domain	Assessment Methods	Success Indicators
Functional Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Natural environment observations- Parent/teacher interviews- Communication sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Initiates verbal exchanges- Responds appropriately to questions- Engages in reciprocal conversations
Social Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Peer interaction observations- Social skills assessments- Friendship quality measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Forms and maintains friendships- Participates in group activities- Resolves conflicts verbally
Academic Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Classroom participation data- Academic achievement tests- Teacher reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Answers questions in class- Demonstrates verbal reasoning- Explains concepts verbally
Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Community functioning assessments- Adaptive behavior scales- Self-advocacy measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Communicates needs effectively- Navigates social situations- Seeks help appropriately

Longitudinal Assessment

To evaluate the long-term impact of intraverbal training:

- Establish clear baseline measures before intervention
- Conduct regular follow-up assessments at meaningful intervals
- Gather data across multiple settings and with various communication partners
- Include both standardized measures and functional assessments
- Collect qualitative feedback from the learner and significant others

Quality of Life Indicators

Beyond specific skill measures, consider broader quality of life outcomes:

- Self-determination and choice-making
- Community participation and inclusion
- Relationship satisfaction
- Emotional well-being and self-expression
- Independence in daily functioning

Future Directions in Intraverbal Research and Practice



Neuroscience Connections

Emerging research on the neurological basis of intraverbal behavior may lead to more targeted interventions based on specific brain function patterns.



AI-Enhanced Interventions

Artificial intelligence applications that can analyze verbal responses and adapt teaching strategies in real-time show promise for personalized intraverbal training.



Telehealth Applications

Remote delivery of intraverbal training through telehealth platforms continues to evolve, potentially increasing access to services for underserved populations.

Research Priorities

Key areas for future investigation include:

- Comparative effectiveness of different intraverbal teaching methodologies
- Long-term outcomes of early intensive intraverbal training
- Cultural variations in intraverbal development and intervention response
- Integration of intraverbal training with other language intervention approaches
- Development of more sensitive assessment tools for complex intraverbal skills

Evolving Practice Models

The field is moving toward:

- More naturalistic, context-embedded teaching approaches
- Greater emphasis on functional, socially meaningful communication
- Increased collaboration between behavioral, developmental, and educational approaches
- Enhanced parent and caregiver involvement in intervention planning and implementation
- Integration of technology while maintaining the primacy of human interaction

As our understanding of intraverbal behavior continues to evolve, practitioners can anticipate increasingly sophisticated, evidence-based approaches that maximize outcomes for learners across the spectrum of verbal abilities.