



# Social Skills

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

**AbaTools**

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# Social 1M: Eye Contact as a Gateway to Communication

Mastery Criterion	The learner establishes eye contact in at least six different situations as an initial form of communication to access desired items or activities.
Program Goal	Promote the use of eye contact as a communicative tool, strengthening its function as a form of manding in natural contexts.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	A visible but inaccessible item or activity that creates the need to communicate.
Target Behavior	The learner looks directly at the adult/caregiver with intentionality, signaling a desire to access the item or activity.

## Teaching Procedure

- Place highly motivating materials in sight but out of reach.
- Before offering assistance, pause briefly to allow the learner to initiate eye contact independently.
- Deliver the item immediately after the learner makes eye contact, pairing it with a verbal label of the item.

# Strategies to Evoke Eye Contact Responses



## Light-Up Toy

Activate a light-up toy and suddenly turn it off, waiting for eye contact before reactivating it.



## Flashlight Play

Shine a flashlight briefly and partially cover it, encouraging the child to look at you to request more.



## Drink Sharing

Drink from a colorful bottle without offering, keeping it visible until eye contact is made.

## Prompting and Reinforcement

### Prompting Strategies

- Hold the item near the adult's face.
- Gradually move the item closer to the learner's eye line.
- Reinforce any attempt at eye contact, fading prompts over time.

### Reinforcement Plan

- Immediate access to the desired item.
- Social reinforcement such as smiles and short verbal praise.

**Note:** If the learner shows signs of frustration, provide a less preferred version of the item to maintain engagement without losing motivation.

# Social 2M: Seeking Physical Contact to Initiate Interaction

Mastery Criterion	The learner spontaneously seeks or initiates physical play on at least three separate occasions.
Program Goal	Increase active attempts to engage in physical and social contact, fostering bonds through shared sensorimotor experiences.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	Structured play opportunities that invite the learner to request or initiate being lifted, held, or moved.
Target Behavior	The learner raises arms, pulls the adult, climbs into their lap, or uses gestures/vocalizations to indicate a desire for physical contact.

## Teaching Procedure

- Begin with highly motivating physical activities (e.g., swinging, spinning, "airplane ride").
- Provide physical support initially, fading gradually until the learner initiates.
- Record responses, noting which were spontaneous versus prompted.

# Suggested Activities for Physical Contact Initiation

1

## Rocket Ride

Lifting the child after a countdown, encouraging them to initiate by raising arms or making a request.

2

## Blanket Pull

Gently pulling the child on a sturdy blanket, teaching them to pull an adult's hand to request more.

3

## Tickle Monster

Approaching playfully and delivering brief tickles, waiting for the child to initiate through gestures or vocalizations.

## Prompting and Reinforcement

### Prompting Strategies

- Physical modeling first, then gestures only.
- Use exaggerated facial expressions to signal interaction opportunities.

### Reinforcement Plan

- Verbal praise and shared laughter.
- Enjoyable physical contact (hugging, bouncing, spinning).

**Note:** If signs of discomfort arise, stop immediately and switch to a more acceptable form of physical interaction for the learner.

# Social 3M: Spontaneous Eye Gaze Exchange with Peers

Mastery Criterion	The learner engages in spontaneous eye gaze exchanges with peers across at least five different social contexts.
Program Goal	Encourage recognition of peers as social partners by using eye gaze as a means of connection.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	Group situations (e.g., circle time, school arrival, shared activities).
Target Behavior	The learner looks directly at a peer, initiating or responding to eye gaze without adult mediation.

## Teaching Procedure

- Arrange environments where peers hold attractive items.
- Position peers face-to-face with minimal distractions.
- Prompt peers to call attention subtly (gesture, giggle, raise item).

# Teaching Steps for Eye Gaze Exchange

## Structured Play

Play peek-a-boo style games (covering and revealing the face with a smile) to encourage eye contact.

## Greeting Routines

Encourage greetings with gestures that begin with eye contact between peers.

## Natural Exchanges

Create situations where peers naturally exchange glances during play activities.

## Error Correction and Reinforcement

### Error Correction Procedures

If the learner looks at the object instead of the peer, reposition the item near the peer's face and reinforce when eye gaze shifts to the peer.

### Reinforcement Plan

- Immediate praise from the peer.
- Access to the desired object.

**Note:** Peers should be prepped with simple instructions to reinforce naturally, avoiding mechanical or artificial responses.



# Social 4M: Remaining in Activities Near Other Children

Mastery Criterion	The learner remains near peers, engaged in parallel play, for at least four consecutive minutes.
Program Goal	Foster tolerance and group participation even without direct interaction.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	Structured or natural settings with peers engaged in play activities.
Target Behavior	The learner plays individually but within close physical proximity to peers, without avoiding or leaving.

## Teaching Procedure

- Start with settings involving a small number of peers, gradually increasing complexity.
- Provide similar toys to reduce competition.
- Use differential reinforcement for each additional minute of staying near peers.

# Strategies for Promoting Proximity Tolerance

## Prompting Strategies

- Begin with gestural or verbal guidance to approach peers.
- Place motivating toys near peers.
- Fade supports gradually until the learner approaches spontaneously.

## Alternative Teaching Variation

Use incidental teaching in natural environments such as playgrounds or community settings where proximity naturally occurs.

## Reinforcement Plan

- Social praise for successful proximity.
- Tangible reinforcers at the beginning, gradually replaced by social motivation.

**General Note:** If the learner leaves before meeting the time goal, restart with a shorter interval and gradually increase until the criterion is reached.



# Social 5M: Imitating Peers' Movements and Actions

Mastery Criterion	The learner imitates peers' motor actions in at least three different situations, without adult instruction.
Program Goal	Develop social imitation skills, strengthening observation and group engagement.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	A peer performs a visible movement or uses an object within the learner's view.
Target Behavior	The learner copies the peer's action or follows them spontaneously.

## Teaching Procedure

- Prepare peers to perform simple actions (clapping, spinning a toy).
- Arrange spatial positions to allow direct visual contact.
- Minimize adult instructions, encouraging learning through observation.

# Examples of Peer Imitation Situations



## Physical Movement

A peer hops on one foot, and the learner repeats the action after observing.



## Object Interaction

A peer blows into a whistle, and the learner attempts to imitate the same action with their whistle.



## Complex Movement

A peer raises arms and spins, and the learner follows by performing the same spinning motion.

# Prompting and Reinforcement

## Prompting Strategies

- Adult parallel demonstration, gradually faded.
- Subtle gestural prompts as needed.

## Reinforcement Plan

- Differential reinforcement (verbal praise, tokens, access to a toy).
- Reverse turn opportunities: the learner leads and the peer imitates.

**Note:** Spontaneous imitation should always be valued more highly than prompted imitation, as this increases the likelihood of generalization in natural contexts.

# Social 6M: Initiating Physical Approaches during Play

Mastery Criterion	The learner initiates physical interaction with peers on at least three different occasions, showing spontaneous initiative.
Program Goal	Encourage active social approaches, strengthening peer bonds through physical interactions in group play.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	Group activities involving movement or physical contact (e.g., obstacle courses, circle games, shared toys).
Target Behavior	The learner begins a physical action directed toward a peer without relying on adult instruction or mediation.

## Teaching Procedure

- Introduce the activity first with an adult, then transfer to peers.
- Teach peers to respond positively to approach attempts.
- Gradually fade adult presence and reinforcement until the peer interaction itself becomes the motivator.

# Examples of Physical Approach Situations

## Shoulder Bump Race

The learner bumps shoulders with a peer to start a short race across the playground.

## Fist Bump Circuit

The learner offers a fist bump and pulls the peer into a floor circuit with various movement activities.

## Mat Sliding

The learner initiates sliding together on a mat, alternating turns and creating a cooperative game.

## Rope Pull

The learner pulls a rope with a peer to move a lightweight box to a marked spot, requiring coordination.

## Synchronized Jumping

The learner synchronizes jumps alongside a peer on a line, creating a shared rhythmic activity.

# Prompting and Reinforcement

## Prompting Strategies

- Active adult participation at first, then only distant observation.
- Simple gestures (pointing to a peer) or short verbal cues.
- Gradual removal of prompts as the learner shows initiative.

## Reinforcement Plan

- Immediate reinforcement for initial successful attempts.
- Gradual transition to natural reinforcement: enjoyment of the play and social reciprocity.

**Note:** If initiative is lacking, create motivating conditions (e.g., a peer holds a play item and releases it only when the learner initiates physical approach).

# Social 7M: Spontaneous Requests between Peers

Mastery Criterion	The learner makes requests to peers on at least eight separate occasions, demonstrating verbal initiative without adult support.
Program Goal	Promote independence in social communication, encouraging the learner to seek assistance or items from peers rather than adults.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	Contexts where peers control access to objects, turns, or activities.
Target Behavior	The learner directs requests to peers, such as: "Can I go now?", "Can you pass it to me?", "Can you help me keep going?"

## Teaching Procedure

- Plan activities that require resource sharing (board games, art materials, group play).
- Teach peers to respond clearly and positively, using a parallel reinforcement system to maintain their engagement.
- Gradually reduce adult presence and support until requests occur spontaneously.

# Environmental Arrangements for Peer Requests



## Card Game

Only a peer holds the deck; the learner must request to join or get cards.



## Art Activity

During drawing, coloring materials are with another peer; the learner must ask to use them.



## Building Activity

A peer holds larger pieces; the learner must request to continue construction.

# Prompting and Reinforcement

## Prompting Strategies

- Initially, provide short textual prompts (e.g., "say: Can I use it too?").
- Fade to partial verbal cues, then to simple gestures.
- Remove all supports until requests occur naturally and independently.

## Reinforcement Plan

- Ensure the request is honored immediately, reinforcing the effectiveness of communication.
- Add social praise when the learner requests without prompts.

**Note:** Spontaneous requests are strong indicators of social independence and should always receive more intense reinforcement than prompted requests.



# Social 8M: Maintaining Social Play with Continuity

Mastery Criterion	The learner sustains cooperative play with a peer for at least five uninterrupted minutes without adult support.
Program Goal	Strengthen the ability to maintain social interactions, making the activity itself the primary reinforcer.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	An environment with engaged peers and materials requiring joint participation.
Target Behavior	The learner remains involved in shared play, interacting reciprocally and actively throughout the activity.

## Teaching Procedure

- Introduce the play activity with an adult, then fade adult involvement.
- Prepare the peer to sustain the interaction in an engaging manner.
- Gradually withdraw therapist support until the motivation comes solely from shared play.

# Examples of Sustained Social Play Activities



## Car Track Building

Building a car track together with interlocking pieces, requiring coordination and turn-taking.



## Musical Sequence

Taking turns with a sound toy to create a "musical sequence" that both children contribute to.



## Blanket Fort

Building a blanket fort using chairs and cushions, requiring cooperation and shared problem-solving.



## Push and Pull Game

Playing a "push and pull" game with a bottle tied to strings, requiring coordination between players.



## Doll Care

Caring for dolls together, simulating routines like feeding and putting to sleep through cooperative play.

## Prompting and Reinforcement

### Prompting Strategies

- Adult participation at the start to model interaction.
- Short comments as reminders to sustain play ("Look how fun it's getting!").
- Gradual distancing until peers are fully independent.

### Reinforcement Plan

- Provide tangible or social reinforcement at first to maintain engagement.
- Gradually fade external reinforcers, emphasizing the natural enjoyment of social play.

**Note:** Choosing activities that truly require cooperation (e.g., tasks that cannot be done alone) increases the likelihood of sustained interaction and reduces disengagement.

# Social 9M: Responding to Peers' Requests Spontaneously

Mastery Criterion	The learner responds to peers' requests on at least seven occasions by handing over an item or performing an action within three seconds.
Program Goal	Teach social reciprocity, expanding the learner's willingness to collaborate naturally in everyday interactions.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	A peer makes a verbal or gestural request for access to an item or assistance.
Target Behavior	The learner delivers the requested item or performs the requested action without adult prompts.

## Teaching Procedure

- Train peers to make clear and direct requests.
- Arrange activities where the learner controls items of interest to others.
- Apply differential reinforcement initially until the behavior becomes spontaneous.

# Examples of Peer Request Situations

## Classroom Materials

A peer asks: "Can you pass me the scissors?" and the learner responds by handing them over promptly.

## Play Materials

A peer requests: "Can you open the playdough container for me?" and the learner assists with opening it.

## Shared Items

A peer says: "Let me borrow your flashlight for a bit," and the learner shares the item willingly.

## Cooperative Tasks

A peer asks: "Can you hold this rope while I tie it?" and the learner helps by holding as requested.

## Technology Sharing

A peer requests: "Can I have one of the headphones to listen too?" and the learner shares one earbud.

# Prompting and Reinforcement

## Prompting Strategies

- Short verbal modeling ("Give it to your friend").
- Light physical assistance, faded gradually.

## Reinforcement Plan

- Initially provide both social and tangible reinforcement after correct responses.
- Gradually fade to natural reinforcement from social interaction.

**Note:** Varying items by level of interest (high vs. low value) helps build flexibility and reduces resistance across social contexts.

# Social 10M: Inviting Peers to Join Games and Activities

Mastery Criterion	The learner invites peers to share activities on at least four different occasions, without adult support.
Program Goal	Encourage social initiative by including peers in group experiences, strengthening cooperation and a sense of belonging.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	Peers engaged in games or activities of immediate interest to the learner.
Target Behavior	The learner verbalizes invitations such as: "Come play with me on the track," "Let's build this part together," or "Do you want to join the game?"

## Teaching Procedure

- Begin training in structured interactions with adult modeling.
- Teach peers to respond positively, ensuring reciprocity.
- Gradually fade prompts until invitations occur spontaneously.

# Examples of Peer Invitation Situations

## Building Activity

Peers playing with magnetic blocks; learner invites: "Come help build the tall tower."

## Physical Play

Peers jumping rope; learner requests: "Can I join the line too?"



## Dramatic Play

Children in costumes; learner proposes: "Let's act out a scene together."

## Art Project

Group drawing; learner asks: "Can I join you on this poster?"

# Prompting and Reinforcement

## Prompting Strategies

- Initial verbal modeling with simple phrase templates.
- Gestures (pointing to peers) as visual support.
- Gradual fading of prompts to independence.

## Reinforcement Plan

- Early use of tangible and social reinforcement.
- Over time, allow peer acceptance itself to function as natural reinforcement.

**Note:** Spontaneous invitations indicate advanced social maturity. They should receive strong reinforcement initially until they become part of the learner's natural routine.

# Social 11M: Cooperating in Joint Actions with Peers

Mastery Criterion	The learner participates in cooperative activities on at least six different occasions, sharing roles with a peer or adult to achieve a common goal.
Program Goal	Build collaboration skills, encouraging shared effort, mutual recognition, and collective results.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	Structured or natural situations that can only be completed with participation from at least two people.
Target Behavior	The learner contributes to a joint action — holding, moving, assembling, or adjusting — in a way that complements the peer's role.

## Teaching Procedure

- Select activities that require true cooperation (e.g., carrying, assembling, taking turns).
- Initially model each participant's role.
- Fade prompts gradually until cooperation occurs naturally.

# Examples of Cooperative Situations



## Paper Project

A peer holds large paper while the learner attaches stickers or tape to create a collaborative artwork.



## Moving Together

Two peers pull a heavy rug together to the center of the room, requiring coordination.



## Track Building

One holds the base of a car track while the other connects the rails to create a functioning toy.



## Bridge Construction

A pair builds a bridge with blocks, each adding pieces from opposite sides to meet in the middle.



## Box Carrying

The learner helps carry a toy box while the peer keeps the lid closed, requiring teamwork.

# Prompting and Reinforcement

## Prompting Strategies

- Visual cues (pointing to the learner's part of the task).
- Short verbal directions ("hold this side," "pull together").
- Gradual fading to independence.

## Reinforcement Plan

- Immediate reinforcement with group praise and acknowledgment of the achievement.
- Access to the completed activity as natural reinforcement.
- Encouraging comments in plural ("You made a great team!").

**Note:** Activities with visible, concrete outcomes increase motivation to cooperate, as the learner can see the effect of the shared action.



# Social 12M: Initiating Conversations and Asking Peers Questions

Mastery Criterion	The learner initiates conversations and asks "who," "what," and "where" questions on at least seven spontaneous occasions.
Program Goal	Encourage communicative initiative, motivating the learner to verbally explore the social environment through context-appropriate questions.
Prerequisite Skills	Basic repertoire of simple intraverbal questions.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	Natural social situations where the learner has an opportunity to show curiosity or seek information from peers.
Target Behavior	The learner formulates context-relevant questions directed spontaneously to peers.

## Teaching Procedure

- Begin with simple questions in structured settings.
- Use cards or icons representing "who," "what," and "where" as visual supports.
- Expand gradually to natural environments until the skill is used independently.

# Examples of Peer Question Situations

## Who Questions

"Who will play with me after recess?"

"Who is singing that song with you?"

## What Questions

"What did you draw on that paper?"

"What did you think of the activity we did?"

## Where Questions

"Where did you put your favorite toy?"

"Where are you going to sit for lunch?"

## Prompting and Reinforcement

### Prompting Strategies

- Full verbal prompts ("Ask who is playing with him").
- Visual or textual supports.
- Gradual fading until independent questions occur.

### Reinforcement Plan

- Immediate social reinforcement (praise, showing interest in the question).
- Differential reinforcement for fully independent questions.

**Note:** Role-playing with trained peers helps the learner gain confidence before applying questions in real social contexts.

# Social 13M: Responding to Peers' Verbal Questions

Mastery Criterion	The learner responds verbally to at least five different types of peer questions across varied contexts.
Program Goal	Strengthen social reciprocity through appropriate verbal responses, enhancing understanding and participation in natural interactions.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	A peer asks a question during a social situation or shared activity.
Target Behavior	The learner provides a coherent, context-appropriate verbal response.

## Teaching Procedure

- Start with adult-led training using echoic and textual models.
- Vary questions from simple to more complex.
- Introduce role-playing with peers in playful scenarios.
- Gradually fade supports until responses are spontaneous.

# Examples of Peer Response Situations

<b>Preference Questions</b>  Peer asks: "What's your favorite color?"  Learner: "Blue."	<b>Location Questions</b>  Peer asks: "Where did you put your backpack?"  Learner: "On the shelf."	<b>Person Questions</b>  Peer asks: "Who is sitting next to you?"  Learner: "Ana."
<b>Plan Questions</b>  Peer asks: "What are you going to play at recess?"  Learner: "Tag."	<b>Yes/No Questions</b>  Peer asks: "Do you like listening to music?"  Learner: "Yes, I like it a lot."	

## Prompting and Reinforcement

### Prompting Strategies

- Echoic modeling at the beginning.
- Use of visual or textual cue cards.
- Progressive fading until responses are spontaneous.

### Reinforcement Plan

- Immediate social and/or tangible reinforcement in early phases.
- Later, rely on natural reinforcement from interaction.

**Note:** Vary both the type of question and the peer asking to promote generalization across social contexts and partners.

# Social 14M: Engaging in Pretend Play with Peers

Mastery Criterion	The learner participates in symbolic play with peers for at least seven consecutive minutes without adult support.
Program Goal	Promote imagination in social interaction, encouraging shared narratives and creativity in playful contexts.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	Peers already engaged in pretend play, or a direct invitation from a peer.
Target Behavior	The learner joins symbolic play, actively and consistently interacting with peers.

## Teaching Procedure

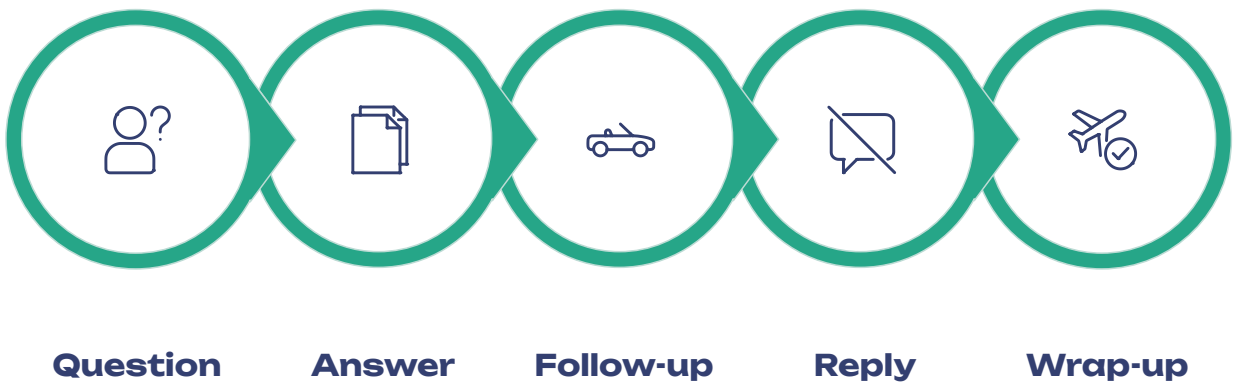
- Begin with adult modeling of simple roles in familiar play scenarios.
- Train peers to include the learner functionally (e.g., assigning roles, inviting cooperation).
- Gradually reduce adult involvement until peers sustain play independently.

# Social 15M: Sustaining Extended Verbal Exchanges in Conversation

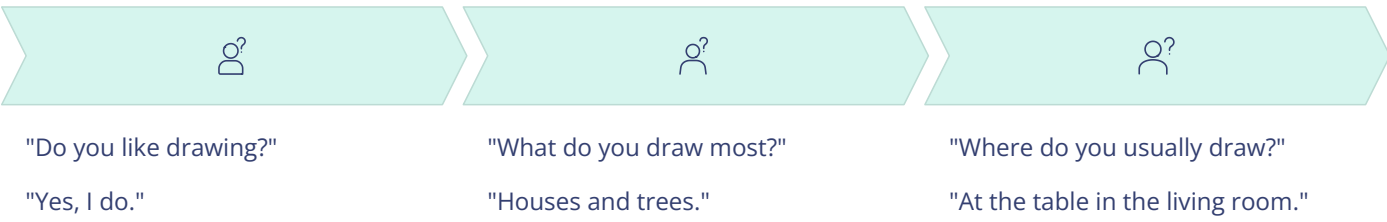
Mastery Criterion	The learner maintains at least five consecutive verbal exchanges on the same topic, with thematic coherence and clear responses.
Program Goal	Expand the ability to sustain social dialogues, fostering reciprocity and broader verbal repertoires.
Discriminative Stimulus (SD)	A peer is available to start or respond to a conversation.
Target Behavior	The learner initiates and sustains consecutive verbal exchanges on a single topic without abrupt shifts.

## Teaching Procedure

- Begin with structured training with adult dialogue models.
- Provide visual or textual cues for initial exchanges.
- Gradually transfer to peer interactions, fading supports.



## Examples of Guided Conversations



**Note:** It's essential to vary conversation topics (e.g., drawing, outings, music, food) to ensure generalization of the skill across different social contexts.