



# Social Skills

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

# Table of Contents

- **Social 1M: Eye Contact as a Gateway to Communication**
- **Social 2M: Seeking Physical Contact to Initiate Interaction**
- **Social 3M: Spontaneous Eye Gaze Exchange with Peers**
- **Social 4M: Remaining in Activities Near Other Children**
- **Social 5M: Imitating Peers' Movements and Actions**
- **Social 6M: Initiating Physical Approaches during Play**
- **Social 7M: Spontaneous Requests between Peers**
- **Social 8M: Maintaining Social Play with Continuity**
- **Social 9M: Responding to Peers' Requests Spontaneously**
- **Social 10M: Inviting Peers to Join Games and Activities**
- **Social 11M: Cooperating in Shared Actions with Peers**
- **Social 12M: Initiating Conversations and Asking Questions**
- **Social 13M: Responding to Peers' Verbal Questions**
- **Social 14M: Engaging in Pretend Play with Peers**
- **Social 15M: Sustaining Extended Verbal Exchanges in Conversations**

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

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

<b>Mastery Criterion</b>	The learner spontaneously seeks or initiates physical play on at least three separate occasions.
<b>Program Goal</b>	Increase active attempts to engage in physical and social contact, fostering bonds through shared sensorimotor experiences.
<b>Discriminative Stimulus (SD)</b>	Structured play opportunities that invite the learner to request or initiate being lifted, held, or moved.
<b>Target Behavior</b>	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

<b>Mastery Criterion</b>	The learner engages in spontaneous eye gaze exchanges with peers across at least five different social contexts.
<b>Program Goal</b>	Encourage recognition of peers as social partners by using eye gaze as a means of connection.
<b>Discriminative Stimulus (SD)</b>	Group situations (e.g., circle time, school arrival, shared activities).
<b>Target Behavior</b>	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

<b>Mastery Criterion</b>	The learner remains near peers, engaged in parallel play, for at least four consecutive minutes.
<b>Program Goal</b>	Foster tolerance and group participation even without direct interaction.
<b>Discriminative Stimulus (SD)</b>	Structured or natural settings with peers engaged in play activities.
<b>Target Behavior</b>	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

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

<b>Mastery Criterion</b>	The learner initiates physical interaction with peers on at least three different occasions, showing spontaneous initiative.
<b>Program Goal</b>	Encourage active social approaches, strengthening peer bonds through physical interactions in group play.
<b>Discriminative Stimulus (SD)</b>	Group activities involving movement or physical contact (e.g., obstacle courses, circle games, shared toys).
<b>Target Behavior</b>	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

<b>Mastery Criterion</b>	The learner makes requests to peers on at least eight separate occasions, demonstrating verbal initiative without adult support.
<b>Program Goal</b>	Promote independence in social communication, encouraging the learner to seek assistance or items from peers rather than adults.
<b>Discriminative Stimulus (SD)</b>	Contexts where peers control access to objects, turns, or activities.
<b>Target Behavior</b>	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

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

<b>Mastery Criterion</b>	The learner responds to peers' requests on at least seven occasions by handing over an item or performing an action within three seconds.
<b>Program Goal</b>	Teach social reciprocity, expanding the learner's willingness to collaborate naturally in everyday interactions.
<b>Discriminative Stimulus (SD)</b>	A peer makes a verbal or gestural request for access to an item or assistance.
<b>Target Behavior</b>	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

<b>Mastery Criterion</b>	The learner invites peers to share activities on at least four different occasions, without adult support.
<b>Program Goal</b>	Encourage social initiative by including peers in group experiences, strengthening cooperation and a sense of belonging.
<b>Discriminative Stimulus (SD)</b>	Peers engaged in games or activities of immediate interest to the learner.
<b>Target Behavior</b>	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

<b>Mastery Criterion</b>	The learner participates in cooperative activities on at least six different occasions, sharing roles with a peer or adult to achieve a common goal.
<b>Program Goal</b>	Build collaboration skills, encouraging shared effort, mutual recognition, and collective results.
<b>Discriminative Stimulus (SD)</b>	Structured or natural situations that can only be completed with participation from at least two people.
<b>Target Behavior</b>	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

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

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

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

## Teaching Procedure

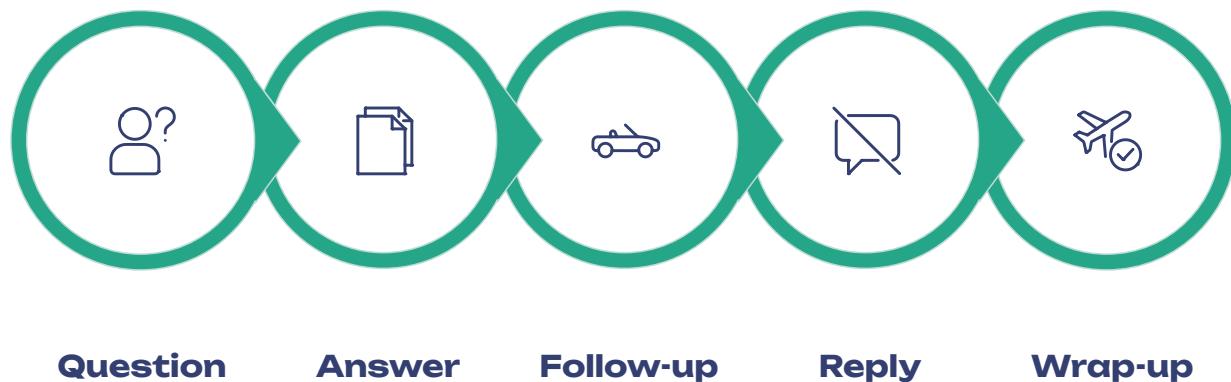
- Begin with adult modeling of simple roles in familiar play scenarios.
- Train peers to include the learner functionally (e.g., assigning roles, inviting cooperation).
- Gradually reduce adult involvement until peers sustain play independently.

# Social 15M: Sustaining Extended Verbal Exchanges in Conversation

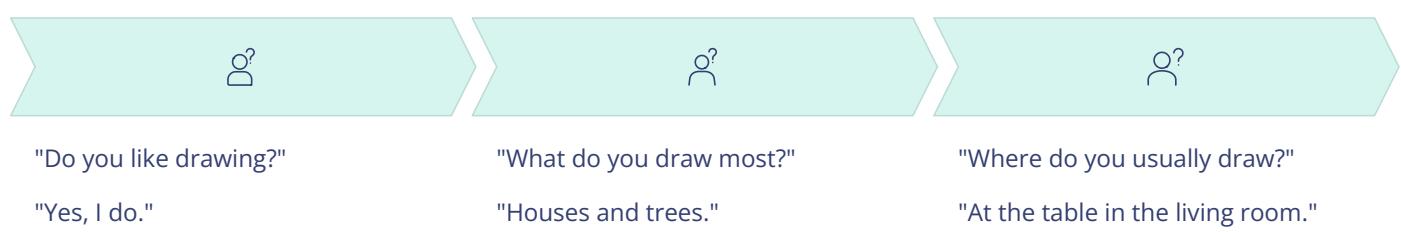
<b>Mastery Criterion</b>	The learner maintains at least five consecutive verbal exchanges on the same topic, with thematic coherence and clear responses.
<b>Program Goal</b>	Expand the ability to sustain social dialogues, fostering reciprocity and broader verbal repertoires.
<b>Discriminative Stimulus (SD)</b>	A peer is available to start or respond to a conversation.
<b>Target Behavior</b>	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.