



Tips for Communication Across the Day

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As a new school year quickly approaches, many professionals and caregivers may be thinking about how to best incorporate communication opportunities across the day. The end goal is to ensure that all learners are communicating from the time they wake up in the morning until the time they go to bed at night. But, how do we make this goal a reality? Here are a few dos and don'ts to consider:

- **DON'T** only schedule PECS as a separate activity during the day. It's common to review a visual schedule and see 30 minutes of "PECS Time" scheduled. Though it may be helpful to ensure that there is a block of time available to work on communication skills, keep in mind that this cannot be the **ONLY** time that PECS is used. If PECS is only something that is scheduled into the day, the learner will likely view PECS as just another activity...no different from the sorting, matching or counting tasks that may also be scheduled.
 - **DO** schedule communication opportunities across the day! A minimum of 40 – 50 communication opportunities should be incorporated daily. To begin, determine what items and activities your students enjoy. Within those activities, withhold some components to create a communication opportunity. For instance, during an art activity, rather than handing over the student's favorite paint color wait for the student to initiate a request for the item.
- **DON'T** allow free access to everything in the environment. If all the students' favorite things are available on low shelves or on the floor, your students are likely to independently access those items.
 - **DO** place preferred items inside containers and/or on high shelves. Ensure that the items are in-sight, but out of reach. In so doing, you are creating additional communication opportunities
 - **DO** offer one part of an item/activity, while withholding another necessary item. For example, place a pitcher of juice on the table, but withhold the cups. Offer a game board, but hold back the game pieces. Or, give the tablet, but withhold the headphones.
 - **DO** interrupt preferred activities. For instance, if the child likes being pushed on a swing, stop the pushing and/or stop the swing. Wait for the student to request additional pushes.

And last, but certainly not least, **DO** have fun capturing and creating communication opportunities across the day!