



**FIRSTPATH**  
AUTISM



Lesson Guide

## 7. Imitating Speech



# Overview

Teaches:	How to imitate another person's speech. Develops the child's ability to speak single sounds, sound blends, whole words, and short phrases. Also develops the ability to imitate volume (i.e., loud vs. soft), rate (i.e., fast vs. slow), and pitch (i.e., high vs. low).
Before beginning:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The child should already have some ability to produce <u>vocal sounds</u> (e.g., babbling, not necessarily talking).</li><li>• Often, the child is taught to ask for things (request) <u>before</u> he is taught to imitate speech, since requesting is more easily rewarded by receiving the item/activity. (In this lesson, the child does <u>not</u> receive what he asked for; instead, he receives social praise or another unrelated reward.)</li></ul>
Why it's important:	A child can use this skill to learn other skills such as conversation and social skills, requesting and labeling things, repeating information from one person to another, participating in group activities such as singing songs, and more.
Materials needed:	None required. In some cases, mirrors may be useful in allowing the child to look at his own mouth and move it like the model.
Generalization activities:	Song time, Simon Says, Follow the Leader, Telephone.



# Steps

## Prepare

1. Sit facing the child, in a quiet place free of distractions.
2. Have several rewards ready and available.
3. Have data sheets and pen/pencil ready.
4. Make sure the child is ready to attend, ideally looking at teacher and not engaging in any other activities.

## Teach

**NOTE:** Do not give other instructions in addition to "Do this", such as naming the action, e.g., "Clap your hands!" or "Kick the ball!" Giving additional instructions might accidentally teach the child to follow instructions, rather than look at and copy your physical action. Following instructions is a good thing and is taught in a different, separate lesson. However, the goal of this lesson is watching and doing: imitating.

1. Ask the child to "Say\_\_\_\_\_ " (fill in target sound/word)
2. Wait 3-5 seconds for child to respond.
3. Provide feedback on how the child responded  
Correct response: enthusiastic praise and/or reward  
Incorrect (but attempted) response: praise for trying, model correct response  
No response: corrective feedback
4. Write down data
5. Begin again at step 1.

*Examples include:*

Correct response	Incorrect response	No response
Teacher: "Say, 'Eeeeeee'." Child: "Eeeeeee."	Teacher: "Say, 'Eeeeeee'." Child: "Ssssss."	Teacher: "Say, 'Eeeeeee'." Child: (no response)



Teacher: "Great job!" (hugs child and/or delivers reward)	Teacher: "Good try. 'Eeeeeee.'" (usually no reward)	Teacher: "Oops. I said, 'Eeeeeee.'" (usually no reward)
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## TYPICAL ORDER OF LEARNING TARGETS:

1. single phonetic sounds

(often these sounds will be the beginning of functional words that you eventually want to teach the child to say, such as "MMMM", which is the beginning of the functional word "Mama")

2. sound blends

(putting two sounds together, usually a consonant and vowel, such as "M-A")  
step fine motor actions 2-step actions

3. single whole words

("Mama")

4. multi-word phrases

("Help me, Mama", "I love you, Mama", etc.)

5. volume

(how loudly or softly the child speaks)

6. rate

(how quickly or slowly the child speaks)

7. pitch/intonation

(how the child emphasizes what he/she is saying)