

Introduction

Asking questions is one of the most important language skills young communicators must learn. Learning this skill can be a challenge for many children, but it's particularly difficult for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Asking questions requires not only the language development to formulate the question, but also the social awareness and social interaction skills to initiate the question. Children with ASD may have difficulty with all of these skills. Additionally, children with ASD often fall into the role of *responder*, waiting for an adult's prompt to interact verbally. It may be a struggle for children with ASD to initiate verbal interactions required for asking questions.

Asking questions is a natural means for allowing people to create social interactions, gain information, and learn about others. A child who doesn't ask questions becomes limited by the ability to do the following:

- initiate interactions
- gain information
- request permission
- locate objects
- learn about upcoming and past events
- problem solve

Autism and PDD Photo Cards Asking Questions systematically teaches children not only how to formulate questions, but it also provides children with the opportunity to ask questions in a social context, as if they were speaking directly to another person. Children learn how to generate questions using names and appropriate pronouns. This makes the questions more personal, like the communication would be if the child were asking a peer or a family member a question in everyday life.

The photos are meaningful, depicting real children and animals in natural contexts. Needless distractions are removed since children with ASD attend better to simple photos without distracting background and competing stimuli.

Introduction, *continued*

The photos are designed to elicit a genuine question since the answer to the desired question isn't evident in the photo itself. Each card includes one or two statements that describe the photo, which provides an imbedded cue to guide the child's initiation of the question. The language level of these statements is intended to be simple yet provide enough information for a child to understand what he sees in the photos. When needed, a "you want to know" statement is included to guide the child to ask a particular question form. You may opt to eliminate this statement to increase the difficulty level of the task or to use the photo to elicit any question type.

In addition, you may use the cuing hierarchy provided on each card to prompt the child. A Level 1 prompt will help the child use the targeted question form. To simplify or clarify the task, you may opt to immediately provide the Level 1 prompt to help guide the child in generating the target question form.

Autism and PDD Photo Cards Asking Questions allows you to teach question asking as an isolated skill, which makes it easier for children with ASD to learn. Simple, meaningful photos; simply written language prompts; a structured cuing hierarchy; and an opportunity for repetition are combined in this easy-to-use photo set.

Functional Outcomes

Autism and PDD Photo Cards Asking Questions is a tool you can use to teach children to ask questions for gaining information in a social context. These photo cards provide structured opportunities to isolate and highlight specific questions. Following the typical developmental pattern for acquisition of asking questions, the child will first learn to produce early-acquired questions beginning with *what*, *where*, *who*, *can/will*, *do/does/did*, *is/are*, *whose*, and *which one*. Once the child has mastered these questions, you may target the more difficult forms of *why*, *how*, and *when*.

Through immediate implementation of less-structured generalization activities, the child will spontaneously produce targeted question forms to initiate conversation and gain information. Activities might include the following:

- Hide puzzle pieces in a bag and take turns asking what the other person has (*Do you have a dog? or Is it a cat?*).
- Start an action, pause, and have the child guess what action will occur (*Will you jump?*).
- Hide objects (in boxes, under books, in bags, etc.) and have the child ask what is hidden (*What is in the bag?*) or ask where an item is (*Where is the ball?*).
- Fill a small bag with objects and give a bucket to each person. Then take objects out of the bag, one at a time. When the child asks, “Whose ___ is it?” place the object in one of the buckets while answering.

Functional Outcomes, *continued*

Measure improvement in stages. To measure progress, chart percent correct of the targeted question forms in the following ways:

- structured activities with photo cards
 - using level 3 prompt
 - using level 2 prompt
 - using level 1 prompt
 - spontaneous production
- less-structured play activities
 - when provided with a prompt
 - when taking turns (which provides a natural model)
 - spontaneous production
- natural interactions with parents and siblings

The purpose of these photo cards is to isolate and highlight the targeted question form for instruction. Through the immediate implementation of more natural, generalized tasks, the child will be able to spontaneously produce these targeted question forms in conversation.

I hope you enjoy using these photo cards with your clients.

Jennifer