

Attention & Imitation: Verbal Imitation

Student will learn to imitate verbal sounds. Student will begin to imitate simple vocalizations modeled by the teacher and will progress to more difficult vocalizations, words, and sentences.

Suggested Materials

- ★ Bucket, hollow tube, or other items that when vocalized into may produce interesting sounds.



Suggested Introductory Verbalizations

- ★ See page 3.

Notes

Student:
Projected activities for: ___/___/___ to ___/___/___

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

IEP Goals

- [Student] will approximate 9 early sounds, when provided a model in a reduced distraction environment with a sound enhancing device as a prompt, as measured by recorded data, in 80% of provided opportunities over [#] consecutive data days by [date or timeframe].
- [Student] will approximate 9 early sounds, when provided a model in a reduced distraction environment, without prompting, as measured by recorded data, in 80% of provided opportunities over [#] consecutive data days by [date or timeframe].
- [Student] will approximate 12 intermediate sounds, when provided a model in a reduced distraction environment, without prompting, as measured by recorded data, in 80% of provided opportunities over [#] consecutive data days by [date or timeframe].
- [Student] will approximate 6 advanced sounds, when provided a model in a reduced distraction environment, without prompting, as measured by recorded data, in 80% of provided opportunities over [#] consecutive data days by [date or timeframe].
- [Student] will approximate 12 early consonant-vowel-consonant sounds, when provided a model in a reduced distraction environment, without prompting, as measured by recorded data, in 80% of provided opportunities over [#] consecutive data days by [date or timeframe].
- [Student] will approximate 10 intermediate consonant-vowel-consonant sounds, when provided a model in a reduced distraction environment, without prompting, as measured by recorded data, in 80% of provided opportunities over [#] consecutive data days by [date or timeframe].
- [Student] will approximate 6 advanced consonant-vowel-consonant sounds, when provided a model in a reduced distraction environment, without prompting, as measured by recorded data, in 80% of provided opportunities over [#] consecutive data days by [date or timeframe].
- [Student] will approximate 20 single words, when provided a model in a reduced distraction environment, without prompting, as measured by recorded data, in 80% of provided opportunities over [#] consecutive data days by [date or timeframe].
- [Student] will approximate 18 2-4 word phrases, when provided a model in a reduced distraction environment, without prompting, as measured by recorded data, in 80% of provided opportunities over [#] consecutive data days by [date or timeframe].
- [Student] will approximate 20 words or phrases with varying pitch, loudness, intonation, or duration, when provided a model across 2 or more natural settings, without prompting, as measured by recorded data, in 80% of provided opportunities over [#] consecutive data days by [date or timeframe].

Attention & Imitation: Verbal Imitation

Lesson Focus

Student will learn to imitate verbal sounds. Student will begin to imitate simple vocalizations modeled by the teacher and will progress to more difficult vocalizations, words, and sentences.

Lesson Format

The primary lesson is for 1:1 instruction with a teacher or therapist.

Location

This lesson begins as an indoor activity that requires the teacher and student to be in the same room with little or no distractions. This activity is best started with the teacher and student sitting in chairs or on the floor, facing each other, with no table or impediment between them.

Preparation

Find a room, or a space within a room, with the least amount of distraction possible. Secure a clean copy of the *Communication-Based Lessons Data Sheet* to record:

- Vocalizations presented for imitation.
- Number of trials presented.
- Student performance (correct, incorrect, non-responsive, or prompted response).
- Pronunciation accuracy.
- Prompt used.
- Any additional notes on performance or behavior.

Procedures

Verbal Imitation is a first step toward teaching spoken language to students with no language skills or students who will not speak when asked to. It is often easiest to start with very simple sounds like “Ba” or “Ahh” before moving to more complex sounds, words, and sentences.

1. Sit in the chair at the table or sit on the floor with the student.
2. Make sure you have the student’s attention.
3. Give the instruction, “Say Ahhh.” Or, simply say, “Ahhh” yourself.
4. If the student is able to complete the action, reinforce immediately using praise or a reinforcing object or food.
5. Wait for the student to imitate the vocalization.
6. Reinforce the student.

Once the student gains mastery, move to the “Old McDonald” song and suggested Next Step lessons to practice verbal imitation.

If you have a difficult time getting the student to imitate your vocalization, try vocalizing into a bucket, tube or microphone to create a fun sound that captures the student’s attention. They may not want to imitate what they perceive as spoken language, but making a fun sound into a tube may be more enticing.

Prerequisites

Verbal Imitation is an introductory activity. The only prerequisite is:

- ★ **Lesson 4:** *Come Here*

If verbal imitation is particularly difficult for the student, you can start by having them imitate mouth-based actions, such as blowing, sticking their tongue out, kissing, fishlips, etc. These actions are considered non-verbal imitations. Accordingly, this lesson may be more easily accomplished if the student has mastered some actions from:

- ★ **Lesson 8:** *Non-Verbal Imitation*

Standards

Head Start

- ★ P-LC 1

Common Core

- ★ N/A

ABLLS-R

- ★ E1

VB MAPP

- ★ Echoic 1 (EESA assessment)

Record Keeping

Data Sheet

- ★ *Attention, Imitation & Following Directions*

Home Communication Sheet

- ★ *Communication Skills*



Teacher Tip

Turn the tables! Children who are pre-verbal, or are just starting to talk, benefit from you imitating their vocalizations. Make a point to only imitate vocalizations or language that is appropriate in the context, and bring energy and fun to the interaction.



Lesson Progression

Basic Sounds

- Start with the Early Sounds vocalizations, as listed below in the Suggested Introductory Verbalizations section.
- When the student is able to imitate all of the listed Early Sounds, move to Intermediate and then Advanced Sounds.

Consonant-Vowel-Consonant

- When the student can imitate all of the sounds in the Basic Sounds list, move to the Consonant-Vowel-Consonant Imitation list.
- Work through the Early Sounds, then the Intermediate and Advanced Sounds.

Word/Phrase Imitation

- Work in order through:
 - Single Words
 - 2 Word Phrases with:
 - » 2 Syllables
 - » 3 Syllables
 - 3 Word Phrases
- When the student can imitate up to 3 word phrases, introduce variations in emphasis, pitch, loudness and duration.

Generalization

Once the student is able to successfully imitate a few vocalizations:

- Have the student practice verbal imitation with another staff member.
- Elicit verbal imitation in settings outside of the 1:1 lesson setting, such as during recess, snack time, and during transitions.
- Communicate to parents and home staff on the *Communication Skills Home Communication Data Sheet* about the specific vocalizations that the student can successfully imitate on command, so they can practice and reinforce these behaviors at home.
- Make sure to continue imitating the student's vocalizations when appropriate, creating a back-and-forth exchange dynamic for verbal behavior.

Whole-Child Lesson Ideas

Slow-Mo Old McDonald

If the student has had success imitating a few verbalizations, you can transform this lesson into a more fun and natural activity by incorporating a well-known early childhood song.

- Begin singing the classic children's song "Old McDonald." Alter the typical tempo by waiting for longer periods of time in between each animal sound.
- Allow time for the student to imitate, to the best of their ability, the relevant animal sound.
- Great sounds to focus on are "Baaa" (sheep) "Mooo" (cow) and "Sssss" (snake).

Suggested Introductory Verbalizations

This list offers some suggested ideas for sounds, vocalizations, and words to use when you first start the *Verbal Imitation Lesson*.¹

Sound Imitation Basic Sounds				
Early Sounds		Intermediate Sounds		Advanced Sounds
Mmm	Puh	Koo	Sh	Eff
Ahh	Tuh	Keh	Guh	Fuh
Buh	Duh	Key	Wuh	Vuh
Eee	Oh	Ay (A)	Yuh	Lah
Uh		I (eye)	Juh	Ruh
		Zz	Ch	Th

Sound Imitation Consonant-Vowel-Consonant Imitation					
Early Sounds		Intermediate Sounds		Advanced Sounds	
Baba	Meme	Byebye	Hihhi	Fafa	
Ceecee	Dada	Juju	Booboo	Lala	
Hoho	Tata	Tuto	Gogo	Rara	
Mama	Hehe	Wawa	Mumu	Veevee	
Papa	Nana	Zeezee		Lulu	
Beebee	Neenee	Coco		Vava	

Word/Phrase Imitation Single Word				2-Word Phrases – 2 Syllables	2-Word Phrases – 3 Syllables	3-Word Phrases	Syllable Emphasis	Pitch
Out	Puppy	Big	Water	I see	How many	I want play	No-WAY	Echos pitch variation in 1 to 2 line songs
In	Baby	Shirt	Truck	I want	Potty time	Hey me too	ONE-Bunny	Echos continuous wargle (firetruck: 00-00-00-00-00)
Eat	Keys	Sock	Car	I like	Teddy bear	Go bye bye	In a MIN-ute	
On	Hub	Want	Tree	Want play	Peek-a-boo	My big toe	My MOM-my	
Up	Cat	Color	Bush	All done	Doggy bone		Bug-a-BOO	
Cup	Flower	Tummy	Candy	Night time	Daddy up		UH-oh	
Egg	Head	Fork	Window	Too hot			MY mommy	
Apple	Coat	Spoon	Table				bow-WOW	
Away	Hat	Phone	TV				BUG-a-boo	
Open	Little	Doggy	Party					
Go	Cookie	Juice	Wash					
Shoe		Bike						
More	Nose							

¹ This list is based on the Early Echoic Skills Assessment (EESA) created by Barbara E. Esch, Ph.D, BCBA, CCC-SLP.

Prompting

Suggested prompt ideas:

- Look at the student and make sure they focus on your mouth.
- Model vocalization.
- Use light physical prompting or touching to guide their mouth into position for the sound.
- Repeat the sound several times until the student makes approximation.
- Verbal Imitation* is difficult to prompt, so be sure to take every opportunity to reinforce imitations of your vocalization whenever possible.

Next Steps

The next formal lessons include:

Labeling Lessons

- ★ **Lesson 26:** *Expressive Labeling—Body Parts*
- ★ **Lesson 27:** *Expressive Labeling—Single Nouns*
- ★ **Lesson 28:** *Expressive Labeling—Familiar People*

When a student can imitate vocalizations, you can prompt any expressive labeling lessons. Lessons 26, 27, and 28 are introductory expressive labeling lessons. There are many other matching, sorting, and receptive lessons that will often happen before expressive activities.

Intraverbal Lessons

- ★ **Lesson 40:** *Requesting Desired Object*
- ★ **Lesson 41:** *Requesting Help*

As soon as you can use verbal imitation as a prompt, you should encourage requesting behaviors inside and outside of formal lessons.



Attention, Imitation & Following Directions

HOME COMMUNICATION SHEET



STUDENT NAME _____

DATE _____

INSTRUCTOR _____

Attention

When we first meet your child, we will measure the below attention-related information carefully, and communicate it to you, so you can keep similar expectations at home. Later, we may only note this level of detail on your child's attention periodically. We will always let you know if there are significant improvements or challenges. Thank you for helping us make this a great learning experience for your child.

Today, when we worked with your child we found that they liked:

Toys _____

Edibles _____

Praise _____

We also found that they didn't like _____

When asked to give up preferred object reinforcers, your child:

Complied Immediately Complied after ___ seconds

Complied only with help from the instructor.

The object we used to practice this activity was: _____

This is an evolving list. Preferences Change. Let's stay in contact about your child's likes and dislikes.

In response to hearing their name, your child responded:

Every time 50+% of the time Less than 50% of the time Never

When we called your child's name we were about ___ feet away.

When we asked your child to "Come Here" they responded:

Every time 50+% of the time Less than 50% of the time Never

Your child was able to maintain eye contact for about ___ Seconds, about ___% of the time.

When asked to sit quietly and get ready to learn, your child: _____

When asked to "wait," your child was able to wait quietly for ___ seconds.

VERBAL IMITATION

Your child is able to imitate the following sounds/words consistently:

Your child is working on imitating the following sounds/words:

NON-VERBAL IMITATION

Your child is able to imitate the following actions consistently:

Your child is working on imitating the following actions:

FOLLOWING SINGLE VERB DIRECTIONS

Your child can follow these single verb commands consistently:

Your child is working on following these single verb commands:

FOLLOWING COMPOUND VERB DIRECTIONS

Your child can follow these compound verb commands consistently:

Your child is working on following these compound verb commands:
