

# Attention & Imitation: Pairing & Accepting Reinforcers

Student will build a rapport, also known as “pairing,” with teacher and learn to accept reinforcers from the teacher. Student will be required to respond to a variety of toys or edibles by selecting their most preferred item or items. This lesson is a foundation upon which the rest of the program is based. It is critical that pairing be accomplished between the student and every teacher with whom they interact.

## Suggested Materials

- ★ Foods or snack items that the student enjoys
- ★ Toys or games that may be attractive to the student
- ★ Preferred objects



### Student:

Projected activities for: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday

## IEP Goals

1. [Student] will select a preferred food item when provided a selection of 3-5 reinforcing food items in an isolated 1:1 setting, with physical or gestural prompts, as measured by recorded data, in 80% of provided opportunities over [#] consecutive data days by [date or timeframe].
2. [Student] will select a preferred non-food item when provided a selection of 3-5 reinforcing non-food items in an isolated 1:1 setting, with physical or gestural prompts, as measured by recorded data, in 80% of provided opportunities over [#] consecutive data days by [date or timeframe].
3. [Student] will independently select a preferred food or non-food item when provided a selection of 3-5 reinforcing items in an isolated 1:1 setting, without prompt or support, as measured by recorded data, in 80% of provided opportunities over [#] consecutive data days by [date or timeframe].

## Notes

# Attention & Imitation: Pairing & Accepting Reinforcers

## Lesson Focus

Student will build a rapport, also known as “pairing,” with teacher and learn to accept reinforcers from the teacher. Student will be required to respond to a variety of toys or edibles by selecting their most preferred item or items. This lesson is a foundation upon which the rest of the program is based. It is critical that pairing be accomplished between the student and every teacher with whom they interact.

## Lesson Format

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

## Location

This lesson is intended as an indoor activity that requires the teacher and student to be in the same room with little or no distractions.

## Preparation

Before conducting this lesson, the teacher should have a conversation with the student's parents or caregivers to get a list of preferred toys, games, and foods. The teacher will be in a room with the student with little or no distractions with highly reinforcing items to be used as a reward for the student. Before starting this lesson, the teacher should be in a positive mood and engage the student in play, allowing the student to associate the teacher with a positive experience, which will aid in compliance and control.

Secure a clean copy of the *Pairing & Preferences Data Sheet* to record:

- Toys the student chooses during each trial.
- Foods or snacks the student prefers.
- How much time the student plays with the toy or consumes the snack.
- Phrases or physical reinforcers the student prefers.

## Procedures

### Phase I: Pairing with the Student

The goal of the *Pairing & Accepting Reinforcers Lesson* is for the student to associate the teacher with a fun and enjoyable experience. Pairing can take on a less formal, more playful feeling, but at a minimum:

1. Sit in a chair or on the floor across from the student.
2. Greet the student and begin to play.
3. Express great enthusiasm “Wow! Look at this!” when using a toy.
4. Use tickling or hugs if the student enjoys this sensory stimulus.
5. Have the student lead play with the toy. Verbally engage and praise their play.
6. Continue to play with the student for at least 2 to 3 minutes.

### Phase II: Accepting Reinforcers

1. Sit at a table across from the student.
2. Place at least 3, and up to 5 toys in a row in front of the student.
3. Give the instruction, “Pick 1.”
4. Note on your data sheet which toy the student picks.
5. Remove all other toys so the student only has the chosen toy.
6. Allow the student to play with the toy for 30 seconds and say, “My turn.”
7. Take the toy and put aside from the student's line of sight.
8. Repeat process with the remaining toys until 1 toy is left.
9. Record the order in which the toys were chosen.
10. Once completed, repeat this procedure with drinks and snacks to develop a list of preferred edible items.

## Prerequisites

*Pairing & Accepting Reinforcers* is an introductory activity. There are no prerequisites for this lesson.

## Standards

### Head Start

- ★ IT-SE 2, P-SE 1

### Common Core

- ★ N/A

### ABLLS-R

- ★ A1, A2, A3

### VB MAPP

- ★ Prerequisites for M 1-M, M 1-b

## Record Keeping

### Data Sheet

- ★ *Pairing & Reinforcers*

### Home Communication Sheet

- ★ *Attention, Imitation, & Following Directions*



## Teacher Tip

Once the student and teacher are “paired,” it is easier for the teacher to place demands on the student. If the student is having a bad day, this may be a time to back off of formal lessons and engage in some pairing activities. Just be careful the student doesn't learn that “bad days” equals no lessons!



## Lesson Progression

### Pairing Progression

- Do not overwhelm a student who is hesitant to engage with you. Start simple and deepen pairing over time. In the beginning, you may simply introduce yourself to the student and spend time shadowing people with whom they are already comfortable. Once the student is comfortable with your presence, you can start to pair yourself with existing toys or activities that the student already enjoys.
- Play with the student, and gain their trust. Pairing is a time for fun, rather than for tasks or drills. Your goal is for the student to associate you with positive emotions, fun, and happy engagement.
- The pairing activity allows the student to associate positive learning experiences with you. The next step is to establish preferred reinforcers.

### Accepting Reinforcers Progression

- Once preferred reinforcers are established, they will be given to the student when they perform tasks correctly. This process teaches the student that they need to complete a task in order to receive their reward.
- It is common to start with food as the primary reinforcer for the student. Food should be paired with some form of verbal praise such as “Good job,” and possibly a physical reinforcer such as a tickle, hair rustle, etc. Over time, work toward fading the need for food until the student responds positively to verbal praise alone.
- Toys and games may be introduced as reinforcers following food. The same preference assessment should be conducted to determine the most preferred items.
- Lengthy time with a reinforcer, whether food or toy, is ideally not required each time the student correctly performs a task. The long term goal is for the student to complete several tasks with verbal, or very short reinforcement, and then be reinforced with a more lengthy reward at the end of the lesson.
- Ultimately, you will work toward a token economy system, as described in Lesson 123.

### Overall Progression

- Every teacher who interacts with the student must go through the pairing process and work toward the student successfully accepting offered reinforcers. Pairing is not something you do only at the beginning of the program. You should regularly spend time actively pairing with your student... just having fun, rather than only doing lessons.
- The teacher should also conduct frequent preference assessments to determine if new food, toys, objects or interactions are motivating to students. Students may become overly satiated with some reinforcers, or newly available reinforcers may be more motivating.

## Generalization

Once the student is able to successfully respond to the teacher and accept reinforcers:

- Have the student select reinforcers with other staff members.
- Have the student select reinforcers in settings outside of the classroom.
- Communicate to parents and home staff, using the *Attention, Imitation, & Following Directions Home Communication Sheet*, about the reinforcers which are successful at school so they can try at home or in other environments outside of school.

## Whole-Child Lesson Ideas

### Let's Play

1. Sit directly in front of the student. Let the student choose the toy/reinforcer that most interests them. As they explore or play with the object, let them take the lead in how they want to interact with the object.
2. You can first begin by copying what they are doing until they are comfortable with you playing with them. Then, you can extend their actions and encourage the student to continue interacting with you and the toy. For example, if the student is rolling a toy car back and forth, first imitate the action with your own toy car.
3. Then, perhaps show the student how the car can swerve back and forth or add a sound affect. Encourage the student to join you as you play. You can use phrases like, “Now it's your turn.” Reward the student with excited praise.

## Prompting

Some students may be unwilling to engage with you or to choose preferred reinforcers. In particular, you may need to prompt them to choose among presented toys, as toy selection does not come naturally to all students. Some suggestions include:

1. Move one of the toys closer to the student.
2. Choose items that the student already enjoys – even if these items include stimulatory behavior, such as wheel spinning.
3. Help the student choose an item with a hand over hand physical prompt, and then show the student what fun thing that item does (makes a sound, flashes lights, etc.)

## Next Steps

Once the student is making strong progress in *Pairing & Accepting Reinforcers*, you can begin working on:

- ★ **Lesson 2: Giving Up Reinforcers**





# Pairing & Reinforcers DATA SHEET



STUDENT'S NAME

DATE

INSTRUCTOR

Record Known Preferences

Preferred Foods	Preferred Drinks	Preferred Toys	Preferred Physical	Preferred Verbal

Negative Foods	Negative Drinks	Negative Toys	Negative Physical	Negative Verbal

Record qualitative data on the rapport between student and instructor, on how well the student associates the instructor with positive reinforcement, and on the student's reactions to specific edible, physical and verbal reinforcement. In the Food/Drinks and the Toys section, write in the items presented in the order they were from the student's perspective, left to right. Then record the order chosen in the boxes. This will help you determine which reinforcers the student prefers and will make it easier to notice if the student is just selecting a certain position rather than attending to the reinforcer. For example, always choosing the item on the right, regardless of preference.

Example: #1 gold fish crackers 3 raisins 1 gummy bears 5 popcorn 2 M&M's 4

Pairing Notes	Set #	Foods/Drinks Presented – Record Order Chosen in Boxes				
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Set #	Toys Presented – Record Order Chosen in Boxes					
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Physical Reinforcement		Positive	Negative	Neutral		
Verbal Reinforcement		Positive	Negative	Neutral		