

Teaching Yes/No Questions

Begin with teaching the easier-to-understand accept/reject yes/no questions such as:

Accept/reject

- Choice "How about the blue one?"
- "Do you want your blanket?"

Affirm/deny

- *Possession* "Is this your coat?"
- *Preference* "Do you like the red one?"
- *Label* "Is this a table?"
- *Function of objects* "Does a vacuum walk?"
- *Test knowledge* "Is it facing north?"
- *Comparison* "Is a dog older than a puppy?"
- *Relative time* "Did that happen first?"
- *Preference* "Do you like apples?"

Offer Choices to work on accept/reject questions until we are sure that the learner understands that yes is accept and no is reject.

Example 1

- Adult: "Do you want Barney?", **Wait 10 seconds**
- Learner: Eye gazes to Barney
- Adult: "Yes, you want Barney." while modelling the learners yes response (head nod, symbol or switch).

Example 2

- Adult: "Would you like the purple one?" **Wait**
- Learner: pushes away the purple one
- Adult "No, you do not want the purple one!" again, while pointing to the learner's No response (head shake, symbol or switch).

Don't assume

Be careful not to assume that we know what the learner wants. They may love Barney, so you ask, *"Do you want Barney?"* and they communicate "no", by looking away. A "no" is a "no". Perhaps they are tired of Barney or want to listen to music. Or maybe they don't yet understand yes/no. Modelling that no means you rejected the thing that was offered by taking it away or not giving Barney to them, is essential.

Wrong Choice

If the learner is upset after they indicate No, wait a minute and try:

- Adult: "Do you want Barney? (slight pause) Yes."
This time you answer your own question both verbally and by modeling the yes response. This gives a cue to the learner that the answer is yes. You already established that they want Barney (the complaining when you took it away after they said no) so you can now teach the yes response by modeling it.

Avoid

- Too many words in the question.
"Do you want the ball? Yes or no? The ball?"
- Asking:
"Yes or no?"
"Tell me yes or no?"
- Many children just choose whatever comes last and this is one of the ways we unintentionally teach them to do that. A key to teaching anything is wait time. And a key to teaching yes/no is refraining from using the phrase, *"Tell me yes or no."*

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ACS | acs@tvcc.on.ca | 1.866.590.8822 ext 53378
www.tvcc.on.ca | 779 Base Line Road East, London ON N6C 5Y6
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