

Teach Charlie to request verbally for a visible, out of reach item (Manding Training)

Why is this skill important?

The skill of being able to ask for things, or to mand, is vital for not only a child's communication skill development, but also for reducing many challenging behaviors. For example, when a child is able to ask for a cookie or water, there is no need for him to throw a tantrum anymore out of frustration of not getting these items!

Goal

Charlie will learn to request items that are visible but out of reach.

Requirements before this training can be started

Preferred reinforcers (rewards) have been chosen.

Being able to label the items requested with words. For example, if you want to teach Charlie to request raisins, they should be able to say "raisin."

Links

(This file is an example of our work. Our actual files are bundled with all relevant information. This section typically includes links to other files that are vital for the topic at hand)

- [Crafting an Ideal Learning Environment](#)
- [Teaching to Request](#)
- [Shaping](#)
- [Choosing Reinforcers \(Rewards\)](#)
- [Manding Data Collection Sheet](#)

Choosing the first items for request

Choose items that you can easily deliver throughout the day and that Charlie truly enjoys. Include at least one edible, one activity, and one item. These might include juice, a bouncy ball (and only call it ball), or letting Charlie watch their favorite show for a short period of time.

Choose words that Charlie can already say and are relatively easy to say. Charlie's pronunciation does not have to be perfect in the beginning. For example, if you ask them "What is this?" while pointing to a picture of a ball, and Charlie correctly identifies it, this might be a good word to choose, especially if Charlie likes playing with balls.

Setup

Start by sitting down at a table facing one another. Keep the reinforcers behind you so that Charlie cannot grab them. Once Charlie has learned this task on a table, you can start doing it sitting on a floor, outside in a park, etc. To ensure that you can teach Charlie to request in many different settings, always carry their favorite reinforcers with you.

Data Collection

You can find the manding data collection sheet at the top of the page. You can either fill it out electronically or print the sheet out and input the data at a later time.

Instructions:

1. To start the process, show Charlie their preferred item (it is usually easiest to start with edible) and give them for example a raisin (if that is what they prefer) without expressing any demands. If Charlie accepts this item, proceed. If not, it is usually a sign that this item does not motivate them at the moment, and you should try a different item or wait for a later time when Charlie is motivated because the desire to get an item must be there before Charlie can be taught to mand.
2. If Charlie accepts the item, hold another, similar item in front of Charlie's eyes but far enough so that they cannot reach it. Wait five seconds to see if Charlie asks for the item spontaneously. If they can do this, give them the item, praise them vigorously by saying things like "Good job asking raisin!"), mark this down in your datasheet under Independent, and start the process with another item. If Charlie does not say the name of the item, present a verbal model by saying "raisin" wait one second and if Charlie does not say anything bring the raisin a bit closer to their head and repeat "raisin" wait for a second and if Charlie does not say anything again bring the raisin closer to them and say raising for the 3rd and last time. If at any point Charlie uses gestures to indicate that they want an item instead of words, say "Use words," and do not give the item to them until they say the word. If they don't use the word, put the item away, and mark this down on your datasheet.
3. Once Charlie had learned to request an item after you have said it but does not ask it without you saying the word yet, you can start saying the beginning of the word only. Charlie is likely to say the whole word after that. Once Charlie can do this well, stop saying the word altogether.
4. If Charlie says "raisin" or anything that resembles this word at any point after you have modeled the word mark this down in your datasheet under "prompted." If Charlie says this independently, write it down under independent.

If Charlie does not request an item even after 3 models put the item away and continue some other time.

Shaping

Charlie's pronunciation does not have to be perfect in the beginning, but eventually, you need to expect a better pronunciation before rewarding them. If Charlie does not pronounce the name of the item correctly by the time the mastery criteria is reached, start shaping the pronunciation, by demanding better, and better pronunciation, before the reward (giving Charlie the object) is given to them.

Frequency

It is very important to teach Charlie to request things multiple times per day using different items that they might be motivated to get at that moment. Remember if Charlie is not interested in an item, there is no point trying to teach them to request it. Try to make this a part of your daily routine and offer Charlie an opportunity to request as often as you can in the beginning. Keep a data-sheet in your pocket throughout the day so you can always write down if Charlie requested an item when you gave them an opportunity, and whether they did it independently or with prompts.

Generalization

Teach Charlie to request things in different environments and by different people. Teach them to request different items. All of this is done so that Charlie would generalize what they have learned so that eventually they would learn to request a new item, that you never taught them to request.

Reduce the Rewards

It is very important to always reduce the rewards. For example, in the beginning, you should say "Good job requesting a raisin," give them a high-5, hug them, or whatever Charlie likes. Little by little, your responses should become less and less enthusiastic and frequent. In the end, all Charlie gets is the item they requested. This is done to ensure that Charlie keeps on doing this activity in the real world where people seldom offer rewards for everyday tasks.

Mastery Criteria

Charlie has learned to request an item 8 out of 10 times when you present it to them if Charlie wants it (instead of just trying to take it from you). If Charlie does not want an item, don't think of this as a failure to request. When Charlie can request about 30 items that they can see they have mastered this skill.

Maintenance

If you keep on using our data collection system, it will notify you when Charlie has mastered this skill. This means that you can move on to teach Charlie to request different things or to a different task whatever your program says and you decide. This does not mean that you should forget about this task. To make sure that Charlie doesn't forget this task, give them this task again from time to time. If it seems that they have forgotten how to do this task, re-start this task again, and do it several times a day until Charlie masters it again. Don't worry if this should happen. Charlie is likely to master this task at a much faster rate this time.

Tips

Practice requesting both in Charlie's typical work area and in a natural environment such as the park. Do several requesting sessions in a day.

Always teach Charlie to request several items in a day. You do not get enough opportunities to teach for manding if you always use the same items, because Charlie may not be motivated to get a raising, for example, for a long. Ideally, your list of items to request should include various items such as edibles, toys, and activities that are visible to Charlie.

If Charlie tries to take an item from your hands without requesting it, you may want to switch to a picture of an item instead of the real thing and keep the goodies out of reach for Charlie.

Keep the requests short. Don't say: "Do you want to watch a movie?" Instead, say only the word "movie."

Don't be discouraged if Charlie does not learn to request during the first few sessions. Keep going. Repetition is the key. Still, if Charlie does not learn after a month of teaching, you may want to use sign language in addition to spoken language and accept a sign instead of words from Charlie.

Next Step

If Charlie does not pronounce the name of the item correctly by the time the mastery criteria is reached, start shaping the pronunciation, by demanding better, and better pronunciation, before the reward (giving Charlie the object) is given to them.

Common Mistakes

Avoiding the Reinforcement of Improper Manding. Many parents make the mistake of reinforcing echolalia or repeating a sentence or word. For example, if someone says: Do you want a cookie? And a child repeats the sentence, this should not be rewarded.

Don't choose a word that is too specific at the beginning such as football, instead of a ball. Once Charlie has mastered the basic words, you can teach them to mand e.g. tennis ball or a soccer ball, but you should not start that way.

Don't teach Charlie only one request at a time because they may overgeneralize it as a word that Charlie can use to get anything from a cookie to a movie. This is much less likely to happen when Charlie is learning to request different items simultaneously.

Don't use words like "more" or "please" when teaching Charlie to request since such words cannot be used to ask for an object that is out of sight and another person may not always understand what Charlie wants more of in a particular situation, which may increase challenging behaviors.

Q&A:

What if Charlie does not pronounce a word correctly?

In the beginning, you can reward the child even when they don't pronounce words 100% correctly but always remember to say that word correctly before you give the reinforcer to Charlie. Also, use shaping to begin to demand better and better pronunciation before giving the reward.

How many different items should I teach Charlie to request in the beginning?

3-5 is a good number for most beginner learners. Give Charlie 10 opportunities to request each of them per day,

What should I do if Charlie does not use any words yet?

If Charlie understands language but does not use words, start teaching them manding using pictures or sign language.

Should I ask: "Do you want...?"

We don't recommend that because studies say that people who have been trained with a sentence like that oftentimes wait for such a question before they express what they want or don't want. We believe that people should be thought to express their wishes spontaneously.

What if Charlie does not learn to request?

If after hundreds of trials Charlie is still not requesting items, you'll need to begin to pair words with sign language. Sometimes it's all some learners need to make the connection between the word and the request. Don't worry about using sign language. It does not mean that Charlie would never learn to use verbal language but it is essential for their development that Charlie has some way to communicate with people.