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Imitation Skills in Action: Equipping EC Providers and Parents to Enhance Toddler Development


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Imitation

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 **What is Imitation**

 **Why is it important**

 **Intro to Reciprocal Imitation Training**

Imitation

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Most kids are born with a brain that helps them intuitively learn to observe social information around them, their “social radar”

Hendrix, Zweber Palmer, Tarshis, Garcia Winner; 2013

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Imitation

Imitation is an important component of a comprehensive intervention program for young children with an ASD.

Imitation is often suggested as a "pivotal skill" that can be used to acquire other abilities (e.g., play skills, and communication skills).

Ingersoll and Schreibman (2006)

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Imitation and ASD




Children on the autism display significant impairments in imitation, including imitation of facial expressions and body movements and imitation of actions on objects.

There is a direct relationship between imitation and language development in children with ASD

Much of early learning about people and things takes place through imitation.

(Charman et al., 2003; Stone & Yoder, 2001; Toth, Munson, Meltzoff, & Dawson, 2006).

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| <p>J Speech Lang Hear Res. Author manuscript; available in PMC: 2013 Jun 4. Published in final edited form as: <i>J Speech Lang Hear Res</i>. 2010 Jul 14;53(4):1040–1051. doi: 10.1044/1092-4388(2009)09-0043 ↗</p> <p>The impact of object and gesture imitation training on language use in children with autism</p> <p>Brooke Ingersoll¹, Katherine Lalonde¹</p> <p>▶ Author information ▶ Article notes ▶ Copyright and License information</p> <p>PMCID: PMC3671906 NIHMSID: NIHMS468538 PMID: 20631228</p> <p>The publisher's version of this article is available at J Speech Lang Hear Res ↗</p> <p>Abstract</p> <p>Purpose</p> <p>Reciprocal Imitation Training (RIT) is a naturalistic behavioral intervention that teaches imitation to children with autism within a social-communicative context. RIT has been shown to be effective at teaching spontaneous, generalized object and gesture imitation. In addition, improvements in imitation were associated with increases in verbal imitation and spontaneous language.</p> <p>Method</p> | <p>Article</p> <p>Enhancing Early Intervention For Caregivers of Autistic Children with Online Reciprocal Imitation Training Learning Modules</p> <p>November 2024 · <i>Topics in Early Childhood Special Education</i> 45(4) DOI: 10.1177/02711214241292030</p> <p>Authors:</p> <p> Johanna Higgins University of Pittsburgh</p> <p> Louise A. Kaczmarek</p> <p> Seth King University of Iowa</p> <p>Abstract</p> <p>In this study, we taught caregivers of four young autistic children to implement Reciprocal Imitation Training, a focused naturalistic developmental behavioral intervention (NDBI), using a hybrid approach, combining online modules with in vivo coaching. Early Intervention (Part C) services are often the first to support autistic children; therefore, providers must focus on training caregivers to deliver NDBIs such as RIT, within daily activities that are meaningful to the family in the home. We used a multiple-probe design to examine the effect of home visits enhanced by online modules completed before the coaches' arrival. Results indicated caregivers acquired intervention procedures effectively after approximately six coaching sessions. While most caregivers maintained acceptable fidelity levels, outcomes for children varied, with mixed results in spontaneous imitation. We discuss considerations for providers delivering NDBIs, including factors that impacted outcomes, barriers to intervention, and recommendations for Part C services.</p> |
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| <p>Randomized Controlled Trial ▶ Res Dev Disabil. 2007 Mar-Apr;28(2):163-75. doi: 10.1016/j.ridd.2006.02.004. Epub 2006 Apr 17.</p> <p>The effect of a parent-implemented imitation intervention on spontaneous imitation skills in young children with autism</p> <p>Brooke Ingersoll¹, Samantha Gergans</p> <p>Affiliations + expand</p> <p>PMID: 16603337 DOI: 10.1016/j.ridd.2006.02.004 ↗</p> <p>Abstract</p> <p>Children with autism exhibit significant deficits in their ability to spontaneously imitate the play actions and descriptive gestures of others. Reciprocal imitation training (RIT) is a naturalistic imitation intervention designed to teach spontaneous imitation skills during play. This study assessed the effectiveness of parent-implemented RIT using a multiple-baseline design across three young children with autism and their mothers. After an initial baseline, mothers were taught to implement RIT techniques with their child twice a week for 10 weeks in a clinic setting. Two mothers were taught to use RIT to teach object imitation. The third mother was taught to use RIT to target both object and gesture imitation in a multiple-baseline design across behaviors. Generalization was assessed in the families' homes at the end of treatment and a 1-month follow-up. Parents learned to use the intervention strategies and their children exhibited increases in spontaneous imitation. These findings replicate the results from previous studies, indicating that RIT is effective for teaching imitation skills to young children with autism in a naturalistic setting and extend the findings to parents.</p> | <p>Article</p> <p>Brief Report: Pilot Randomized Controlled Trial of Reciprocal Imitation Training for Teaching Elicited and Spontaneous Imitation to Children with Autism</p> <p>February 2010 · <i>Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders</i> 40(9):1154-60 DOI: 10.1007/s10803-010-0966-2 Source · PubMed</p> <p>Authors:</p> <p> Brooke Ingersoll</p> <p>Abstract</p> <p>Children with autism exhibit significant deficits in imitation skills. Reciprocal Imitation Training (RIT), a naturalistic imitation intervention, was developed to teach young children with autism to imitate during play. This study used a randomized controlled trial to evaluate the efficacy of RIT on elicited and spontaneous imitation skills in 21 young children with autism. Results found that children in the treatment group made significantly more gains in elicited and spontaneous imitation, replicating previous single-subject design studies. Number of spontaneous play acts at pre-treatment was related to improvements in imitation during the intervention, suggesting that children with a greater play repertoire make greater gains during RIT.</p> |
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Reciprocal Imitation Training (RIT)

Learning How to Imitate Through Play

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M.Ed.

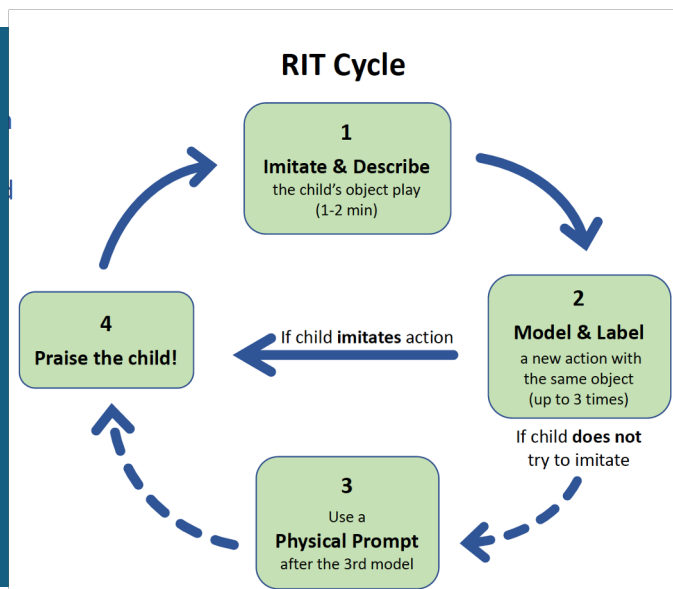
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What is Reciprocal Imitation Training (RIT)?

RIT is a play based behavioral intervention designed to improve your child's ability to imitate the actions of others. It is designed to be fun!

RIT involves a cycle of 4 steps



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Importance of Reciprocal Imitation

- The goal of RIT is to teach your child to imitate in a social context....play!
- It is important that we reinforce any attempt to imitate since the attempt is **more** important than actually copying the action correctly
- RIT can be implemented in a variety of play settings (e.g., inside, outside) as well as during daily routines (e.g., bath time, story time).
- RIT increases other social-communication skills such as social engagement, language, pretend play, and gesture use.

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Overview of RIT Steps:

Step 1.

- Imitate and describe your child's actions

Step 2.

- Model and label a new action

Step 3

- Physical prompt (after 3 models)

Step 4.

- Praise -After any attempt to imitate or prompt

- EVERY RIT Cycle ends with Praise!

- After praise, Return to Step 1 and repeat

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Implementing Reciprocal Imitation Training (RIT)

Learning How to Imitate Through Play

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Implementation in the Home or School Setting (Behavior Skills Training)

- Describe the step- -don't forget "the why"
- Model the step
- Coach the parent or team member to implement the new step
- Provide feedback (3:1 ratio)
- Practice more as needed/answer questions

**Training parent or team member in small steps with time of practice is important!

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Home Visit Plan...

#1

**GRETNA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
IN-HOME VISIT PLAN**

Child's Name: IB Date: 3-6 Provider: RWarren
 Who participated in the visit: Mom, Rachel, IB

#FSP Selected Outcome: Functional Play with toys
 Routine: Playtime
 Skill: Imitation of actions with objects

By our next home visit, child will... Sit with mom and play with toys, allowing mom to imitate his play.

What did we do on today's visit? Reviewed Steps of Imitation • Planned and Gathered Materials • modeled and coached child-led play

What will happen between visits (strategies, routines, skills)?
 Family: Practice imitating their child's play actions and describing the actions using simple language. Family will strive for 5-10 mins of daily practice, multiple times a day.
 Provider: Share video model with parents. Support as needed.
 Other Support:

How will we communicate between visits?
Check-ins through texts and phone calls

What are each of us feeling good about right now (parent and provider)? Excited about staying something new! IB said "Dog" at the park!

What is our plan for the next visit?
Model & label a new action. Prompting & praising the child
 Additional Notes:
• Follow his lead! Don't direct play or ask him questions.
• Have fun @ the Zoo!

Date and time of next visit: 3-13 @ 9am

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Considerations for Additional Support- -

- Consider front- loading home visits
- Schedule time with team members to model and train
- Suggest implementer (parents or team members) record their RIT session during the week and send it to you to provide feedback and gentle reminders
- Provide a video model with reminders and tips for each step
- Simple written steps for implementer

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Lesson Plans

Description of Lesson

Steps for Lesson


Planning Sheet

Reflections Sheet

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Example Plan and Reflection Questions!

Lesson
2
Reciprocal Imitation Training (RIT)



Imitating Your Child

PLAN

- What are some play behaviors or actions that you have seen your child do that might be good to imitate?
 - With toys:
 - Body movements or gestures:
 - Vocalizations/words:
- Are there any of your child behaviors that you will not be imitating?
- What types of challenging behaviors might arise as you imitate your child?
 - What strategies can you use to reduce or prevent the occurrence of these behaviors?

REFLECTION

- How did your child respond when you imitated him/her?
- Were there any behaviors that you found difficult to imitate?
- Which toys or activities worked best for practicing RIT?

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Step 1

- Set up a structured play area - free from distractions with boundaries so the child knows where he or she is supposed to be

Step 2

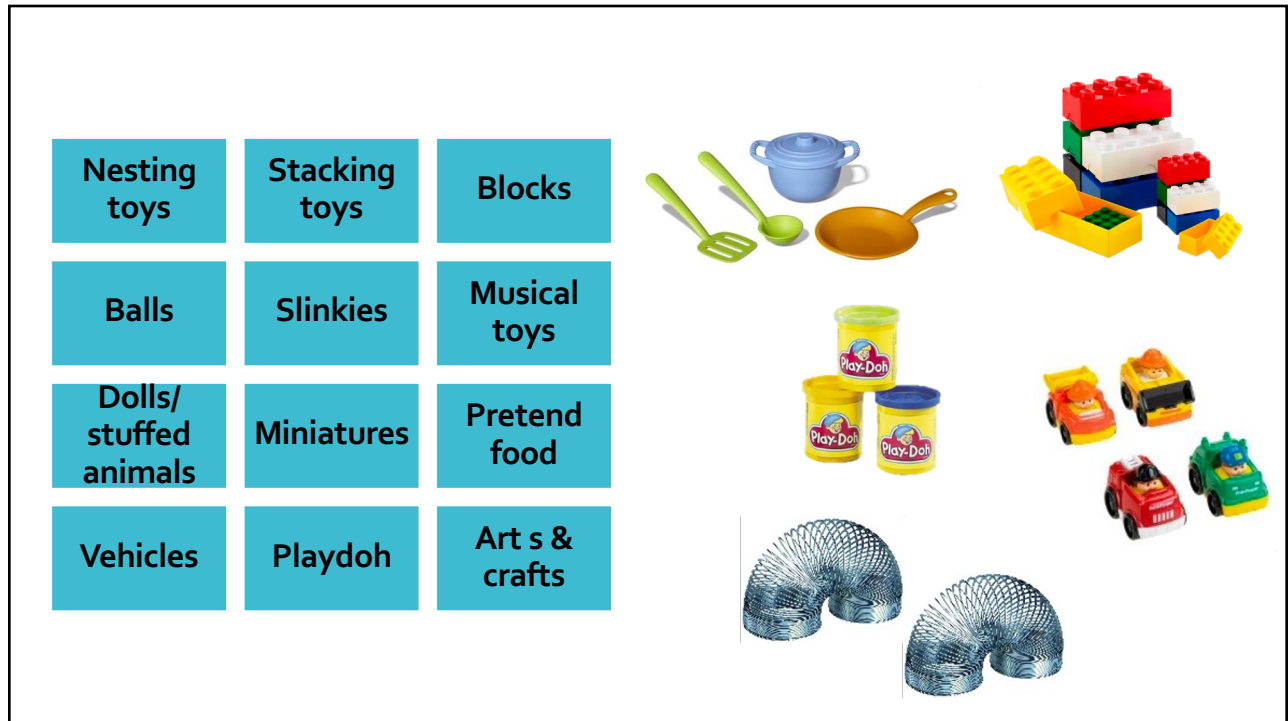
- Choose a set of items to play with - 2 identical sets of items is best. 5-7 items in each set
- Choose toys that can be used in lots of different ways! Examples are: stacking toys, blocks, balls, stuffed animals or dolls. Kitchen items, such as plastic cups, paper towel rolls and wooden spoons, also work well for RIT.

Step 3

- Decide when you will do RIT - Plan some times of the day that you can spend 15-20 minutes doing RIT with your student.

Lesson/
Step #1-
Getting
Ready for
RIT

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Lesson/Step #2- Imitating Your Child: PLAN SHEET

| | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Sit face-to-face with your child, and position yourself so you are at eye level with him/her.</p> | <p>If your child is playing with a toy, use the matching toy from your RIT set to imitate your child's actions.</p> | <p>Move with your child and position yourself like your child (lie down, move around the rooms etc) Copy your child's movement</p> |
| <p>Imlitate any sounds or vocalizations-</p> | <p>The best ways to get your child to notice you are: (1) making your actions more dramatic, and (2) commenting on what you and your child is doing in simple language</p> | <p>Do not make requests or place demands – simply follow the child's lead</p> |

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PLAN SHEET

Describe your child’s play, using language that is slightly more advanced than what he or she is using now. Model, or demonstrating, the language that you want your child to learn.









•While you are imitating your child’s actions, use descriptive words or phrases to label the actions. This strategy will help your child learn the words that are associated with his or her actions.

How to Describe your Child’s Play –

- Use simple Language, Speak Slowly, Stress the most important words, Be repetitive, avoid asking questions

Lesson/Step 3 - Describing Your Child’s Play

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| Table 1 | | Table 2 | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Modeling more advanced language Example: “Ball” | | If Your Child Says... | You Can Say... |
| If your child’s current language level is... | Then you should model... | | |
| No words yet Babbles, reaches, etc | Single words “Ball” | Ca, ca, ca  | Ca, ca- <u>car</u> , <u>car</u> !  |
| Single words or word approximations “Ba,” “Ball” | Simple phrase speech “ <u>Throw</u> the ball” | Yummy!  | Yummy <u>food</u> !  |
| Simple phrase speech “Throw the ball” | Phrase speech with descriptors “Throw the <u>big</u> ball” | All done!  | All done with <u>snack</u> !  |
| Phrase speech with descriptors “Throw the big ball” | Complex phrase speech “Throw the big <u>green</u> ball” | I want a crayon  | I want a <u>red</u> crayon  |

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PLAN SHEET

Lesson/ Step 4- Modeling and Labeling a New Action

Show the student new ways to play with toys. Do this by modeling (demonstrating) a new action with the same type of object your child is using.

This part of the RIT cycle occurs right after you have been “imitating and describing” your child’s actions for about 1-2 minutes.

Key Points:

- Model the new action with the same toy the child is using, Model the action in BIG, EXAGGERATED ways
- Use a verbal label as you model the new action
- Start with actions your child is likely to imitate

| Toy/Object | Play Actions My Child Uses Now | Play Actions I Can Model | Verbal Label |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| EXAMPLE: Blocks | Stacking Lining up | Crashing Making a train out of lined up blocks | “Crash!” “Driving!” “Choo-choo!” |

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PLAN SHEET

Lesson/Step 5 Physical Prompting and Praise

Ensure that your child experiences success during your RIT sessions.

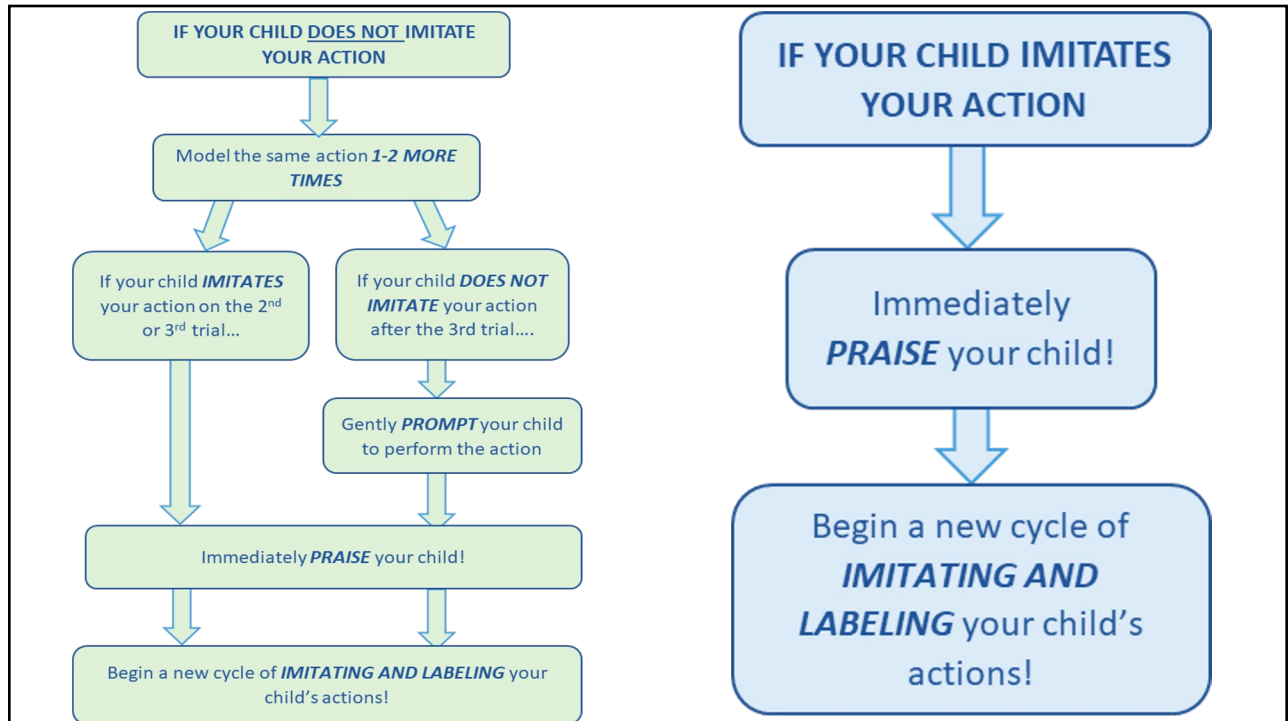
.Physical prompting and praise are important tools for helping young children learn new behaviors, and to feel successful during the learning process.

.Praise is a very strong motivator for helping children to learn – and repeat – behaviors we want to see.

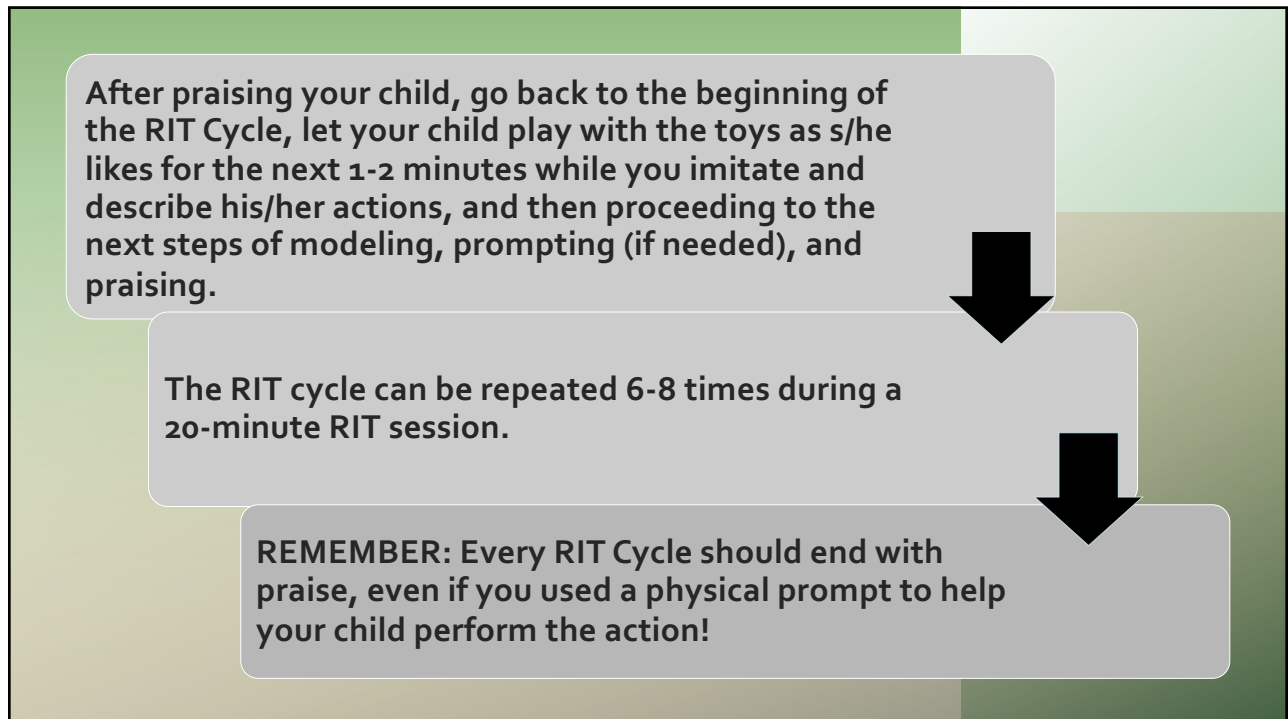
•But sometimes children need a little support in order to be successful when learning new skills. ..

•Use **physical prompting** to guide children through the actions we are looking for, so that we can praise them for their effort and participation.

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PLAN SHEET

RIT "play time" isn't the only time you can teach your child to imitate. You can also practice RIT during everyday routines, such as snack time and bath time.

This lesson describes how to use RIT during some different activities throughout the day.

Lesson/Step 6- - Teaching Imitation During Daily Routines

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Use RIT Planning Sheet as a Guide

Use the table below to identify different daily routines in which you can practice RIT:

| Daily Routine | Location | Specific Activity | RTI Strategy I Can I Use |
|---------------|----------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

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Examples

While looking at a book, you can take turns imitating your child's actions and vocalizations and then encouraging him to imitate yours. For example, if he touches or points at a picture of a bird, you can point too, and then flap your arms like wings and say "Tweet, Tweet!"

During snack time, you can imitate your child's chewing movements while saying "Yum, Yum!" Or you can imitate him putting a cracker in his mouth by eating one yourself and then feeding the snack to a stuffed animal.

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RIT Application Activity- Daily Routines

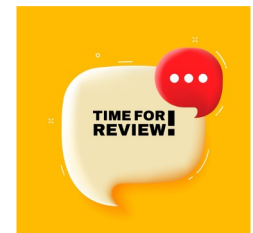
Bath Time

Recess

Center
Time

Playing in
Sandbox

- Describe what the child is doing (what are they playing with?)
- Practice how you might model and label a new action in this activity
- What new actions could you add to the child's play?



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After your child is consistently imitating actions with objects, you can begin to teach gesture imitation.

Teaching gesture imitation follows the same steps you have already learned, but instead of using a duplicate object, you will model a gesture that is related to what your child is doing.

Keep in mind that the gesture you model should be one that you can prompt your child to do.

Lesson/Step #7 - - Teaching Gesture Imitation

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Object Actions

Moving finger in circles (it's spinning!), clapping hands together once (crash!), moving hand in a downward "swoosh" as if going down a slide.

Conventional Gestures

Putting finger to lip (shh!), wagging finger as if scolding, shrugging shoulders with palms up (where is it?), clapping hands (yay!), cupping hand around ear (what's that noise?).

Attributes

Moving hands apart to show size, rubbing hand on stomach (yummy!), jerking hand/finger away from toy as if it's hot.

Pantomime/Acting out actions

Holding arms out as if flying, moving hands as if banging on a drum or strumming a guitar, pivoting palms open as if reading a book, wiggling fingers before a tickle.

Affective States

Fists rubbing eyes as if sad, hands pressed together by cheek as if sleeping, hands on hips as if angry, hands on cheeks for "oh no!"

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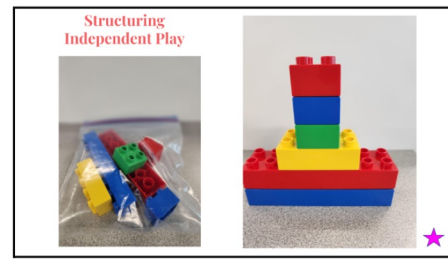
Next Steps..

Expanding Imitation



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Expanding Play - -

- Increase variety of play- -adding more steps with favorite toys
- Offer play with new toys
- Continue to increase vocalizations, words, word combinations etc. with play
- Teach imaginative play/ pretend play with peers (visuals can support this play in the classroom)



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RIT Lesson Plans RIT Manual

Resources

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THANK YOU!!



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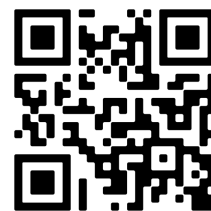
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this session.
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