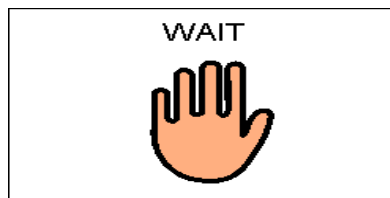
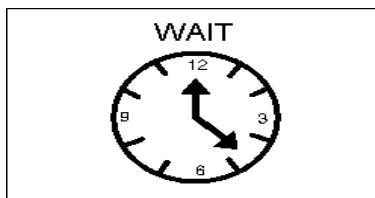


STRATEGIES TO INCREASE APPROPRIATE WAITING

How to structure a waiting situation:

When teaching a child who is diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder, adding visual and physical structure to the environment often helps the child acquire skills more quickly. Structuring the activity in a way that conveys expectations to the child may increase the amount of times the child waits appropriately.

1. In order to convey to the child that it is time to wait, it is a good idea to pair the direction, “Wait,” with a visual cue. The visual cue can be a gesture, such as extending the adult’s palm toward the child, or showing the child a “wait” card. A “wait” card is a small piece of paper displaying either the word “wait” or a picture that represents waiting. Below are a few examples of possible “wait” cards:



2. Have a preferred item readily available for the child when s/he has finished waiting. The preferred item will be used as a reward to increase the child’s motivation to wait appropriately. How to use this reward is described in the teaching section.
3. Use visual supports.
 - a. Organize the environment to create a distraction-free setting. For example, turn the television or radio off and remove all preferred items from the child’s view.
 - b. It may be easier for a child to learn to wait while sitting in a chair than while standing. The chair itself provides visible structure, conveying to the child how and where the child should wait.
 - c. To teach the child to wait while sitting on the floor or standing, it may be helpful to place a piece of paper, a masking tape “X,” or another visual marker on the floor in order to clarify where the child is expected to wait, creating an opportunity for the child to be successful. Initially, the marker should start out big enough so the child can easily stand or sit on it. The marker should also allow a little “wiggle room.” As the child’s waiting skills improve, the size of the marker can be decreased and eventually eliminated. A good rule of thumb is to teach the child that at least 1 body part (foot if standing and bottom if sitting) must remain on the marker.
4. Decide what a correct waiting response should look like and stick to it. For example, for some children, “waiting” may mean sitting with their hands on their lap, while for others it may mean standing with their hands in their pockets and their feet still. The expectation should be

tailored to the individual child's skills, and should be the same each time the child is told to wait.

5. When starting to teach this skill, the interval that the child is expected to wait should be short, e.g., 5-10 seconds, in order to promote success. As the child acquires the ability to wait independently, the time interval should be increased in small intervals, such as 15-30 seconds.

Teaching the child to wait:

For children who consistently initiate requests for preferred items or activities, teaching procedures can be used in those natural situations to teach the child to wait. However, for children who do not consistently initiate requests, a direct instruction approach may be more useful for teaching waiting skills.

1. Pairing the card with positive reinforcement can be accomplished by using a work-reward sequence (first the child waits and then s/he gets a preferred item). Practicing this method will let the child know that you are going to follow through when you say "wait," and that s/he will be rewarded for waiting. This is an important step toward preventing undesirable behaviors that may occur when the child is told to wait.
2. It is important that you limit the number of times you deliver the direction, "wait" to **one time**. If the adult repeats the direction numerous times, the child may learn to wait after receiving multiple directions rather than after the first direction.
3. Initially, you should provide prompts to help the child learn to wait appropriately. This can be done by using physical prompts to help the child stay in the designated spot. When the predetermined time interval for appropriate waiting elapses, you should provide the child with behavior specific praise, "Great waiting!," while showing the child the "wait" card (if appropriate). You should also allow immediate access to the item the child indicated a preference for earlier.
4. If the child squirms or verbally refuses, such as saying, "No!" or crying, ignore the noise and continue to use physical prompts to show the child how s/he is expected to wait. When the child stops making noise and/or resisting the prompts, you can reward the child as described in #3 (above).
5. A naturalistic teaching procedure can be useful when teaching a child to wait. Set up a situation so that the child can see, but cannot reach, a highly preferred item. You may need to draw the child's attention to the item by commenting about it and moving it around, but **not** by giving the child any instructions. When the child indicates that s/he is interested in the item (by reaching, vocalizing or otherwise requesting), the adult clearly says "wait" one time while showing the child the "wait" card or the palm of an outstretched hand.
6. If the child does not or will not initiate a request for a preferred item, you can use the direct instruction sequence to teach waiting skills. First, indicate to the child what s/he will earn when s/he waits appropriately (e.g., a preferred item or activity such as tickles, music, book, or snack). Then, deliver the **instruction**, "wait," paired with the visual cue. After the child **responds** (either with or without your prompts), give the child **feedback** depending on his/her

response. If the child responds correctly (with or without prompts), give the child positive reinforcement (praise plus the preferred item/activity). If the child makes an error, you tell the child “Try again,” and start the sequence over again. You may remind the child again that once s/he waits, s/he will receive a reward, (i.e. Say, “First wait, then [preferred item]!”)

Expecting the child to wait during daily activities:

1. Once the child consistently demonstrates the ability to wait independently, this procedure can be implemented in many settings. Waiting is a functional skill for the child to engage in during home routines (e.g., meal preparation and bath time) and during community outings (e.g., doctor visits, waiting in line at the store, waiting at crosswalks).
2. As the child’s waiting skills improve, s/he can be expected to wait at home and in the community when s/he requests attention, items, or activities that are not immediately available. If a child requests an item and is required to wait for it, then his/her reward will be that item paired with behavior-specific praise. For example, if the child requests juice, the adult can instruct the child to “wait” verbally while using the visual cue before the adult retrieves the juice from the refrigerator, locates a cup, and pours the juice. In this example, giving the child the juice after waiting appropriately becomes the natural reward in that instance. If a parent needs a child to wait during a daily activity, the reward can include any appropriate preferred item or activity (e.g., small toy, snack, magazines) and behavior-specific praise. For example, a child may have to wait while an adult answers the phone or puts on shoes before getting in the car.
3. During activities when the child is expected to wait for a long period of time, it may be necessary to repeat the wait-reward sequence several times until the overall wait period has elapsed. Examples of these times include waiting in line at a store, waiting in the waiting room of a doctor or dentist, and waiting for a table at a restaurant. The wait-reward sequence may occur in the following manner: wait for 1 minute, reward, wait for 1 minute, reward, and so on, until the overall wait period is complete. The required amount of wait time and reward time within each interval can be decreased or increased dependent on the individual child’s waiting skills.