

PECS

PECS was developed in 1985 as a unique augmentative/alternative communication intervention package for individuals with autism spectrum disorder and related developmental disabilities. PECS does not require complex or expensive materials. It was created with families, educators, and resident care providers in mind, so is readily used in a range of settings.



PECS begins by teaching an individual to give a picture of a desired item to a “communicative partner”, who immediately honors the exchange as a request. The system goes on to teach discrimination of pictures and how to put them together in sentences. In the more advanced phases, individuals are taught to answer questions and to comment.

The PECS teaching protocol is based on B.F. Skinner’s book, Verbal Behavior, such that functional verbal operants are systematically taught using prompting and reinforcement strategies that will lead to independent communication. Verbal prompts are not used, thus building immediate initiation and avoiding prompt dependency.



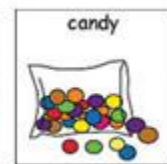
PECS has been successful with individuals of all ages demonstrating a variety of communicative, cognitive and physical difficulties. Some learners using PECS also develop speech. Others may transition to a voice output system. The body of research supporting the effectiveness of PECS continues to expand, with research from countries around the world.

The Six Phases of PECS

PHASE I

How to Communicate

Students learn to exchange single pictures for items or activities they really want.



PHASE II

Distance and Persistence

Still using single pictures, students learn to generalize this new skill by using it in different places, with different people and across distances. They are also taught to be more persistent communicators.



PHASE III

Picture Discrimination

Students learn to select from two or more pictures to ask for their favorite things. These are placed in a communication book—a ring binder with Velcro strips where pictures are stored and easily removed for communication.



PHASE IV

Sentence Structure

Students learn to construct simple sentences on a detachable sentence strip using an “I want” picture followed by a picture of the item being requested.



Attributes and Language Expansion

Students learn to expand their sentences by adding adjectives, verbs and prepositions.



PHASE V

Answering Questions

Students learn to use PECS to answer the question, “What do you want?”.



PHASE VI

Commenting

Now students are taught to comment in response to questions such as, “What do you see?”, “What do you hear?” and “What is it?”. They learn to make up sentences starting with “I see”, “I hear”, “I feel”, “It is a”, etc.

